

Republican Hopefuls Crowd Into Speaker Race After Jordan's Exit

Party plans candidate forum on Monday night, vote as soon as Tuesday

By Katy Stech Ferek
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WASHINGTON—Out of many, House Republicans are hoping for one.

GOP lawmakers heading into another week without a speaker will try to overcome deep divisions long enough to unify behind a new candidate, after [colleagues soured on](#) conservative firebrand Rep. Jim Jordan (R., Ohio) following a string of [unsuccessful floor votes](#).

With the race now rebooted, nine Republican lawmakers are angling for the speaker job, jumping into the race before a Sunday deadline.

Rep. Tom Emmer (R., Minn.), who serves as the House's majority whip, has announced a run. He already locked up an endorsement from former Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R., Calif.), who remains a popular and influential party member despite [his sudden ejection](#) from the speakership on Oct. 3. Other candidates include Kevin Hern of Oklahoma, who leads the conservative Republican Study Committee group, Byron Donalds of Florida, a political newcomer with ties to former President [Donald Trump](#), and longtime lawmaker Pete Sessions of Texas.

McCarthy's departure [froze the House's legislative operations](#), preventing lawmakers from taking steps to confront key issues such as negotiating an agreement to extend federal funding beyond its Nov. 17 expiration date and considering [assistance for Israel](#) or Ukraine.

"I just know this is not a time to play games," McCarthy said Sunday on NBC's "Meet the Press." "This is embarrassing for the Republican Party, it's embarrassing for the nation, and we need to look at one another and solve the problem."

Candidates are expected to pitch their colleagues at a forum on Monday evening ahead of an internal vote to designate a new Republican speaker nominee as soon as Tuesday morning.

"On Monday, we should come in and say, 'Let's clean the slate,' " Rep. Don Bacon (R., Neb.) said Friday after Jordan dropped out. "We debate. You get it down to two candidates. Whoever has the majority, you get behind them and support them."

House lawmakers left Washington on Friday evening after 112 Republicans—a majority of the chamber’s GOP members—said in a secret ballot vote that Jordan shouldn’t remain the party’s nominee for speaker. The private vote followed one on the House floor where Jordan received 194 votes from Republicans but saw 25 defect, [failing for a third time](#) in a week to get the majority needed to win the gavel.

“The next 48 hours will be like drinking from a fire hose, with candidates reaching out and jostling for support,” said Rep. Mark Amodei (R., Nev.) on Friday.

The long list of speaker candidates provides a new set of challenges for Republicans, whose fractures, coupled with a very narrow 221-212 majority, are prone to [generating groups of holdouts](#) who may decline to back their nominee on the House floor. McCarthy, Jordan and [prior nominee](#) Steve Scalise of Louisiana each had pockets of the Republican conference that refused to back them.

Rep. Mike Flood of Nebraska is circulating a unity pledge, which lawmakers can sign saying that they promise to back the party’s speaker designee in a House floor vote.

Getting a majority is “obviously going to be very difficult” and akin to solving a Rubik’s Cube, Rep. Mike Turner (R., Ohio), chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, said Sunday on CNN’s State of the Union. “I’m very fond of saying that Congress is like high school, but even more so. So, hopefully, we will get past this,” he said.

Emmer, 62, is the highest-ranking speaker candidate within Republican leadership and is in charge of keeping track of how the conference votes on legislation. Before that, he led the House Republicans’ campaign arm during two terms including their successful win of the House majority in 2022.

“The American people elected us to deliver on a conservative agenda that secures our border, stops reckless spending, and holds [Joe Biden](#) accountable,” Emmer said on social media.

Hern, 61, leads the Republican Study Committee, a broad group of conservative members that takes policy positions on issues such as defense, the economy and fiscal restraint. The group has about 170 members, roughly 75% of all Republicans. A former businessman, Hern serves on the House Ways and Means committee and was first elected to Congress in 2018.

“We must unify and do it fast,” he said in announcing his bid. “We need a different type of leader who has a proven track record of success.”

Other candidates include Sessions, 68, who was first elected to Congress in 1996. He led the House Rules Committee from 2013 to 2019 and rejoined the chamber after a

two-year break following a defeat in 2018. He said he can “forge a positive path as a conservative leader who can unite the Conference.” Sessions boasted that he led the Republican campaign effort as chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee from 2009 to 2012 when the party expanded by 63 seats.

Donalds, 44, [aligned himself closely with Trump](#) in his run for Congress in 2020. He would be the House’s first Black speaker. Florida Reps. Cory Mills and Mario Diaz-Balart have endorsed him.

Rep. Mike Johnson, 51, of Louisiana, announced his candidacy on Saturday, pointing to his background in law, policy, messaging and building coalitions. He is vice chairman of the Republican conference and once led the Republican Study Committee.

Rep. Jack Bergman, 76, of Michigan, a retired U.S. Marine Corps lieutenant general who says he is the highest-ranking combat veteran to be elected to Congress, also said he would run. He said on social media that he already has the endorsements of all four of the state’s Republican U.S. delegation.

Rep. Austin Scott, 53, of Georgia, who briefly challenged Jordan in the Oct. 13 Republican conference vote that led Jordan to claim the title of speaker-designee, said he is also running again.

Reps. Dan Meuser, 59, of Pennsylvania and Gary Palmer, 69, of Alabama are also running, according to Republican Conference Chair Rep. Elise Stefanik, who announced the official list of candidates after the deadline to enter the race closed at noon on Sunday.

Some lawmakers said they are still supportive of a plan to expand the authority of Speaker Pro Tempore Patrick McHenry (R., N.C.), who is in charge of the chamber until a permanent speaker takes over.

After his decision to drop out, Jordan told reporters that he had no regrets with how he handled his campaign and said it is important for the party to unite.

Asked if any House Republicans could secure the 217 votes needed to win the speakership, he responded: “Man, I hope so. I think so, I really do.”

Kristina Peterson and Eliza Collins contributed to this article.