

# G.O.P. Nominates Steve Scalise for Speaker but Postpones Full Vote

*The No. 2 House Republican won a slim majority, but the chamber adjourned after bitter divisions in the party delayed an election.*

**By Luke Broadwater and Annie Karni**  
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Representative Steve Scalise of Louisiana narrowly scraped together enough Republican support on Wednesday to become his party's choice to lead the House, but deep divisions in the G.O.P. ranks threatened to complicate his election as speaker.

Mere minutes after a slim majority of Republicans voted in a closed-door party meeting to select him as the party's candidate, Mr. Scalise's fate was thrown into doubt. Several Republican lawmakers announced they would not back him on the House floor without concessions, complaining of a rushed process to choose a new speaker and voicing skepticism that he could unite their fractious conference.

Republicans delayed an election of the full House that had been planned for midafternoon while the party regrouped, and adjourned on Wednesday evening with no resolution. They scheduled another meeting of the House for noon on Thursday, but there was no sign that the G.O.P. was any closer to an agreement that would allow them to elect a speaker at that point.

A week and a day after the abrupt and historic ouster of former Speaker Kevin McCarthy at the hands of a small right-wing bloc, Republicans voted behind closed doors, 113 to 99, to name Mr. Scalise, their second-ranking leader, as his successor. Mr. Scalise turned back a challenge by Representative Jim Jordan of Ohio, the chairman of the Judiciary Committee and a favorite of the hard right who had the endorsement of former President Donald J. Trump.

But he still had to win a majority on the House floor, where [chaos reigned](#) the last time Republicans tried to elect a speaker, and it was clear that Mr. Scalise did not yet have enough votes.

Mr. Scalise toiled Wednesday evening to try to win over his detractors, meeting one-on-one with several of them, but he appeared to be losing votes, rather than gaining them. The Republican leadership vacuum was fueling the infighting just as Mr. Scalise was working to quell it.

Representative Chip Roy of Texas, the policy director for the ultraconservative House Freedom Caucus who engineered what he called a "power sharing agreement" with Mr.

McCarthy during his excruciatingly drawn-out election in January, pledged not to vote for Mr. Scalise.

The two men met Wednesday evening, and Mr. Roy said afterward he wanted to see Mr. Scalise commit to changes demanded by hard-line conservatives to how Congress operates.

“What we’re trying to do is make sure we can make this institution represent the people and not just represent the swamp,” Mr. Roy said.

After his slender loss, Mr. Jordan met with Mr. Scalise privately and offered to nominate him on the House floor, according to a spokesman, but he made no public statement of endorsement, and his supporters did not appear swayed.

“I just voted for Jim Jordan for speaker on a private ballot in conference, and I will be voting for Jim Jordan on the House floor,” said Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene, a far-right Republican from Georgia.

“I’m not switching my vote,” said Representative Max Miller, Republican of Ohio, another right-wing member. “I’m Jim Jordan all the way.”

Complicating the picture, a variety of Republicans were refusing to back Mr. Scalise, including some in the mainstream who represent districts won by President Biden and even a powerful committee chairman.

“He came out with 110 votes; he needs 217,” Representative Mike Turner, Republican of Ohio and the chairman of the Intelligence Committee, said on CNN. “He’s going to have to give us a message or an understanding of how he’s going to bridge that gap and make certain that he brings Congress together and not divide the Republican conference more.”

The situation underscored the formidable challenge any Republican speaker would face in navigating the same dynamics that made the party ungovernable for Mr. McCarthy. The party’s minuscule margin of control and its many divisions make maintaining a governing majority difficult. Those factors have also empowered a far-right faction that will not tolerate compromise with Democrats who control the Senate and the White House.

The Republican infighting has left the House largely paralyzed since Mr. McCarthy’s ouster. Lawmakers were growing increasingly worried about the impact of continuing to operate without a duly elected speaker, including that the chamber might not be able to support Israel after an [invasion by the Palestinian group Hamas](#) that has led to more than 1,000 Israeli deaths and scores of hostages being taken.

Early in the day, Mr. Scalise gained ground after Republicans killed an effort to change their party rules for nominating a candidate for speaker by requiring a public roll call and a higher threshold that would have made it more difficult for him to prevail. It had

been billed as an attempt to minimize chaos on the House floor and avoid another situation like what played out in January, when it took Mr. McCarthy [15 rounds of votes](#) to win the speakership.

The nomination of Mr. Scalise, 58, [who has been the No. 2 leader in the chamber](#), was a vote of confidence for a deeply conservative Republican who once described himself, according to a local columnist, as “[like David Duke without the baggage](#).” He represents the Louisiana congressional district that elected Mr. Duke, the former Ku Klux Klan leader, to the State Legislature in 1989. His conservative governmental philosophy, the columnist wrote, was not much different from the one Mr. Duke embraced as a politician, including oppositions to taxes and social safety net programs.

Mr. Scalise apologized in 2014 for having attended a white supremacist gathering more than a decade earlier, saying that he had not known the nature of the group.

On Wednesday, Representative Nancy Mace, Republican of South Carolina, cited that episode as a reason not to support him, saying that she would back Mr. Jordan instead.

“I personally cannot, in good conscience, vote for someone who attended a white supremacist conference and compared himself to David Duke,” she told CNN.

In Congress since 2008, Mr. Scalise was [diagnosed with blood cancer over the summer](#) and is now undergoing intense treatment, which has prompted him to wear a mask to vote on the House floor and to attend news conferences. And in 2017, during a practice for a congressional baseball game, an anti-Trump extremist [shot and seriously wounded Mr. Scalise](#). He still walks with a limp.

Over the past year, Mr. Scalise has been marginalized by Mr. McCarthy, who has privately described him to colleagues as [ineffective, checked out and reluctant to take positions](#), and cut him out of all major decision making. Their icy relationship made it more difficult for Mr. Scalise to consolidate support in the badly fractured Republican conference.