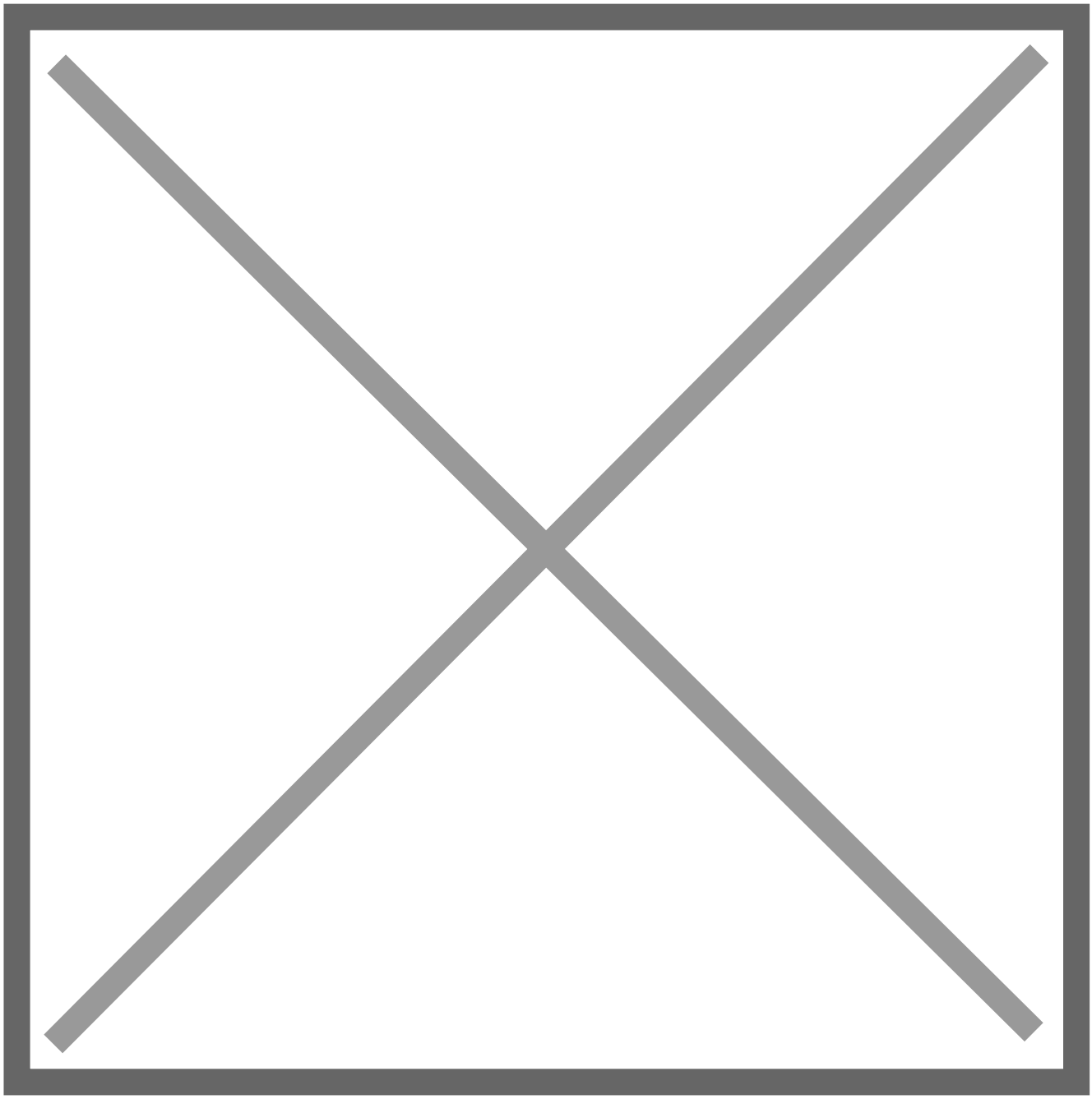
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An American flag is displayed as Pope Leo XIV, the first U.S.-born pontiff, arrives to celebrate his inauguration Mass at the Vatican May 18, 2025. He is the first American pope in history. (OSV News/Reuters/Andy Abeyta)

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Washington — November 10, 2026
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Ahead of the Nov. 3 midterm elections, a bipartisan group of more than 90 U.S. lawmakers urged House Speaker Mike Johnson to invite Pope Leo XIV to address Congress, saying the U.S.-born pope's "unique perspective" and "ties to our country" would be "a unifying force" for officials.

On Oct. 30, Catholic lawmakers, Rep. Mike Thompson, D-Calif., and Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick, R-Pa., spearheaded a letter signed by 91 members of Congress, asking Johnson and House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries to formally invite the Chicago-born pope to speak at a joint session of the legislative body in January, when it convenes for its 120th session.

"As the first ever American-born Pope, his unique perspective, and ties to our country, would serve as a unifying force for members of Congress," said the lawmakers in their letter. "Following a divisive election, Pope Leo's unifying message of service, compassion for fellow mankind, and the importance of human dignity would be especially timely."

The letter attracted media attention following the tumultuous election, which saw Democrats regain robust control of both the House and the Senate.

If Leo does end up addressing Congress, it may possibly not include either of the lawmakers who led the charge to invite him. Fitzpatrick lost his seat in the election and, as of press time, Thompson is projected to lose his closely contested district

race against another Democrat.

Johnson reportedly plans to step aside as House Speaker, with several media outlets citing his recent private call with staff. Jeffries has meanwhile announced his candidacy for House Speaker.

Despite the historic flux in the midterms, at least one lawmaker has continued to express support for the Leo initiative, with Rep. Wesley Bell, D-Mo., posting on X Nov. 6 that he had signed the letter.

In their request, the lawmakers said that Leo's proposed "visit would offer a much-needed outlook as we navigate complex foreign and domestic issues."

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They pointed to Pope Francis' 2015 address to Congress — which marked the first time a pope had addressed a joint session of the legislative body — and cited its "undeniable historical significance and cultural impact."

In its Oct. 30 press release accompanying the letter, Thompson's office quoted Jesuit Fr. Chris Kellerman, justice and ecology secretary for the Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States, who described Leo as "arguably the strongest moral voice in our world for the promotion of human dignity, peace and the common good."

"A joint address to Congress from the Holy Father would not only offer a precious opportunity to hear his wisdom but could also serve as a joyous celebration of the United States and its tradition of religious freedom," said Kellerman.

Laurie Carafone, executive director of the Catholic advocacy group Network, said in the press release that the lobbying group's members "enthusiastically support this important bipartisan effort."

"Pope Leo's urgent and universal call for peace, for greater love, and for solidarity that recognizes and champions the dignity of every person, no exceptions, is urgently needed," Carafone said. "Our prayer is that his visit inspires lawmakers, Catholics, and all people of good will to work together to create laws that protect our shared humanity and the common good."