

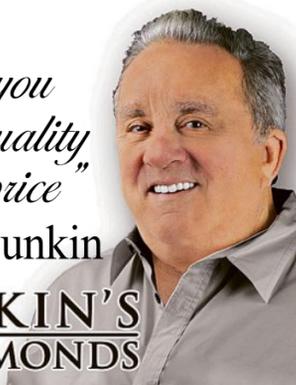


'Birth tourism' enters immigration debate

INSIDE, 5A

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-Stuart Dunkin



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From prison guard to drug smuggler

Doug Livingston

The Marshall Project | USA TODAY NETWORK

Corrections officer Barbara Devine grew nervous at the sight of the K-9 unit as she walked through security at Chillicothe Correctional Institution.

- The dog was sniffing everyone entering the prison that morning in late 2022. But Devine had a good reason to be worried: In her vagina was a condom-wrapped package with three ounces of meth and eight cell phone SIM cards.
- Corrections staff have recorded more than 56,000 drug confiscations in Ohio prisons since 2020, according to state data.
- The Marshall Project - Cleveland, Columbus Dispatch, Cincinnati Enquirer, Akron Beacon Journal and Canton Repository examined nearly 100 prison smuggling cases to understand how illegal drugs are entering secure facilities under constant surveillance.

See DEVINE, Page 5A

Barbara Devine, a former corrections officer, is serving a three-year sentence for smuggling drugs into a Chillicothe state prison in 2022. She said she told her story to shed light on how corrupt staff contribute to the epidemic of drugs in Ohio prisons. ANDREW DOLPH/AKRON BEACON JOURNAL

Fairfield County hosts No Kings protest

Jeff Barron

Lancaster Eagle-Gazette
USA TODAY NETWORK

LANCASTER - Those against President Trump and his policies once again took to the streets on March 28 in protest at the third No Kings event.

Protesters gathered downtown at Main and Broad streets from 10 a.m. to noon before concluding the event by marching down Main Street to Columbus Street and around the block in cold temperatures.

The crowd appeared to be mixed in age and there were no incidents observed. It also appeared that there were no counter-protesters.

Many of those opposing Trump carried signs and for most of the two hours, motorists driving by honked their horns in support of the protesters. Like other local No Kings protests, this one was loud and raucous.

See PROTEST, Page 4A



Protesters of President Donald Trump participated in a No Kings event on March 28, in Lancaster. JEFF BARRON/EAGLE-GAZETTE

Ramaswamy pitches rolling back property taxes

Jessie Balmert

State Bureau
USA TODAY NETWORK

Republican Vivek Ramaswamy, who is running to replace Gov. Mike DeWine, says he wants to roll back property taxes to where they were before the end of the COVID-19 pandemic but provided few details about how he would achieve that.

If elected, Ramaswamy aims to cut property taxes in his first two-year budget to "where they were before the end of the COVID pandemic" without eliminating them altogether. Ramaswamy rolled out the initial plan March 27, along with a new ad about tax relief.

Ramaswamy's campaign didn't specify the exact levels he'd aim for. The CO-

VID-19 pandemic officially ended in 2023, though DeWine rescinded the state's emergency declaration in mid-2021.

Ohio homeowners are feeling the pressure as local property taxes have skyrocketed from \$18.3 billion collected in 2020 to nearly \$24 billion in 2024.

According to Ramaswamy's tax relief proposal, his plan would allow local governments to continue to operate "but with greater discipline." When asked for details, Ramaswamy's campaign pointed to the number of local governments collecting taxes in Ohio.

"Taxpayers can't afford the path we're on, and most Ohioans believe our government can do better as a steward of their hard-earned tax dollars," spokesperson Evan Machan said. "For example, the

state of Ohio has 88 counties but over 2,000 taxing jurisdictions, and no one believes that is in the best interests of Ohioans."

Ramaswamy also blamed the "disastrous public school closures" for poor academic outcomes, even as Ohioans pay more in property taxes. DeWine gave the order to close schools in March 2020 to prevent the spread of COVID-19. At that time, Democratic gubernatorial candidate Dr. Amy Acton served as DeWine's state health director and COVID-19 czar.

"Ohio homeowners are paying more than ever in property taxes, and our kids aren't benefiting from it either. That's unacceptable," according to the Ramaswamy campaign's policy explainer. "Vivek is determined to fix it with a common-sense

plan that delivers real property tax relief while restoring excellence in education."

Ramaswamy doesn't want to eliminate all property taxes

Ramaswamy initially pledged to eliminate all income and property taxes during his campaign launch in February 2025. In the months since, he's instead promised to slash property taxes and eliminate the state's income tax, which brings in about \$10 billion in state tax dollars each year.

Last year, Ohioans' frustrations over rising property taxes prompted state lawmakers to make several sweeping

See RAMASWAMY, Page 4A

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