

In Historic Vote, House Votes to Remove McCarthy as Speaker

October 3, 2023 **by Dan McCue**



Speaker of the House Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., talks to reporters after a closed-door meeting with Rep. Matt Gaetz, R-Fla., and other House Republicans after Gaetz filed a motion to oust McCarthy from his leadership role, at the Capitol in Washington, Tuesday, Oct. 3, 2023. (AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite)

WASHINGTON — For the first time in its history, members of the House of Representatives voted to remove a speaker of the House, ousting Rep. Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., from the seat after just 269 days in the office.

In the end, after an hour of debate, the vote was 216–210, with eight Republicans joining all their Democratic colleagues in voting in favor of the measure.

The motion to vacate the seat was made by Rep. Matt Gaetz, R-Fla., who has been a nemesis of McCarthy's throughout the latter's tenure as speaker and even beforehand.

It was Gaetz, along with several members of the ultra conservative House Freedom Caucus, who forced the 15 ballots to elect McCarthy speaker in the first place.

Gaetz filed the motion Monday night after McCarthy advanced a resolution on Saturday to fund the government for the next 45 days.

After weeks of stalemate over the measure within his own conference, McCarthy ultimately had to rely on Democratic votes for passage, and Gaetz has claimed that the speaker made a deal with President Joe Biden to also bring forward a measure for further assistance to Ukraine.

“Clearly someone has been lied to,” Gaetz told reporters.

For his part, McCarthy started Tuesday predicting that he would survive.

“If I counted how many times someone wanted to knock me out, I would have been gone a long time ago,” McCarthy told reporters after a meeting with the House Republican conference Tuesday morning.

“I think Matt has planned this for a long time. It didn’t matter what transpired,” he said in answer to a reporter’s question.

McCarthy also said he had not made a deal with Democrats to save his speakership.

Earlier this afternoon, House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, D-N.Y., issued a lengthy **statement** in which he encouraged his Republican colleagues “to break from the extremists, to end the chaos, end the dysfunction.”

“We are ready, willing and able to work with our Republican colleagues. But it is on them to join us to move the Congress and

the country forward,” Jeffries said.

On Tuesday evening, the Minority Leader released a second statement in which he said, “This is a solemn moment for the country and for the House of Representatives.

“The Constitution gifted us a government of the people, by the people and for the people,” Jeffries said. “House Democrats will continue to put people over politics and work together in a bipartisan way to make life better for everyday Americans. It is our hope that traditional Republicans will walk away from MAGA extremism and join us in partnership for the good of the country.”

Immediately after the vote, Rep. Derek Kilmer, D-Wash., released a statement in which he said, “I spent four years chairing a committee to strengthen the U.S. House as an institution because I care passionately about a Congress that can solve problems for the American people.

“Unfortunately, Speaker McCarthy has repeatedly chosen to weaken the institution by bending to extremists rather than collaborating across the aisle. He has inherited the chaos he has sown,” he said.

“The process of choosing a new speaker will be messy, but I hope the Republican majority will embrace a smarter path forward and a more functional House,” Kilmer said.

Rep. Suzan DelBene, D-Wash., also commented after the vote, saying, “House Republicans have proven once again that they cannot govern.

“From day one of this Congress, they have put their extreme, unpopular agenda ahead of the interests of the country,” she continued. “They have lurched from one manufactured crisis to

another trying to get their way, putting families and our economy at risk. House Republicans alone started this leadership crisis and they alone can resolve it.”

Among those not present to vote on Tuesday was former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., who had traveled to California to escort the casket of Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., who died last week.

In a post on X, the social media platform formerly known as Twitter, Pelosi wrote, “In this Congress, it is the responsibility of House Republicans to choose a nominee and elect the speaker on the floor. At this time, there is no justification for a departure from this tradition.”

In the near term the historic development will effectively freeze the chamber in its tracks, legislatively, but it is also likely to touch off a chaotic battle to succeed McCarthy, and there is a possibility that he could run again for speaker, as there is no rule precluding such a possibility.

With McCarthy’s ouster, Rep. Patrick McHenry, R-N.C., is now speaker pro tem of the House.

A longtime ally of McCarthy, he took the podium in the well of the House chamber and immediately gaveled it into recess.

After the vote, Gaetz declined to tell reporters whether he or the other Members who toppled McCarthy would support Majority Leader Steve Scalise, R-La., to be the new speaker, but when pressed, he did indicate a liking for Rep. Tom Emmer, R-Minn., who is currently the House Majority Whip.

“I think the world of Tom Emmer,” Gaetz said. “I think he’d make a great speaker.”

Meanwhile, there is already talk of repercussion for at least one of the Republicans who voted to remove McCarthy from the chair, Rep. Nancy Mace, R-S.C.

There are indications that the Republican Governance Group, a group of moderate Republicans originally known as the Tuesday Group, is considering ending her membership.

Tuesday vote was only the third time in the 234-year history of the House that a speaker faced a motion to vacate.

The last time was in 2015, when Rep. Mark Meadows, R-N.C., filed a motion against Speaker John A. Boehner, R-Ohio, who resigned from Congress before the House voted.

Prior to that, the only other time the process was used was in 1910, when Speaker Joe Cannon, R-Ill., faced a revolt from a dozen insurgent Republicans.

At the time, Cannon was seen as something of a tyrant by his fellow members and as an obstacle to every piece of progressive legislation introduced during an era when progressivism was at its peak.

But in a twist, it was Cannon who introduced the motion to remove himself in a bid to prove he still had the support of the majority of his conference. In the end, the motion failed and he remained speaker.

The Cannon House Office Building is named after him and a large display case in its basement holds many of his mementoes.

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