Party leadership in the 118th Congress

A look at party leadership in the 118th Congress, including an overview of House Republicans’ struggles with the speakership position

October 30, 2023
Roadmap

- Congressional structure
- Speaker of the House changes
- Current congressional leaders
Legislative hierarchy and organization

- House of Representatives
  - Speaker of the House
    - Majority leader
    - Majority whip
    - Committee chairs
      - 435 Representatives
    - Ranking members
    - Minority leader
    - Minority whip

- Senate
  - Vice President of the United States
    - President Pro Tempore
    - Majority leader
    - Majority whip
    - Committee chairs
      - 100 Senators
    - Minority leader
    - Minority whip
    - Ranking members
## Party leadership elections overview

Each party uses the same method to decide who presides over each chamber, majority/minority leaders in each chamber, and whips in each chamber.

### House of Representatives

**Speaker of the House**
- The Speaker of the House is determined by a chamber-wide secret ballot vote.
- The Speaker serves as the de facto leader of the House and is second in line to succeed the President after the Vice President.

**Majority/minority leader**
- The majority/minority leaders are elected by each party’s caucus in a secret ballot.
- The House majority leader is distinct from the Speaker; the former is not in the presidential line of succession and deals with more quotidian operations management.

**Majority/minority whip**
- Party whips are elected by each party’s caucus in a secret ballot.
- Whips are responsible for ensuring that congresspeople vote along party lines.

### Senate

**President Pro Tempore**
- In lieu of the VP, the Senate elects a President Pro Tempore (usually the most senior member) to preside over the chamber.
- The President Pro Tempore is third in the line of presidential succession after the Speaker of the House.

**Majority/minority leader**
- The Senate majority leader holds a role analogous to the Speaker of the House, while the minority leader holds a role similar to the House minority leader.
- Leaders are elected by a majority vote of all members in their party.

**Majority/minority whip**
- As in the House, the Senate whips are responsible for ensuring party members toe the party line.
- Whips are elected by a majority vote of all members in their party.
Roadmap

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Kevin McCarthy was ousted as speaker by the rule he offered as a concession to earn the position

In January 2023, Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R-CA-20) prevailed after 14 failed votes, allowing the 118th Congress to commence.

**Why the process was lengthy**

20 members of the House Freedom Caucus, the GOP’s furthest-right caucus, had refused to vote for McCarthy unless he conceded to their demands; McCarthy failed 14 consecutive ballots before winning the support necessary to assume the Speaker role.

**House Freedom Caucus demands**

- Reinstitute the “Motion to vacate” rule, allowing any member to bring forward an immediate motion to remove the Speaker.
- Simplify bills and enforce a deadline by which to have final text ready to read before a vote.
- Eliminate party leadership involvement in GOP primaries.
- Increase conservative representation on committees, especially the Rules Committee.
- Institute an actionable plan to cut government spending.
- Use must-pass legislation like the NDAA to battle Biden’s legislative agenda.
- Form a “Church Commission”-style committee to target “weaponized” government.

**What roadblocks this caused**

1. The House could not be sworn in on time.
3. Committee assignments could not officially begin.
4. Other party leaders including majority/minority leaders, whips, conference chairs, etc. could not officially begin their roles.
Overview of McCarthy’s concessions in the House rules package

The House adopted a final set of rules the evening of January 9

Concessions status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>House Freedom Caucus demand:</th>
<th>Adopted?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Motion to vacate</td>
<td>YES</td>
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<tr>
<td>Simplify bills and enforce text-ready deadline</td>
<td>YES</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eliminate party leadership involvement in GOP primaries*</td>
<td>PARTIAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase conservative representation on committees*</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cut government spending:
- Reinstitute “Holman rule”
- Cut spending before raising debt ceiling
- Eliminate omnibus spending

Target Biden’s legislative agenda

Investigate “weaponized” federal government

Key concessions overview

1. Reinsituting the motion to vacate
   - New rules allow any one member to bring forward a motion to remove the Speaker from their role at any time
   - McCarthy had previously floated an amended version of the rule allowing any five members to bring forward such a motion to no avail

2. Investigating “weaponized” government
   - New rules establish a “Select Subcommittee on Weaponization of the Federal Government” under the Judiciary Committee
   - Committee objectives will be investigating the work of the Jan. 6 Committee, the withdrawal from Afghanistan, and the work of the FBI

3. Cutting government spending
   - New rules reinstate the “Holman rule,” which can be used to reduce the salary of federal officials
   - Spending cuts must accompany efforts to raise the debt ceiling

*Not specifically in rules package; agreed to on other terms
°One McCarthy-aligned super PAC agreed to stay out of open Republican seats in safe districts
Rep. Kevin McCarthy became the first House speaker in history to be voted out of the role

Rep. Matt Gaetz followed through with plans to bring forth a motion to vacate after House Speaker McCarthy worked with Democrats to pass a 45-day “clean” continuing resolution

“I think we need to rip off the Band-Aid. I think we need to move on with new leadership that can be trustworthy… Look, the one thing everybody has in common is that nobody trusts Kevin McCarthy.”
- Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-FL-1)

118TH CONGRESS MOTION TO VACATE TIMELINE

**Introduction**
Rep. Matt Gaetz introduced a “motion to vacate” on Monday, Oct. 2

**Roadblocks**
The motion to vacate could be blocked by other House motions such as a motion to table; the House defeated a resolution to table McCarthy’s motion to vacate in a 208-218 vote on Oct. 3

**Vote preparation**
A vote on the motion needed to occur by Oct. 4; voting occurred shortly after the resolution to table the motion to vacate on Oct. 3

**Final House vote**
In the evening of Tuesday, Oct. 3, McCarthy was officially ousted from the Speaker role in a 216-210 vote

INSIDE THE VOTE

- While McCarthy received support from many GOP representatives, he ultimately lost his job due to the eight Republicans who joined 208 Democrats in voting against him; three Republicans and four Democrats abstained from voting
- Of the eight Republicans who voted to oust McCarthy, six are members of the House Freedom Caucus who complicated McCarthy’s vote to be Speaker in January

Rep. Mike Johnson becomes the Speaker of the House after three other candidates failed

OVERVIEW

- Rep. Mike Johnson secured the House Speaker nomination with 128 votes cast via secret ballot; his nomination came in the same day Rep. Emmer won but dropped mere hours later due to right-wing GOP backlash
- A separate vote after his nomination saw no GOP “nay” votes against him; two representatives voted “present” while 20 were absent

VOTE RESULTS

- Unlike Rep. Emmer, Rep. Johnson has been a consistently staunch advocate of former President Donald; Trump posted to Truth Social that his “strong suggestion” is to make Johnson the Speaker
- Rep. Johnson received 220 votes to become House Speaker on October 25; Former House Speaker Rep. McCarthy along with former nominee Reps. Scalise, Emmer, and Jordan all voted for Johnson’s speakership along with every other member of the House Republican Party apart from one absence

“\textit{This House Republican majority is united...We’re going to serve the people of this country. We’re going to restore their faith in Congress, this institution of government.}”

Rep. Johnson (R-LA-4) to reporters after being nominated to be the Speaker of the House

PRESENTATION CENTER 10/25/23
Roadmap

• Congressional structure
• Speaker of the House changes
• Current congressional leaders
# House Republican leadership

## Mike Johnson (LA-4)
*Speaker of the House*
- Represents the Republican Party on the House floor
- Elected after 15 ballots; conceded to certain demands of the House Freedom Caucus to win support

## Steve Scalise (LA-01)
*Majority Leader*
- Elected as House majority leader
- Assists Republican leadership in managing the party’s legislative program

## Elise Stefanik (NY-21)
*Republican Conference Chair*
- Reelected as Republican Conference Chair
- Leads organization efforts of all Republican Party members in the House

## Tom Emmer (MN-06)
*House Majority Whip*
- Elected as House majority whip (last Republican whip was Steve Scalise (R-LA-01))
- Leads Republican Conference on policy development

## Gary Palmer (LA-04)
*Republican Policy Committee Chair*
- Re-elected as Republican Policy Committee Chair
- Heads conference forum for policy development

## Richard Hudson (NC-09)
*National Republican Congressional Comm. Chair*
- Previously held by Tom Emmer (R-MN-06)
- Organizes and manages Republican House campaign efforts
Senate Republican leadership

Mitch McConnell (KY)
*Republican Leader*
- Re-elected as Senate Minority Leader
- Head representative of the Republican Party on the Senate floor

John Thune (SD)
*Republican Whip*
- Previously served as Senate Majority Whip
- Assistant leader, responsible for counting and securing party votes

John Barrasso (WY)
*Republican Conference Chair*
- Reelected as Republican Conference Chair
- Responsible for intraparty committee assignments and leadership elections

Joni Ernst (IA)
*Republican Policy Committee Chair*
- Previously Vice Conference Chair
- Responsible for Senate Republican policy development

Shelley Moore Capito (WV)
*Vice Chair of the Senate Republican Conference*
- Previously held by Joni Ernst (R-IA)
- Responsible for taking minutes of the party conferences

Steve Daines (MT)
*National Republican Senatorial Committee Chair*
- Previously held by Rick Scott (R-FL)
- Responsible for strengthening the Republican conference through recruiting and fundraising
House Democratic leadership

Hakeem Jeffries (NY-08)
*Minority Leader*
- Won bid to become the House’s top Democrat
- Position in party previously held by Nancy Pelosi

Katherine Clark (MA-05)
*Minority Whip*
- Newly elected as House minority whip
- Position previously held by James Clyburn

Pete Aguilar (CA-31)
*Democratic Caucus Chair*
- Newly elected as Democratic caucus chair
- Position previously held by Steny Hoyer

James Clyburn (SC-06)
*Assistant Caucus Leader*
- Elected after challenger David Cicilline withdrew
- Opted to stay in House Democratic leadership, previously House majority whip

Ted Lieu (CA-33)
*Democratic Conference Vice-Chair*
- Elected as vice-chairman
- Previously served as a co-chair on the Democratic Policy and Communications Committee

Joe Neguse (CO-02)
*Chair, Dem Policy & Communications Committee*
- Elected as sole chair of the DPCC
- Previously served as co-chair along with Ted Lieu, Debbie Dingell, and Matt Cartwright


*Presentation Center* 10/30/23
Senate Democratic leadership (1/2)

Patty Murray (WA)
*President Pro Tempore*
- Previously held by Sen. Leahy (VT)
- Nominally the President of the Senate, but holds far less power over the Democratic caucus than the majority leader

Chuck Schumer (NY)
*Senate Majority Leader*
- Current Senate Majority Leader
- Head representative of the Democratic party on the Senate floor

Dick Durbin (IL)
*Democratic Majority Whip*
- Current Senate Majority Whip
- Assistant leader, responsible for counting and securing party votes

Debbie Stabenow (MI)
*Chair, Dem. Policy & Communications Committee*
- Current Vice-Chair of the House Democratic Caucus
- Responsible for leading policy development for Senate Democrats

Elizabeth Warren (MA)
*Vice Chair of Conference (Co-vice Chair)*
- Current Vice Chair of Conference
- Assists Democratic leader in setting the Democratic agenda, messaging, and strategy

Mark Warner (VA)
*Vice Chair of Conference (Co-vice Chair)*
- Current Vice Chair of Conference
- Assists Democratic leader in setting the Democratic agenda, messaging, and strategy
Senate Democratic leadership (2/2)

Amy Klobuchar (MN)
Chair of Steering Committee
- Current Chair of the Steering Committee
- Responsible for coordinating efforts between Democrats, advocacy groups and government agencies

Bernie Sanders (VT)
Chair of Outreach
- Current Chair of Outreach
- Leads efforts to engage Americans who feel disconnected from the political process

Joe Manchin (WV)
Co-VC, Policy & Communications Committee
- Current Vice Chair of Policy and Communications Committee
- Assists Chair in leading policy development for Senate Democrats

Cory Booker (NJ)
Co-VC, Policy & Communications Committee
- Reelected as Vice Chair along with Joe Manchin

Tammy Baldwin (WI)
Secretary of Conference
- Current Secretary of Conference
- Responsible for intraparty committee assignments and leadership elections

Gary Peters (MI)
Chair, Dem. Senatorial Campaign Committee
- Reelected as sole Chair
- Responsible for coordinating Senate strategy to elect more Democrats
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