Armed Republican attacks Ohio Democratic candidate for governor

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7 September 2026

An armed man, a registered Republican whose brother is a party activist, tried to attack the Democratic candidate for Ohio governor, Dr. Amy Acton, as she made a public appearance Sunday in the Youngstown suburb of Canfield.

Acton was speaking to a group of supporters inside the Democratic Party tent at the Canfield Fair, an annual event that draws a wide local audience. Republican candidate Vivek Ramaswamy was also scheduled to make an appearance at the fair.

Patrick M. Havas, 38, was grabbed by Ohio State Highway Patrol officers as he sought to push his way through the crowd toward Acton. "Havas knocked multiple fairgoers over while trying to get towards Dr. Acton, and was found to be in possession of a taser and two pistols," state police said.

Havas was also equipped with brass knuckles, but he did not remove any of the weapons from his pockets or brandish them, and he was arrested and taken to Mahoning County Jail without incident. He was charged with disorderly conduct and two counts of assault, for knocking over an elderly man and woman as he charged toward Acton.

Acton was not injured and remained at the fair, reportedly assisting in providing medical treatment for the two people who were injured.

The state highway patrol and the Mahoning County Sheriff's Office were investigating the event further, seeking to determine what precipitated the apparent attack, including Havas's intentions and motives.

The attacker's brother, Andrew Havas, was the volunteer chair for the Senate campaign of Republican candidate Jon Husted in Franklin County, which includes Columbus and is the state's largest, with 1.4 million people. He resigned in July after a local NBC News affiliate discovered that he had pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor assault charge on a teenaged girl in 2009, when he was 22, but had not disclosed the conviction to the Husted campaign.

A registered lobbyist with the state government, Andrew Havas also donated more than $10,000 to the gubernatorial campaign of Republican Vivek Ramaswamy. After his guilty plea became public, the Democratic Party made an issue of the donations.

Dr. Acton directly criticized Ramaswamy for accepting the money. "Ohioans deserve leaders who exercise good judgment and who put integrity first," Acton wrote in July. "I find it appalling that Vivek Ramaswamy accepted over $10,000 from Andrew Havas."

Under other circumstances, such an exchange would represent the mudslinging which is typical of two-party capitalist politics in the United States. But in 2026, when President Trump denounces his political opponents as lunatics, communists and traitors, political tensions increasingly threaten to erupt in acts of violence.

The statements issued by both the Democratic and Republican campaigns in response to the abortive attack on Amy Acton made no reference to the social conditions or political climate in which the attack took place.

Addie Bullock, communications director for the Acton campaign, said in a statement that Acton and her husband Eric, "are grateful for the swift and decisive action of law enforcement and are praying for the recovery of those injured." She added, "This kind of violence has no place in Ohio."

Ramaswamy's campaign, in a statement the candidate posted on X, used virtually identical language, declaring, "What happened today is completely unacceptable and has no place in politics."

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The statement continued, “Candidates should be able to meet with voters without having to worry about threats or violence.”

In reality, violence plays an increasing role in American politics, driven by mounting social tensions and the direct provocation of violence by Trump and his fascist coterie.

A major factor in the deepening political crisis is the impact of deindustrialization and growing poverty in areas that were once the centers of steel, auto and tire production. Canfield, Ohio, is only a 20-minute drive from the shuttered General Motors assembly plant in Lordstown, Ohio, and the scrapped steel mills in downtown Youngstown. It is only 50 miles west of Butler, Pennsylvania, another ruined industrial town where Trump himself was the target of an assassination attempt during the 2024 presidential campaign.

Acton, a professor of public health at Ohio State University, was recruited by Republican Governor Michael DeWine to head the state health department. She became well-known in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, giving accurate briefings about the dangers, advocating people stay at home as much as possible and supporting school closures.

Though widely praised by health experts and scientists for her aggressive response to the pandemic, Acton resigned in June 2020 after becoming the target of vitriolic right-wing hostility, including demonstrations outside her home, and efforts by the Republican-controlled state legislature to limit and revoke her authority to issue health orders.

Acton and Ramaswamy have been effectively tied in the polls during the summer months. Acton was unopposed for the Democratic nomination and has raised more than $21.8 million for her campaign. Ramaswamy, a billionaire biotech investor who briefly ran for president in 2024 before backing Trump, has raised nearly $50 million. The contest is one of a handful of competitive governor’s races on the November 3 ballot.

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