Governor

Gov. Wes Moore is seeking a second term; Dan Cox was the 2022 Republican nominee. Rated Solid Democratic by Cook Political Report (Oct. 2026).



Dan Cox

REPUBLICAN · CHALLENGER

Attorney and former Maryland state delegate (2019–2023); 2022 Republican nominee for governor.



Wes Moore

DEMOCRAT · INCUMBENT

Governor of Maryland since 2023; former Army officer and Robin Hood Foundation CEO.

Where the candidates stand on the issues Pope Leo XIV has raised, in their own words and votes. Bracketed numbers link to sources. We do not rate, score, or endorse candidates.

WAR & PEACE

POPE LEO XIV *Leo invited citizens of every country involved in the war with Iran to contact their leaders and members of Congress "to work for peace and to reject war and violence."* Remarks at Castel Gandolfo, Apr. 7, 2026 (Vatican News via The Good Newsroom)

DAN COX

His 2024 congressional platform backed President Reagan's and President Trump's "Peace through Strength" approach.

[1] Ballotpedia: Dan Cox

WES MOORE

No public position found.

AI & THE DIGNITY OF WORK

POPE LEO XIV *"No one can be reduced to productivity, to cognitive performance, or to mere data."* Magnifica Humanitas presentation, May 25, 2026

DAN COX

Calls for a statewide moratorium on data centers, saying "the facilities are different today than they were several years ago."

[1] WJLA: Cox, Moore spar in governor's debate (Oct. 2026)

WES MOORE

Says AI data centers "have got to pay their own way or they need to go away" and set rules for them by executive order; endorsed by UFCW Local 27 and other unions.

[1] Moore campaign: data centers TV ad
[2] WJLA: Cox, Moore spar in governor's debate (Oct. 2026)
[3] Moore campaign: UFCW Local 27 endorsement

THE POOR & THE SAFETY NET

POPE LEO XIV *The preferential choice for the poor is "a source of extraordinary renewal both for the Church and for society."* Dilexi Te, Oct. 4, 2025

DAN COX

Calls for steps to cut fraud in Medicaid and SNAP (Oct. 2026).

[1] OnTheIssues: Dan Cox

WES MOORE

Has set a goal of ending childhood poverty; his 2022 platform pledged a $15 minimum wage and a year of postpartum Medicaid coverage.

[1] The Banner: Maryland governor debate, what to know
[2] Ballotpedia: Wes Moore

ELECTIONS & CIVIC LIFE

POPE LEO XIV *Authentic democracy, "far from being a mere procedure," "recognizes the dignity of every person and calls each citizen to participate responsibly in the pursuit of the common good."* Message to the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, Apr. 9, 2026

DAN COX

Disputed the 2020 presidential results and helped arrange buses to the Jan. 6, 2021, rally, saying he left before the Capitol was stormed; in 2026 said he regretted calling Mike Pence a traitor.

[1] FOX 5 DC: Maryland governor candidates forum (Oct. 2022)
[2] The Banner: Maryland governor debate, what to know
[3] WJLA: Cox, Moore spar in governor's debate (Oct. 2026)

WES MOORE

Said in 2022, "I honor and respect the results of the 2020 election"; in 2026 backed redrawing Maryland's congressional map in response to other states' mid-decade redistricting.

[1] FOX 5 DC: Maryland governor candidates forum (Oct. 2022)
[2] WTOP: Cox bites back at Moore on redistricting

LIFE OF THE UNBORN

POPE LEO XIV *Abortion "cuts short a growing life and refuses to welcome the gift of life."* Address to the Diplomatic Corps, Jan. 9, 2026

DAN COX

Said in 2022, "I am pro-life, and I always will be pro-life," and pledged to "defend unborn life."

[1] FOX 5 DC: Maryland governor candidates forum (Oct. 2022)
[2] The Banner: Moore and Cox debate (Oct. 2022)

WES MOORE

Said in 2022, "I believe that abortion is healthcare," and pledged to enshrine abortion rights in the Maryland Constitution.

[1] FOX 5 DC: Maryland governor candidates forum (Oct. 2022)
[2] Ballotpedia: Wes Moore

THE DEATH PENALTY

POPE LEO XIV *Someone who opposes abortion but favors the death penalty "is not really pro-life."* AP via PBS NewsHour, Sept. 30, 2025

DAN COX

No public position found.

WES MOORE

No public position found.

IMMIGRANTS & REFUGEES

POPE LEO XIV *"Defending human life also includes welcoming, protecting and assisting immigrants."* Letter on the 250th Anniversary of the United States, June 25, 2026

DAN COX

Calls the state-federal partnership with ICE crucial (Oct. 2026); his 2024 congressional platform backed restoring "Remain in Mexico" and ending catch-and-release.

[1] OnTheIssues: Dan Cox
[2] Ballotpedia: Dan Cox

WES MOORE

No public position found.

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY & EDUCATION

POPE LEO XIV *Religious freedom is "the right of every person to worship according to conscience."* Letter on the 250th Anniversary of the United States, June 25, 2026

DAN COX

In 2022 pledged to expand Maryland's BOOST private-school scholarship program and school choice.

[1] FOX 5 DC: Maryland governor candidates forum (Oct. 2022)

WES MOORE

No public position found.

CARE FOR CREATION

POPE LEO XIV *"We cannot love God, whom we cannot see, while despising his creatures."* AP, Oct. 1, 2025

DAN COX

Cites "the highest electric bills in the nation" as a top concern; his 2024 platform called for unleashing "domestic energy resources."

[1] WTOP: Cox bites back at Moore on redistricting
[2] Ballotpedia: Dan Cox

WES MOORE

Says he is lowering energy costs while investing in "a cleaner, more reliable energy future"; his 2022 platform pledged 100% clean energy by 2035.

[1] Moore campaign: Accomplishments
[2] Ballotpedia: Wes Moore

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