

Governor candidates critical of plans for stadiums. 'Just a breathtaking amount of money'

By **Scott Wartman**
Cincinnati Enquirer

Ohio's gubernatorial candidates criticized the proposals for the state to pay hundreds of millions of dollars to build and upgrade the stadiums for the Cleveland Browns and Cincinnati Bengals.

Three Republican candidates, Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost, biotech entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy and Morgan County resident Heather Brazell-Hill, in interviews or statements to The Enquirer, all said they either wanted to find another way to pay for pro-sports facilities or wait for a better economic time.

Democratic gubernatorial candidate Amy Acton, in a statement, indicated the money could be better spent on other issues.

Both the Browns and Bengals, and their respective local governments, have turned to the state for help in their stadium situations. The Ohio House earlier this week included in the state's two-year budget \$600 million in state bonds to build a domed-stadium for the Cleveland Browns.

Hamilton County commissioners, a day after the budget passed, objected to the House not including Paycor Stadium and the Bengals in the budget and revealed the county and the Bengals are asking the state for \$350 million, the source of which remains to be determined.

The House version isn't the final state budget. The Senate will take up the budget next.

Yost: 'It's just a breathtaking amount of money'

Yost said if he was governor he'd veto the plan to issue \$600 million in state bonds to build a stadium for the Cleveland Browns and any similar plan that might apply to the Bengals.

"It's just a breathtaking amount of money," Yost said "And secondly, the fact that it's a bond. The state is taking on debt that's going to have to be paid back by people who candidly can't afford to go to a pro game."

Yost said he would rather find a dedicated pool of money that could go for stadiums. What that would be, remains to be determined. Yost did not support current Gov. Mike [DeWine's plan to double taxes on sports betting](#) to pay for stadiums.

He said he could support using the existing betting tax for stadiums.

Ramaswamy's campaign: 'Simply giving away handouts isn't the right answer'

Ramaswamy's campaign, in a statement, slammed the current proposals as a "handout" but didn't come out against the state funding stadiums. His campaign released a statement that didn't specify what Ramaswamy would propose to pay for pro-sports stadiums.

"Vivek is a longtime Bengals fan (and will be for the rest of his life). He views the team as part of Cincinnati's identity, just as the Browns are part of Cleveland's," his campaign said in a statement. "But simply giving away handouts isn't the right answer for anyone. Vivek is a businessman who will negotiate better win-win deals for our state, and that's what we need in Ohio."

Hill: 'Right now is not the time or the place'

Hill said she doesn't know if she'd veto the Brown's plan for \$600 million in bonds but said she doesn't think now is the right time for the state to pay for stadiums. She said there are more pressing issues.

"I do not oppose using state funds, but there's a time and place for that sort of thing," Hill said. "And right now is not the time or the place. We are in such a crisis right now. We have citizens that can't afford their property taxes. We have citizens that are not able to put food on our tables."

Acton: Stadium money 'does nothing to help Ohioans'

Acton, in a statement, didn't propose a new way to fund stadiums or specify whether the state should play a role in stadium construction. Her statement, however, indicated she didn't agree with the current plans.

"Hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars for stadiums does nothing to help Ohioans across the state who are struggling with the cost of gas, groceries or property taxes," Acton said in the statement. "And this same budget guts public school funding, which is unconscionable."