Donald Trump claimed to have “the full and enthusiastic support” of Ron DeSantis after the two men met on Sunday for a golf course breakfast in an apparent attempt to thaw their relationship after the Republican primary.

“I am very happy to have the full and enthusiastic support of Governor Ron DeSantis of Florida,” Trump posted to his Truth Social platform on Monday afternoon.

“We had a great meeting yesterday, arranged by mutual friend Steve Witkoff, at his beautiful Shell Bay Club in Hollywood, Florida.”

White man wearing black suit and red tie next to US flag

Florida ‘callously’ strips healthcare from thousands of children despite new law

Read more

Witkoff, an investor, is a friend and donor to Trump. He has also been a witness for the former president, in his New York civil trial for business fraud.

DeSantis was once considered Trump’s top rival in the Republican presidential primary, with a platform that rested primarily on fighting the “woke” cultural forces of diversity, inclusion and tolerance.

But a bungled presidential run meant DeSantis left the race after the Iowa caucus in January, leaving Trump to storm to victory despite facing 88 criminal charges and multimillion-dollar penalties in civil suits also including a defamation claim arising from a rape claim a judge said was “substantially true”.

DeSantis’s catastrophic presidential run left him needing to repair his relationship with Trump.

The meeting in Hollywood, Florida, was first reported by the Washington Post. On Monday, Trump said the two men discussed “how we would work closely together” and “the future of Florida”.

Relations between DeSantis and Trump had long been frosty. Trump nicknamed his rival “Ron DeSanctimonious”; DeSantis described Trump as unelectable, though he said he would support him if he won the nomination.

DeSantis has said he does not want to be named as Trump’s running mate and prospective vice-president.

Relations between the two men have long appeared tense. DeSantis at one point criticized Trump’s team as people “we fired”. Trump’s team called DeSantis a “sad little man”, according to the Post.

Trump has proved to be transactional with rivals when necessary – and he stands to benefit from improved relations. DeSantis developed a network of wealthy donors to back his presidential run, moneyed supporters Trump needs if he hopes to catch Joe Biden in fundraising terms.

Many donors were weary of Trump before the primary began. Some of the largest players criticized the former president, who on Sunday met DeSantis during a break from trial in New York in a case centering on hush-money payments to an adult film star that prosecutors allege were illicitly covered up.

Trump is also accused of illegally trying to reverse his defeat to Biden in the 2020 election, at federal and state levels, and of improperly retaining classified materials.

Nonetheless, some Republicans who aligned themselves against Trump began to reverse course as early as January – and a reconciliation with DeSantis may help more return to Trump’s orbit.

DeSantis apparently hopes to run for president again in 2028. To mount a serious effort, he would need to maintain both his national profile and his large network of donors.