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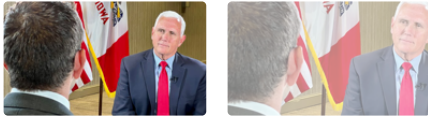


Exclusive: Mike Pence says he would ban transgender troops again

Mike Pence addressed numerous topics, including trans rights, Trump, the war in Ukraine and the current field in the race for president.

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By: Andrew Rafferty, Scripps News Staff

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In a wide-ranging interview with Scripps News, former Vice President Mike Pence covered topics from his views on transgender rights to U.S. foreign affairs – and what he describes as Trump’s changing views on policy.

A ban on transgender troops

In a major revelation, Pence said that he doesn't support allowing transgender soldiers in the U.S. military. President Joe Biden lifted the ban when he took office, which had been in place during the Trump administration.

"I just believe that the introduction of transgender soldiers in the military has not contributed to our readiness and ultimately is a distraction," Pence told Scripps News Political Director Andrew Rafferty during a conversation in Des Moines, Iowa.

Pence argued that focusing on “unit cohesion” was his goal in supporting a ban. The former vice president said that if he decides to run for president he would campaign on reinstituting the controversial Trump-era policy aimed at preventing transgender soldiers from serving in the U.S. military.

Gender-affirming care for transgender youth

The former vice president [referred to the trans rights](#) movement as a "radical gender ideology."

Pence said he supports legislation that would prevent gender-affirming medical care for minors, including hormone blockers and surgery.

He said he also doesn't believe there are more than two genders, insisting there is only male and female.

The American Academy of Pediatric Medicine said in a 2021 amicus brief supporting the ACLU in legal fights in multiple states, "It is critically important for every child to have access to quality, comprehensive and evidence-based care — transgender and gender-diverse youth are no exception."

The AAPM said, "Evidence shows that young people suffering from gender dysphoria who receive gender-affirming standard of care experience improvements in their overall well-being, to the point that their level of well-being is generally consistent with that of their non-transgender peers."

[SEE MORE: Full transcript: Fmr. VP Mike Pence's interview with Scripps News](#)

Gov. Ron DeSantis' rise in politics

Pence weighed in on the 2024 presidential race, including Ron DeSantis' decision to throw his hat into the ring.

Pence said he values people sharing different ideas and he also said he backs DeSantis in his legal battles with Disney in Florida, saying he likes "Walt Disney, not Woke Disney."

The former vice president appeared to disagree somewhat with DeSantis' aggressive stance toward Disney, saying he doesn't believe it is the role of government to go after corporations that have differences with political

leaders.

As for Pence's political future, the former vice president said he's been listening to people over the last year, but he's not ready to make an announcement just yet on a possible 2024 presidential bid.

Pence weighs in on Donald Trump

Pence believes former President Donald Trump was wrong when he didn't abide by a peaceful transfer of power when leaving the White House.

Pence was in the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6 presiding over the process to certify Electoral College votes when Trump supporters began a riot on Capitol Hill. Some of the rioters were heard shouting, "Hang Mike Pence."

He said he continues to take issue with what he calls Trump's "shifting positions on foreign policy." Former President Trump has wavered on his support for Ukraine, refusing to directly call Russian President Vladimir Putin a war criminal.

Despite his criticism of the president's actions on January 6, 2021, Pence said he's proud of the Trump administration's record.

The debt ceiling

The U.S. is just days away from potentially defaulting on its loans. As the potential crisis nears, Pence praised Speaker Kevin McCarthy for what he referred to as "a down payment on fiscal responsibility." Pence added that he supports McCarthy's decision to take Social Security and Medicare cuts off the table.

The U.S. is part of a handful of countries around the globe that set a self-

imposed political and economic debt limit, according to the Atlantic Council.

Economists have warned of severe consequences if the U.S. defaults and cannot come to an agreement on where the debt ceiling will rest this time.

While there have been efforts to abolish the debt limit since it was enacted, those fights have not materialized. The U.S. Treasury says that since 1960, Congress has acted at least 78 different times to permanently raise or “temporarily extend” the debt limit.

U.S. foreign policy on Ukraine

Pence called Russia’s invasion of Ukraine “unconscionable and unprovoked” and said that to fail to support Ukraine in its fight against Russia would be a failure of leadership.

“I think it's incumbent on the United States of America to continue to lead a coalition of the West to provide Ukraine with the resources that they need to repel the Russian invasion,” Pence said.

Pence claimed that Russia did not attempt to redraw international borders by force when he and Trump were in office.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has said the collapse of the Soviet Union was the “greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century.”

And some scholars believe the Trump administration would not have been able to stop an invasion of Ukraine by Russia.

Pence said he believes “Vladimir Putin is not stopping at

Ukraine if he over runs that country, and it would not take long for him to

reach the border of a country we would have an obligation under NATO to send our military in to contend with.”

Pence said he believes the U.S. and allies should provide Ukraine’s military with resources to “repel and defeat the Russian invasion,” and said we would have an obligation under NATO to send U.S. troops in if necessary.

SEE MORE: [Donald Trump gets March 2024 court date in hush money case](#)

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