



By: TA | AP Brief

JD Vance travels to Hungary to support Orbán in campaign finale



U.S. Vice President JD Vance is traveling to Hungary's capital Tuesday in a bid to turn the tide of an election campaign where long-serving Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, a close ally of President Donald Trump, is trailing in the polls.

Vance's two-day trip, where he is scheduled to hold an official visit with Orbán and later appear at one of his campaign rallies, was the clearest sign yet that the Trump administration was going all-in for an Orbán victory when Hungarians go to the polls on Sunday.

In power since 2010, Orbán is running for his fifth-straight term as prime minister.

He and his nationalist-populist Fidesz party are facing their **toughest race** in two decades against a center-right challenger, the Tisza party led by **Péter Magyar**, that could bring an end to Orbán's 16 years in power.

Long accused by critics of taking over Hungary's institutions, clamping down on **press freedom** and overseeing entrenched political corruption — charges he denies — Orbán has become an icon in the global **far-right movement**.

Trump has repeatedly endorsed Orbán's candidacy for reelection, and many in the Make America Great Again movement approve of the Hungarian leader's opposition to immigration, curtailing of LGBTQ+ rights, and capture of the media and academia.

But with most independent polls showing a **double-digit deficit** for Fidesz among decided voters ahead of the April 12 vote, Orbán has sought to boost his profile by appearing publicly with his international admirers.

The vice president's visit wasn't the first sign of U.S. support for Orbán.

Hungary, which has broken with most European Union countries by refusing to assist Ukraine with financial assistance or weapons to ward off Russia's full-scale invasion, has remained firmly committed to purchasing

Russian energy despite EU efforts to wean off such supplies.

An unusual step from a foreign leader

In November, Hungary received an exemption from U.S. sanctions on Russian oil and gas after a White House meeting between Orbán and Trump.

In February, U.S. Secretary of State **Marco Rubio** visited Budapest where he enthusiastically praised Orbán and the “person-to-person connection” he’d established with the president, telling Orbán: “President Trump is deeply committed to your success because your success is our success.”

Late last month, Orbán hosted dozens of allies from around Europe and beyond at the Hungarian iteration of the Conservative Political Action Conference, and at a meeting of the far-right Patriots for Europe party family, the third-largest group in the European Parliament.

Trump sent a video message to CPAC Hungary, saying Orbán had his “complete and total endorsement” and was a “fantastic guy.”

Vance's planned appearance at Orbán's election rally was an unusual step from a foreign leader

The Trump administration's embrace of Orbán reflects its affinity for European far-right parties broadly, and the admiration, from Spain to France to Germany and the Netherlands, has been mutual.

Still, Trump's recent approach to foreign affairs has reverberated in Europe, with his **actions** over Greenland, Venezuela and Iran straining those relationships.

Orbán, however, has remained deferential, and has echoed Trump's false claims that he won the 2020 election.

In comments to state radio just before Trump began his second term, Orbán said Democrats “took the presidency away from Donald Trump through fraud.”

Vance's planned appearance at Orbán's election rally was an unusual step from a foreign leader, and a break with the practice of most politicians who avoid actively taking part in the political campaigns of other countries.

Orbán himself has bristled at the slightest mention of the Hungarian election by other EU leaders, decrying any expressions of support for his opponent as a grave breach of Hungary's sovereignty and meddling in the election.