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Republican Gubernatorial and U.S. Senate Candidates Decline Ohio Debate Commission General Election Debates

Ohio Governor Mike DeWine and Republican candidate for Ohio’s open U.S. Senate, J.D. Vance, have declined to participate in the Ohio Debate Commission’s (ODC) general election debates.

The Ohio Debate Commission planned general election debates for the Governor’s office and U.S. Senate seat for October 10 and October 12, respectively, at the Akron-Summit County Public Library. The ODC provided a save the date to the candidates in mid-May 2022 and followed up with formal invitations on July 1. The deadline to RSVP was Tuesday, September 20, at 5:00 p.m.

Both Democratic party nominees, Nan Whaley for Governor and Tim Ryan for U.S. Senate, accepted the ODC’s debates.

“We’re obviously disappointed. We work hard with our partners and funders to convene debates that would serve campaigns, serve voters, and strengthen democracy. Yet this election year has been plagued with candidates from both parties who prize their campaign consultants’ input over voters’ information needs. When 84% of Ohioans are saying they want debates and campaigns refuse a good faith offer from a statewide organization, democracy is paying the price,” said ODC Board President Dan Moulthrop.

For this cycle, the ODC will not hold events with only one candidate, or so-called “empty chair” or “empty podium” debates.

Established in 2018, the Ohio Debate Commission’s mission is to foster fair and substantive debates that encourage participation in our democracy. It was modeled after similar efforts in Utah and Indiana, and has quickly become a model for the nation. As a collaboration of media outlets, civic organizations, and academic institutions across the state, the ODC conducts debates of the highest quality for statewide distribution. ODC hosted debates in the 2018 statewide election cycle, when then-Attorney General DeWine faced off against Democrat Richard Cordray for the open Governor’s seat.

About the Ohio Debate Commission: The ODC is a nonpartisan collaboration of civic organizations, media organizations, and universities working to create debates of the highest quality for the highest statewide offices and distributing that content to every corner of the state. The commission was founded in early 2018 and includes media entities in every market in Ohio. More information can be found at ohiodebatecommission.org.

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