

Who is Patrick McHenry, Kevin McCarthy's interim replacement as House speaker?

By Andrew Jeong
The Washington Post

Rep. Patrick T. McHenry (R-N.C.) was named acting House speaker Tuesday after Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.), in a historic first, was ousted from the role in a 216-210 vote when hard-right Republicans joined by Democrats to expel him.

McHenry will serve until a leader to replace McCarthy is chosen. McCarthy had designated McHenry as a potential successor, according to House rules that require the speaker to make a secret list of representatives who could act as speaker pro tempore, or temporary speaker, in case of a vacancy.

Here's what to know about McHenry.

Who is Patrick T. McHenry, the interim House speaker?

McHenry, 47, is a 10-term congressman representing the 10th Congressional District in North Carolina. He chairs the House Financial Services Committee.

During his nearly two decades in Congress, McHenry has come to be known for his signature bow ties, deadpan jokes and his stint as the Republican Party chief deputy whip.

He is also a close ally of the man he replaced. Before Tuesday's unprecedented events, McHenry appealed to his fellow Republicans to keep McCarthy in the role. After a hard-right GOP faction, which included Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-Fla.), was joined by Democrats to oust McCarthy, McHenry appeared to express his frustration by forcefully hammering the gavel while declaring a recess.

McHenry was first elected to the House in 2004, when he was 29 years old, after a grass-roots campaign that involved knocking on 60,000 doors, according to the Associated Press. He worked on the 2000 presidential campaign for George W. Bush, who later appointed him as special assistant to the U.S. secretary of labor. He is married to a U.S. government economist and has three children.

What authority does McHenry have in the role?

McHenry, as a designated speaker pro tempore, will not have all the powers of a permanent House speaker or an elected speaker pro tempore, according to House [rules](#).

He may call the House to order, make announcements, answer parliamentary inquiries, rule on points of order and designate another speaker pro tempore. But he may not administer the oath of office to a member-elect without unanimous consent or specific House approval, among other restrictions. By comparison, an elected speaker pro tempore has a greater scope of powers, including being able to preside at a joint session of Congress.

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The unprecedented nature of the situation also adds to the uncertainty, The Washington Post [reported](#), with some experts saying the House could pass legislation deemed “necessary and appropriate” by the Constitution, though most other matters might have to wait.

In one of his first acts as temporary leader, McHenry [ordered](#) former House speaker Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) to immediately vacate her hideaway office in the Capitol.

McHenry is also probably not in the line of presidential succession, because he doesn’t formally hold the title of speaker, The Post [reported](#). The House speaker is [second in line](#) to succeed the president, after the vice president.

Could McHenry replace McCarthy permanently?

McHenry may hold the position only for a matter of days, or months, until Republicans can present a nominee for speaker. It is possible he could seek it permanently, though that is far from certain.

Former House speaker John A. Boehner (R-Ohio) viewed McHenry as a future speaker, according to a 2017 [Politico interview](#). Dee Stewart, McHenry’s former chief of staff, has not ruled out the possibility that his friend might seek the speakership permanently, [the Associated Press reported](#).

Who are the other Republican candidates who could succeed McCarthy?

Republicans do not have a clear pick as successor for McCarthy, who declared he would not seek the position again. Rep. Jim Jordan (R-Ohio) has been floated as a potential successor by Rep. Thomas Massie (R-Ky.), while Gaetz, who led the move to expel McCarthy from the speakership, is not seen as likely to succeed him.

McCarthy has said he does not know who is running for the speaker's gavel, and that he will make an endorsement after examining his options, The Post reported.

"I'll talk to people," he said. "A lot of them, I helped get elected."