

# House GOP appears to have the votes to expel Santos

An internal POLITICO whip count found nearly 90 House Republicans say they plan or are likely to support voting to boot the New York Republican.

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POLITICO

Nearly 90 House Republicans say they plan or are likely to support voting to expel George Santos from Congress. That means it's a near-certainty the indicted lawmaker will be out this week.

A POLITICO internal whip count has found that more than 75 House Republicans say they plan to vote for Santos' expulsion, while a dozen say they are likely to support his removal. If all Democrats vote to boot him, as expected, then lawmakers will reach the two-thirds vote threshold required to remove the New York Republican from the House.

The vote would set a new precedent. The House has only expelled five members in history, three due to supporting the Confederacy during the Civil War. The other two were both convicted before their colleagues voted to boot them from Congress.

But enough House Republicans and Democrats have determined that the damning Ethics Committee report, which found "sufficient evidence" of criminal wrongdoing earlier this month, is enough to trigger his removal. And many Republicans are confident the vote will succeed.

"George Santos is toast," said Rep. Ryan Zinke (R-Mont.) as he walked into a whip meeting on Tuesday night.

"For many members, I predict most Republican members, that time for process is behind us. We expect there to be a sufficient number of yes votes come Thursday," said Rep. Nick LaLota (R-N.Y.).

There are two motions to [expel Santos](#) this week, one led by Ethics Chair Michael Guest (R-Miss.) and another by Democratic Reps. Robert Garcia of California and Dan Goldman of New York. The Democratic resolution was introduced under certain rules Tuesday that triggers a floor vote no later than Thursday, but many GOP members are not expected to back a Democratic-led effort.

Rather, Guest's motion is the one to watch. He told POLITICO Tuesday that GOP leadership has given him assurances that his resolution would receive a vote on the floor this week. Rep. Anthony D'Esposito (R-N.Y.), flanked by other New York Republicans, moved on Tuesday night to force a vote on Guest's resolution by Thursday. Vote timing could still shift, as GOP leadership debates the best path forward.

That's not all that's happening Thursday; Santos is also expected to hold a press conference that morning. He has repeatedly vowed he will not resign, reiterating that position Tuesday night on the House floor while bashing the bipartisan Ethics report as "littered with hyperbole and littered with biased opinions."

Expelling Santos became a major topic of discussion at a closed-door House GOP conference meeting Wednesday morning, according to one person in the room. Freedom Caucus members were leading the defense of Santos, with Chair Scott Perry (R-Pa.) saying Republicans should first focus on lying Democrats.

Still, there are plenty of Republicans who have reservations about kicking the New York Republican out of the House before a conviction (Santos faces a slew of federal fraud charges and his trial is slated to begin next September). Multiple GOP lawmakers worried that doing so would further hurt the institution, stripping members of their due process.

Rep. Clay Higgins (R-La.), a member of the House Freedom Caucus, [sent a letter](#) to his colleagues Tuesday, raising concerns about how Santos' case is being handled by the Ethics Committee. He plans to oppose removing Santos.

“Full media disclosure combined with intention to move straight to expulsion appears weaponized to me,” Higgins wrote in part, arguing the report was filled with “conjecture, opinion, and pejorative language that no professional investigative report should include.”

Others argued that without a conviction, it was not their place to make the decision for Santos’ constituents. Rep. Ralph Norman (R-S.C.), another Freedom Caucus member, said he would also vote against booting Santos, adding “that’s for the people of New York to decide.”

More than a dozen other House Republicans said they felt the Ethics Committee report was significant due process for Santos. Many argued he had a right to a court date but serving in Congress was a privilege, one Santos no longer deserves.

"It's a good new precedent that we should set here — that one holds themselves to a minimum standard as they are campaigning for an office like this," LaLota said. "This is an individual who lied about every single thing about himself and his background. And the new precedent should be: When you lie about everything we will expel you."

House Republicans continue to hope the New York Republican will resign. But they fear he wants to force his colleagues to proceed with a vote, and cast himself as some sort of martyr in the process.

Speaker Mike Johnson told Republicans during a meeting this week that he had talked with Santos to lay out options other than expulsion, including resigning. And in remarks to the press Wednesday morning, he said GOP leadership would not whip the vote and would "allow people to vote their conscience."

“I personally have real reservations about doing this. I'm concerned about a precedent that may be set for that," Johnson added.

The speaker didn't tell Republicans that he had explicitly urged Santos to resign, according to Republican Study Committee Chair Kevin Hern (R-Okla.). Instead, the speaker told Santos that doing so would be “an option that would prevent a lot of people from having to take some very tough votes.”

*Nicholas Wu, Katherine Tully-McManus, Daniella Diaz, Anthony Adragna, Caitlin Emma, Jen Scholtes and Sarah Ferris contributed to this report.*