

# Ohio Republican candidates in 2026 push for early endorsements from state GOP

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COLUMBUS, Ohio—U.S. Sen. Jon Husted, Ohio gubernatorial hopeful Vivek Ramaswamy, and other Republican statewide candidates are lobbying Ohio GOP leaders to award them state party primary endorsements next month.

The endorsements, if approved at the Ohio Republican Party's State Central Committee meeting on May 9, would be an unusually early move by the state party to solidify its 2026 candidate slate with about a year to go before the state's primary election.

It's still unclear whether there's enough support from within the 66-member committee to vote on any endorsements during next month's meeting, three committee members each said in interviews. Attorney General Dave Yost, Ramaswamy's main primary rival, [has urged committee members to hold off](#) on endorsing for governor until much later in the campaign.

So far, only two 2026 Republican statewide races are contested: the governor's race between Ramaswamy, Yost, and Morgan County businessowner Heather Hill, and the four-way race for state treasurer between ex-lawmaker [Niraj Antani](#), ex-state Rep. [Jay Edwards](#), state Sen. [Kristina Roegner](#), and Lake County Treasurer [Michael Zuren](#).

While Edwards has filed to run for state treasurer, he said Tuesday he still is deciding which statewide office to pursue.

Husted, [who was appointed to the U.S. Senate in January](#) by term-limited Gov. Mike DeWine, currently has no primary opponents. Neither, so far, do state Auditor Keith Faber (who's running for attorney general next year), state Treasurer Robert Sprague (who's running for secretary of state), nor Secretary of State Frank LaRose (who's running for for state auditor).

A state party endorsement brings not just bragging rights, but very tangible benefits to candidates who land them -- including access to the state party's voter data, campaign services, field staff support, and bulk-mail permit, among other perks.

It's also often easier for endorsed candidates to coalesce the party around their candidacy and expand their general-election campaign faster than they otherwise would be able to.

Issuing endorsements would not only give a leg up to favored candidates in contested race, but it would help deter additional Republicans from entering those races -- such as Lt. Gov. Jim Tressel, who has [been talked about as a potential candidate for governor](#).

In the [past few election cycles](#), the Ohio GOP's state central committee waited until January or February of the election year before making primary endorsements, sometimes amid grumbling over whether the party should be endorsing in primaries at all.

But the 2026 campaign cycle in Ohio has started far earlier than usual. That's in part because President Donald Trump issued early endorsements of [Ramaswamy](#) and [Husted](#).

Central committee members Amanda Suffecool, Greg Simpson and Gary Cates each told The Plain Dealer/cleveland.com that they have been approached by at least some of the candidates in those races or by surrogates seeking their support for a party endorsement.

Each said that they believe state central committee members are split on the idea.

"I think that there are some that are completely in favor of doing the endorsement vote, and there are others who are like, 'Wait, wait, wait, that puts your thumb on the scale a little bit,'" said Suffecool, who chairs the Portage County Republican Party.

Simpson, who's from the Cincinnati area, said that while it would be "kind of strange" for the Ohio GOP to endorse primary candidates so early, he's not against doing it so long as the candidates can make their case.

"I just want to hear some facts and figures about what they're going to do should they get elected -- that's all," Simpson said.

It's up to Ohio Republican Party Chair Alex Triantafilou to decide whether to put any endorsement votes on the draft agenda for the May 9 meeting – though central committee members have the power to add or subtract agenda items during the meeting.

The Plain Dealer/cleveland.com has reached out to Triantafilou and other state party staffers for comment.

Husted, when asked Monday if he was urging state central committee members for an endorsement, said he's brought it up during his regular conversations with them.

"I think it's known that the party's considering endorsing in May. And so of course, I always ask," the Columbus-area Republican said. "If you don't ask someone for their vote, why would you expect them to give it to you?"

Sprague is also seeking a state party endorsement, said campaign spokesman Dalton Throckmorton.

The Plain Dealer/cleveland.com has reached out to Ramaswamy's campaign for comment, as well as to Antani, Zuren, and spokespeople for Faber, LaRose, and Sprague, respectively.

Yost, in a letter to state central committee members, asked them to hold off on any endorsements for now, arguing that "a great deal will happen" in the next year that could lead them to change their minds.

He noted that Republicans criticized Democratic Party leaders for replacing Joe Biden with Kamala Harris as their party's presidential nominee last year. "The establishment would never have allowed Donald Trump to be nominated (for president) in 2016 if it had been up to them," added Yost, [who himself was a vocal critic of Trump](#) ahead of Ohio's 2016 presidential primary, won by then-Gov. John Kasich, before subsequently endorsing Trump in that year's general election.

While "clearing the field" is a "fine-sounding phrase," Yost wrote, having state party leaders limit Ohio GOP voters' ballot choices reminded him of how people in the former Soviet Union were only allowed to vote for preselected communist candidates.

"In a free society, it is the people who 'clear the field' —by choosing a candidate in a free and fair election," he wrote.