



Ramaswamy Criticizes Trump, Positions Himself as New MAGA Leader

Vivek Ramaswamy's presidential campaign has largely been an homage to Donald Trump, with posturing and rhetoric that, far from challenging the 45th president, has been full of praise and emulation — all with the intended effect of positioning Ramaswamy as Trump's successor to the MAGA movement.

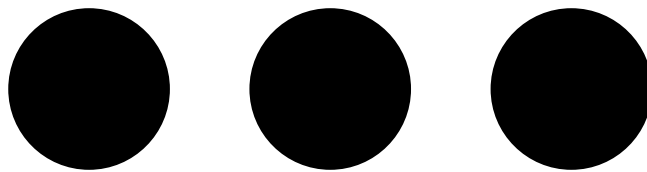
While this strategy has led to speculation that Ramaswamy's candidacy is less a true challenge to Trump than an attempt to ingratiate himself with the MAGA base in order to have a better shot at a future when Trump is not on the ballot, the millionaire entrepreneur has markedly shifted this week, making remarks in which he described Trump as "wounded" and claimed he, Ramaswamy, is the man who is now best suited to lead the movement "to the next level."

Ramaswamy made his comments during an interview with both [NBC News](#) and *The Des Moines Register*. He asserted that Trump is not ideally suited to represent the GOP in the general election this time around because the many legal ordeals he faces will make it tough to cruise to victory.

"They don't have on me what they have on him," Ramaswamy said. "You can just look right now. They've got four different wars they've waged on this man," referring to the multiple indictments against Trump, as well as the actions by some Democrat-run states to keep Trump off the ballot on the grounds that the billionaire real estate-mogul, by encouraging supporters to protest at the U.S. Capitol Building on January 6, 2021, violated the 14th Amendment.

The third section of the 14th Amendment reads:

No person shall be a Senator or Representative in Congress, or elector of President and Vice-President, or hold any office, civil or military, under the United States, or under any State, who, having previously taken an oath, as a member of Congress, or as an officer of the United States, or as a member of any State legislature, or as an executive or judicial officer of any State, to support the Constitution of the United States, shall have engaged in insurrection or rebellion against the same, or given aid or comfort to the enemies thereof.



AP Images
Vivek Ramaswamy



Written by [Luis Miguel](#) on January 4, 2024

But Congress may by a vote of two-thirds of each House, remove such disability.

While Ramaswamy questioned Trump's ability to effectively run given the legal opposition, he nevertheless expressed sympathy for his fellow presidential contender.

"In many senses, I support Donald Trump and his legacy as U.S. president," said Ramaswamy. "I respect what his contributions are to this country. But when making the choice of who's going to lead our America First movement to the next level — that's a separate choice."

The 39-year old first-time candidate went on to say:

I have deep concerns as an American that this system is going to take him out of contention. If we open our eyes to reality, I think that there is an unstoppable force attempting to move what they view as an unmovable object.

I do think we're in the middle of a kind of cold cultural war in this country, between those of us who love the United States of America, and a fringe minority who hates this country and what we stand for. And when it comes to selecting a commander in chief, a general, to lead us to victory in that war, I think I'm best positioned to do it — with fresh legs, as a leader who is not yet wounded in that war.

Ramaswamy also reaffirmed his pledge to sit out of primary races in which Trump is taken off the ballot.

Nevertheless, Ramaswamy was not without his criticisms of Trump. He [disagreed](#) with Trump's emphasis on building a wall along the southern border, asserting that cartels will easily build tunnels underneath any wall, and said that greater focus should be placed on empowering ICE to carry out the laws already on the books and deport the illegal aliens in the country in mass numbers.

Ramaswamy also argued that Trump was deceived by the Deep State, which resulted in Trump's agenda being sabotaged while in office.

"I think it takes two things to actually get this right. One is an outsider who can break the system when necessary. I bring that, Trump brings that, too. But it also takes an outsider who knows and deeply understands the law and the Constitution of this country. I think in many ways, this managerial class in the swamp, they duped Donald Trump," Ramaswamy said, adding, "They duped Trump in a way that they won't be duping me."

Most polls put Ramaswamy's support in the single digits. For example, an [NBC News/Des Moines Register/Mediacom](#) poll from December found Ramaswamy's support to be five percent — well behind Donald Trump's 51 percent.

Is Ramaswamy's new, more-aggressive stance on Trump part of an effort to be taken more seriously as a true challenger to the 45th president? And if it is, will it work? Or will it merely serve to alienate the MAGA base he hopes to win over?



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