



POLITICS

Ramaswamy's expected run for Ohio governor would test experienced Republicans and tradition



1 of 5 | Vivek Ramaswamy speaks before Republican presidential nominee former President Donald Trump at a campaign rally at Madison Square Garden, Oct. 27, 2024, in New York. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci, File)

BY [JULIE CARR SMYTH](#) AND [THOMAS BEAUMONT](#)

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COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Fresh off of his [unexpected departure](#) from President Donald Trump's [Department of Government Efficiency](#), [Vivek Ramaswamy](#) has set his sights on becoming governor of his home state.

The 39-year-old biotech entrepreneur who made an [unsuccessful bid](#) for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination has lined up strategists with Ohio experience and plans to announce his run as soon as this week.

Ramaswamy will try to follow the paths of [Vice President JD Vance](#) and [Ohio Sen. Bernie Moreno](#) — two political newcomers who won Senate seats with the help of Trump's endorsement. His plans have complicated things for a deep bench of veteran Republican politicians, especially the ones who also aspire to succeed term-limited Gov. Mike DeWine. Attorney General Dave Yost [announced his candidacy on Thursday](#).

So far, Ohio voters have continued to support candidates with government experience for state-level offices, while favoring business backgrounds in their presidential and Senate picks.

"At the federal legislative level, that's a different yardstick and standard than for governor of Ohio," said Republican consultant Terry Casey. "Historically, the governor's a little closer to voters — clearing highways, running prisons — than senators and members of Congress."

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Ramaswamy stands to benefit from instant popularity among Trump's most ardent backers and long ties to both Vance and Moreno. He attended Trump's second inauguration and is a well-known booster of the president.

Attending a recent breakfast with more than 600 state GOP activists, Ramaswamy was mobbed by people seeking to have their photos taken with him and his wife, Apoorva. Ramaswamy, who travels with his own small security detail, was again swarmed the same evening during a black-tie inaugural ball in Washington sponsored by the [Ohio Republican Party](#).

"The question is can you bypass the 20 years' worth of political history that used to be required to run for governor," said Ryan Stubenrauch, a Republican strategist and former senior policy adviser to DeWine.

All eyes on Ramaswamy

Ramaswamy is the son of Indian immigrants and a native of Cincinnati. He earned Harvard and Yale degrees before joining a hedge fund firm and leading its pharmaceutical investments. Ramaswamy [launched his own venture](#) in 2014, Roivant, specializing in buying discount patents for drugs stuck in development and resurrecting them. His portfolio is now measured in the hundreds of millions of dollars, enough to dwarf the \$15 million he loaned his presidential campaign.

He was raised in a Hindu-practicing home. With evangelical Christians holding sway in the Republican

Party, Ramaswamy says his faith shares core principles with Christianity and he traces his abortion-rights opposition to his time at St. Xavier High School in his hometown.

Ramaswamy has drawn criticism both from establishment Republicans and the party's populist pro-Trump wing. His opposition to providing weapons to Ukraine in the war with Russia bothered some Republicans. But when he urged Trump, notably in an X post that went viral, to bring in more foreign tech workers, it angered former Trump adviser Steve Bannon and other hard-line supporters of restricted immigration.

When Ramaswamy arrived in [Springfield, Ohio](#), last year to hold a town hall in the wake of false claims made by Trump and Vance that Haitian migrants there were eating people's pets, the venue couldn't hold all the people who showed up.

That popularity does not always translate to those who know Ramaswamy well. Some inside and outside the Trump universe say his style can be abrasive and exhausting.

Trump has made no endorsement in the developing race.

Ramaswamy has long considered running for governor, according to those with knowledge of his plans.

After Trump appointed him to [DOGE](#), Ramaswamy pulled himself out of consideration for the Senate seat that came open with Vance's election as vice president. But Ramaswamy later discussed the vacancy with Trump, according to two people familiar with his plans who were not authorized to publicly discuss the private conversations and spoke on condition of anonymity, and then went to DeWine to ask for the appointment. The governor opted for [Lt. Gov. Jon Husted](#), citing his extensive government experience.

A [spokesperson for DOGE said](#) Ramaswamy would not participate in the cost-cutting initiative due to his plans to run for office. That leaves Musk, the world's richest person, as its sole leader.

Ramaswamy has ties to Republican strategists from his campaign for the White House race, notably Ben Yoho, CEO of the Columbus-based Strategy Group.

Ramaswamy is scrambling others' plans

By appointing Husted to the Senate, DeWine eliminated the leading contender to follow him as governor. But no longer is it a given that the wealthy donors and key endorsers that Husted had locked up over the past six years would naturally shift to another experienced Republican — Yost or Treasurer Robert Sprague, for example.

Yost, 68, is a former county prosecutor elected four times statewide — twice as auditor, twice as attorney general. Sprague, 51, has been twice elected statewide after spending years in the Ohio House and county government. Secretary of State Frank LaRose, a former state senator whose job running elections makes him among the state's highest profile politician, has yet to announce his plans.

"This new dynamic and competition adds a layer of complexity for me," said Ken Blackwell, a Trump loyalist who served two terms as Ohio secretary of state and whose potential endorsement would be coveted. Blackwell is a long-time Yost supporter who lives in Cincinnati and is a former mayor.

Yost, in announcing his campaign, did not mention Ramaswamy, but seemed to draw a contrast with a potential rival who has played on the national stage.

"This is my heart, my home," he said in a statement. "I work for the people of Ohio, and I love my bosses."

But Ramaswamy isn't a total stranger to state government either.

Like Moreno and Vance, his entry point was an invitation to the board of InnovateOhio, an office overseeing technology-related improvements that DeWine set up in 2018 and assigned to Husted.

"It's pretty cool," Husted said at a news conference announcing his Senate appointment. "We have a vice president from Ohio who's, like, my friend. I mean, seriously, InnovateOhio board? We had Bernie Moreno, JD Vance, Vivek Ramaswamy and me. We did all right. We got a good crew there."



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