



Ohio Sen. J.D. Vance speaks at the People's Convention, held by Turning Point Action, in Detroit June 16. (Wikimedia Commons/Gage Skidmore)



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A Catholic U.S. senator who is [considered to be a potential running mate](#) for former President Donald Trump this November is calling for the deportation of undocumented immigrants in the United States.

In a [campaign fundraising message](#) distributed to supporters on July 8, U.S. Sen. J.D. Vance, a Republican from Ohio, is quoted as saying that "hundreds of thousands of illegal aliens are entering our country and being sent to our neighborhoods, our cities, our schools, and our communities."

And echoing [Trump's vow to deport millions of undocumented migrants](#) if he is reelected to the White House, Vance is also quoted as saying, "We need to deport every single person who invaded our country illegally."

The Office of Homeland Security Statistics [estimates](#) there are between 11 million and 12 million immigrants living in the United States without legal authorization.

Vance's spokesman did not immediately return a message from National Catholic Reporter seeking comment.

In contrast to [Pope Francis' calls](#) for humane treatment of migrants and the [U.S. Catholic bishops' support](#) for comprehensive immigration reform that would include a pathway to citizenship for those in the country without documents, Vance — who converted to Catholicism as an adult — has staked out a hardline position on immigration that mirrors Trump's campaign rhetoric about deporting migrants and building a border wall to keep them out.

"Joe Biden's open border is killing Ohioans with more illegal drugs and more Democrat voters pouring into this country," Vance said in a 2022 campaign ad when [he was running for the U.S. Senate against former U.S. Rep. Tim Ryan](#), a Democrat.

Lisa Schare Johnson, a Cincinnati resident who helped to lead a Catholics for Ryan group in 2022, told NCR that she found Vance, a former vocal critic of Trump before he entered politics, to be a "Faustian character."

"His groveling at the feet of Trump is disturbing," Johnson said. "He will say anything to be a VP pick. He clearly has forgotten about the Gospel. It's a gross display and counter to the teachings of Christ."

Since [defeating Ryan in that 2022 midterm election](#), Vance has seized upon immigration as an issue to hammer the current president. In March, Vance told Fox News that all the jobs created during the Biden administration have gone to foreign-born workers, whom he blamed for "decimating" the American middle class.

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"If you go back to the Trump economy, you had American jobs going to American workers. You had wages rising. Under the Biden economy, you have those American workers getting fired and replaced with foreign labor," Vance [told](#) Fox News opinion host Jesse Watters on March 14.

PolitiFact [rated Vance's claim](#) as "mostly false," noting that federal employment data does not distinguish between recent migrants and those who have been residing in the United States for decades.

Regardless of the fact-checkers, Vance's rhetoric on illegal immigration has helped boost him onto Trump's shortlist for vice presidents, a list that is said to [also include](#) Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum and Florida Rep. Byron Donalds.

A celebrity before he entered politics, Vance — whose bestselling memoir [Hillbilly Elegy](#) was adapted into a [Netflix movie](#) in 2020 — has since aligned himself with far-right political actors such as Georgia Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene and Steve Bannon, the political activist and podcast host who [is now serving a four-month prison sentence](#) for defying a congressional subpoena.

In 2022, Vance delivered a keynote speech during a [national conservatism conference](#) at Franciscan University of Steubenville, the conservative Catholic college in east Ohio. During the two-day conference, several "post-liberal" speakers and Catholic integralists described their hopes for a United States governed by a right-wing regime that would use political power to rein in globalization, restore traditional Christian morality and bolster social conservatism while cracking down on "woke" progressives.

This story appears in the [Reporter's Inbox](#) and [Election 2024](#) feature series.