

McCarthy won't rule out return to speakership after Israel attacks

At a press conference with the trappings of a House speaker, McCarthy declined to endorse a successor.

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POLITICO

Former Speaker Kevin McCarthy refused to weigh out a return to his former post, deferring that matter to the House Republican Conference.

"I'm going to allow the conference to do their work," McCarthy said at a press conference on Capitol Hill on Monday. House Republicans are meeting behind closed doors later on Monday.

"Unfortunately, the House can do nothing without a speaker," he added in the aftermath of the attacks in Israel.

McCarthy pointedly declined to endorse Reps. Steve Scalise (R-La.) or Jim Jordan (R-Ohio) to succeed him. Nor would he say what he would do if Republican members nominate him again to the speakership this week.

McCarthy called it the "wrong" message for the world to not have a speaker amid the crisis: "Is our conference just going to select somebody, only to throw them out in another 81 days?"

Any attempt to reinstall McCarthy would face long odds. Scalise and Jordan have already lined up endorsements for the speakership, and McCarthy's detractors remain dug in against him.

The former speaker acknowledged being in uncharted territory with the powers of Rep. Patrick McHenry (R-N.C.) to lead the chamber unclear. But McCarthy said the House should act to support Israel.

In a speech evocative of the pomp and circumstance of a speakership, McCarthy outlined five prongs to address the Middle East crisis: Rescuing U.S. hostages currently being held by Hamas, supplying Israel with new weapons, confronting Iran, addressing U.S. domestic national security and confronting anti-Semitism.

McCarthy last week became the first speaker in U.S. history to be ousted. McCarthy noted he lost his post despite overwhelming support from the GOP conference, pointing out that just eight Republicans joined with Democrats to toss him from the speakership.

McCarthy said the U.S. goal should be to “destroy Hamas” and additional assistance should go beyond replenishing the Iron Dome missile defense system.

“This will not be Afghanistan. We will not leave Americans on the ground,” McCarthy said.