

Jordan Floats Empowering 'Temporary' Speaker, but GOP Hardliners Shoot Down the Proposal

October 19, 2023 **by Dan McCue**



Rep. Patrick McHenry, R-N.C., leaving the speakers office for a meeting in the Capitol. (Photo by Dan McCue)

WASHINGTON — Hardline members of the Republican conference on Thursday slammed the door on a proposal that they temporarily expand the powers of Speaker Pro Tem Patrick McHenry, R-N.C., so the chamber could get back to work while Rep. Jim Jordan, R-Ohio, continues to press for the votes he needs to secure the gavel.

Word that Jordan had decided on the plan as a possible path forward for both his nomination and the House itself began to spread early Thursday after he put off an anticipated third vote on his bid to become the next speaker.

Speaking to reporters in a Capitol hallway after an extended meeting with the GOP conference, Jordan said that he made the pitch to the members on the resolution as a way to “lower the temperature” and begin catching up on work that’s laid dormant since the House returned from its August break.

“We decided that wasn’t where we were going to go,” he said. “I’m still running for speaker and I plan to go to the floor and get the votes and win this race.”

However, when the next vote might occur remains something of an uncertainty.

“I want to go talk with a few of my colleagues. Particularly I want to talk with the 20 individuals who voted against me, so that we can move forward and begin to work for the American people,” Jordan said.

By law, McHenry is at present only able to preside over the election of a new speaker of the House, and he has reportedly been resistant to calls that he do more without formal congressional approval.

Reps. David Joyce, R-Ohio, and Mike Kelly, R-Pa., have both been working on resolutions that would grant McHenry the power to bring bills to the floor and conduct other House business, ending almost three weeks of paralysis in the chamber.

Though neither resolution had been filed as of early afternoon, those familiar with the discussion at the Republican conference meeting said Joyce’s bill would extend to Jan. 3, while Kelly’s would only run through Nov. 17, the date by which Congress has to pass a continuing resolution to keep the government open.

Had the conference gone along with Jordan’s proposal, one or both of those resolutions could have been put to a vote on the

House
floor
as
soon
as later
today.

House

Rep. Jim Jordan, R-Ohio, tells reporters his proposal to temporarily empower the Speaker Pro Tem to get Congress back to work has been rejected by his fellow members of the Republican conference.

Democratic Whip Katherine Clark, D-Mass., has advised members of her conference that the House was expected to recess “shortly” but that further votes “related to the election of the speaker” are expected today.

Jordan lost an initial vote to become the next speaker on Tuesday when he failed to get the necessary 217 votes he needed to secure the gavel. On Wednesday, he lost a second vote by a wider margin, and it was expected that resistance to his quest would be higher today.

Jordan’s hope was that by effectively moving the goalposts, he would have considerably more time to shore up support and woo dissenters.

Jordan's election efforts appear to have, if anything, sharpened the ideological divide between Republican moderates and the far-right members, most of them members of the House Freedom Caucus, that ousted Speaker Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., two weeks ago.

The blowback to even the possibility of giving McHenry greater powers was immediate and it was quite strong.

Rep. Elise Stefanik, R-N.Y., said in a post on X, the social media platform formerly known as Twitter, that her constituents "and people across ... America can rest assured that I strongly oppose any attempt to create a Democrat-backed coalition government.

"I will vote to support Jim Jordan for speaker on the House floor," she said. "We must work to unify Republicans as the last line of defense to save America."

Rep. Lauren Boebert, R-Colo., also came out swinging against the resolution, writing on her campaign account on X that she would "not sit back and watch a complete betrayal of the GOP base with this 'plan' that's being discussed.

"I ran because I was sick and tired of politicians coming up here and cutting deals and releasing 'holier than thou' statements about why we just had to accept it," she said.

Also taking a hard line was Rep. Matt Gaetz, R-Fla., who cast the House into its current stalemate by making the motion that led to the removal of former House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif.

"I'm against 'Speaker Light,'" Gaetz told reporters as he moved through the Capitol basement.

"I'm against Bud Light. I believe it is a constitutional desecration to not elect a speaker of the House. We need to stay here until we

elect a speaker.”

Gaetz continued by saying if someone can’t get the votes, the conference should “go on to the next person.”

“Twisting and torturing the Constitution to empower a temporary speaker is having a ‘Speaker Light.’ That is not constitutionally contemplated, is deeply infirm, and I will do everything possible to stop it,” he said.

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