

Elon Musk fails to launch Ron DeSantis in disastrous Twitter Space

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis announced his 2024 presidential campaign to screeching audio feedback and technical difficulties in a Twitter Space with Elon Musk on Wednesday.

DeSantis eventually did launch his campaign, but the event was mired with problems from the very beginning – and DeSantis didn't manage to use the initial Space hosted by Musk. When moderator David Sacks, a venture capitalist and former PayPal product lead, first unmuted himself to start the talk, the Space was filled with loud, echoing feedback sounds before quickly going silent. The accounts of DeSantis and Sacks popped in and out of the initial room, muting and unmuting themselves before leaving entirely.

As of publication, it's not entirely clear what went wrong, but Musk (one of the only people to actually speak in the first Space) chalked the problems up to overloaded servers. More than 600,000 users were tuned in a few minutes before the Musk-hosted room ended. For comparison, more than 12 million people showed up to Travis Scott's *Fortnite* concert in 2020.

"Man, I think we melted the internet there," Sacks said in a separate Space he created with his account after the first one shuttered. "I think it crashed because when you multiply a half million people in a room by an account with over 100 million followers, which is Elon's account, I think that creates just a scalability level that was unprecedented. But with my meager followership it seems to be working much better." After the event, Sacks claimed on Twitter that the

event was “by far the biggest room ever held on social media.”

DeSantis read his speech launching his campaign in the Sacks-hosted room around 25 minutes after the event was originally scheduled to begin. “I had to switch over to David hosting it because my account was breaking the system,” Musk said.

The DeSantis campaign did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Since taking over Twitter last year, Musk has amassed tremendous support and admiration from Republicans who have long accused social media platforms of unjustly censoring conservative speech. Musk has repeatedly played into this grief by rallying behind various right-wing talking points and offering up troves of internal Twitter documents as evidence that the company’s previous leaders were bias against conservatives. Former Fox News host Tucker Carlson and *The Daily Wire* have chosen to move their shows over to Twitter in recent weeks, after Carlson was fired from Fox News.

Asked about censorship Wednesday, DeSantis said he would soon be signing a “digital bill of rights” that would ban state and government officials from “colluding” with social media companies.

Musk’s popularity with the GOP could serve as a boon to DeSantis whose poll numbers amongst Republican primary voters have fallen over the last few weeks. A recent *Morning Consult* survey showed Trump overtaking DeSantis amongst GOP primary voters by 38 percent.

Both DeSantis and Musk have painted people with progressive positions on issues like LGBTQ+ rights as members of an existential “woke mob” intent on corrupting conservative tradition. Despite suggesting that he would back DeSantis if he were to run for president late last year, Musk said that he was not “at this time planning to endorse any particular candidate” during an interview at a *Wall Street Journal*

conference on Tuesday.

“I think it’s quite groundbreaking that there be a major announcement of this type on social media,” Musk said Tuesday.

The DeSantis campaign formally filed for the 2024 presidential race Wednesday afternoon, teeing up an increasingly crowded GOP primary election currently led by former President Donald Trump.

“Elon Musk has already turned Twitter into a hellscape of hate and conspiracy. But his full-throated embrace of Ron DeSantis – only weeks after Tucker Carlson announced he would revive his Fox News show on Twitter – is a new low for what was once one of the world’s most important communication platforms,” said Nicole Gill, co-founder and executive director for Accountable Tech, in a statement Wednesday.

Update May 24th, 8:07PM ET: Added tweet from David Sacks.

<https://www.theverge.com/2023/5/24/23736271/ron-desantis-presidential-bid-twitter-spaces-elon-musk-announcement>