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Ramaswamy poised to shake up Ohio governor's race

BY JULIA MUELLER - 02/03/25 6:00 AM ET



When Vivek Ramaswamy formally launches his expected bid to succeed Ohio Gov. [Mike DeWine](#) (R), the biotech entrepreneur and former presidential candidate appears on track to become the favorite for the Buckeye State's governor's mansion.

Ramaswamy boasts national name recognition from his firebrand bid for the White House in 2024 and, even before launching, new polling from a pro-Ramaswamy firm shows a majority of Ohio Republican primary voters would get behind him in 2026.

Some of Vice President Vance's top political advisers also joined on this week to steer Ramaswamy's soon-to-be-announced campaign, a promising sign that he could snag a key endorsement from Vance or President Trump — though he'd likely face candidates who have long-standing political ties in the state.

"He'll need to do the work to get around," said one Republican strategist in the state. "But listen, if he gets the Trump-Vance endorsement, I think it's very tough. I think it's over."

Ramaswamy is expected to launch his campaign mid-February, a source familiar confirmed.

New polling obtained by The Hill from Fabrizio, Lee & Associates found Ramaswamy with a "huge lead" over his potential competitors, winning 52 percent of the state's GOP voters in a hypothetical primary ballot. Ohio Attorney General [Dave Yost](#) (R), the first major candidate to declare a run, was in second place with 18 percent.

"In no uncertain terms, Vivek Ramaswamy is the overwhelming frontrunner to be the Republican nominee for Governor in Ohio, and he'll only be buoyed by his pro-Trump and America First policies and ideas," the pollster wrote in a memo.

That pollster is notably an alum of both [the Trump campaign](#) and of Vance's [2022 Senate bid](#). He is also among several Vance allies and advisers who are [joining Ramaswamy's team](#).

Those gets are "a pretty big indicator" that Ramaswamy could enter the governor's race in the strongest position, the Ohio strategist said.

Ramaswamy also pulled in a prelaunch endorsement this week from Sen. Rick Scott (R-Fla.), who [said on the social platform X](#) that Ramaswamy would have his "full support" if he runs.

But the Republican primary could get crowded. Yost jumped into the race for the governor's mansion last week, and Ohio Treasurer Robert Sprague is also expected to run, after reportedly [filing paperwork](#) and [teasing a bid](#) on social media. Amy Acton, a former Ohio health director, is [running on](#) the Democrats' side.

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Former Lt. Gov. Jon Husted (R) was also considered a potential contender for the role, but DeWine instead [selected him](#) to fill the Senate vacancy left open as Vance exited the upper chamber for the White House, a slot for which Ramaswamy, too, [was floated](#).

Another complicating factor is that Ramaswamy, who holds no experience in elected office, would be up against candidates with longer government resumes, including Yost, who was first elected as state auditor in 2010 before winning the top prosecutor slot in 2018.

Longtime Ohio Democratic strategist Justin Barasky, who's working with Acton's campaign, predicted a "pretty messy primary" on the GOP side, which could "make for some interesting moments that I think Democrats will be able to capitalize on."

Buckeye State-based Republican strategist Mark Weaver said Ramaswamy likely enters with an edge from his national profile and fundraising, but noted Yost or Sprague start with "deeper political contacts" in Ohio.

"Each of them will need all of them will need to backfill where they are weak," Weaver said. "So Ramaswamy will need to build an organization and relationships in 88 counties, and Sprague and Yost will need to build name identification and raise money."

Before he rocketed into the national spotlight with his 2024 run for the White House, Ramaswamy was a relatively obscure figure in politics, known for authoring "Woke, Inc.: Inside Corporate America's Social Justice Scam" and his [criticism of environment, social and governance \(ESG\) investing](#).

He [dropped out](#) and endorsed Trump early last year, after poor traction in the polls and a disappointing showing in the Iowa caucuses. He's drawn criticism from both sides of the aisle for some of his [controversial stances](#), such as his labeling of the "climate change agenda" as a "hoax," and his [support for cutting Ukraine funding](#).

"This is somebody who was not particularly relevant, not somebody that the party faithful were talking about, but, put them on TV enough and develop that awareness, and all of a sudden he's top of mind," said David Niven, a political science professor at the University of Cincinnati.

Ramaswamy's alignment with both Trump and Vance is another leg up for his prospects in a Republican gubernatorial primary that could become a battle of who supports the president the best, experts said.

Former President Obama won Ohio in both his presidential races, but Trump has since won the state three times, coming out on top there by [11 points](#) in November. Vance [won his Senate seat](#) in 2022, and GOP Sen. Bernie Moreno ousted incumbent Democratic Sen. Sherrod Brown with Trump's support this year, helping [Republicans take control](#) of the upper chamber.

"Since 2022 in the U.S. Senate race in Ohio, Republican primaries have exclusively been a contest of who can be Trumpier-than-thou," Niven said. "And ultimately, Trump endorsements have been enough, because otherwise, the candidates are hard to distinguish from each other."

Yost notably [touted his support](#) for Trump's agenda in his launch.

"The Ohio Republican Party of today looks nothing like what it did eight years ago, when Mike DeWine launched his campaign for governor. It is louder and brasher and, in all ways, Trumpier," Niven said. "And that figures to be what this race is about. And in that respect, Ramaswamy enters with an advantage."

The Fabrizio polling also found that a hypothetical Trump endorsement increased Ramaswamy's lead over Yost by roughly 12 points.

It's unclear when Trump might weigh in on the Ohio race, though it's unlikely he would preempt an announcement from Ramaswamy about his campaign. But sources said the fact

Ramaswamy "played his cards well" in the 2024 primary by avoiding direct attacks on Trump, Weaver said, while candidates who were critical of the president, such as former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley, have drawn his ire.

He was later floated in the veepstakes to join Trump's bid before Vance got the nod, and then was tapped, alongside Elon Musk, to co-lead the new Department of Governmental Efficiency (DOGE), a commission focused on cutting federal spending.

But Ramaswamy [departed that commission](#) this week as he gears to try again for elected office.

"It was my honor to help support the creation of DOGE," Ramaswamy [wrote on X](#). "I'll have more to say very soon about my future plans in Ohio. Most importantly, we're all-in to help President Trump make America great again!"

He's resisted suggestions that his DOGE exit was because of frictions with Musk, and he hinted again at a campaign in an interview with Fox News's Jesse Watters this week.

"The reality is, I'm pursuing elected office very shortly. We'll have an announcement soon," Ramaswamy said. "When you're talking about a constitutional revival, it's not just done through the federal government. It's done through federalism, where states also lead the way."

Brett Samuels contributed.

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