

Trump pulls Elise Stefanik's Cabinet nomination

Republicans fear they can't afford to lose her vote in the House as they look to pass President Donald Trump's sweeping legislative agenda.

**By Liz Goodwin, Marianna Sotomayor and Theodoric Meyer
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The White House on Thursday pulled the [nomination](#) of Rep. Elise Stefanik (R-New York) as ambassador to the United Nations, after President Donald Trump expressed concern that Republicans could lose the red seat she represents in a special election.

“With a very tight Majority, I don’t want to take a chance on anyone else running for Elise’s seat,” President Donald Trump wrote on Truth Social. “The people love Elise, and, with her, we have nothing to worry about come Election Day. There are others that can do a good job at the United Nations. Therefore, Elise will stay in Congress, rejoin the House Leadership Team, and continue to fight for our amazing American People.”

Trump added that he hoped Stefanik could rejoin the administration “in the future.”

The move is an acknowledgment that Republicans are nervous about their ability to pass Trump’s sweeping legislative agenda — anticipated to include border security, energy and tax reforms — with their razor-thin majority this year. Speaker Mike Johnson (R-Louisiana) has set an ambitious timeline to pass the agenda through the House by early summer.

“This seat would have been vacant for most of the year,” said a White House official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to outline how the decision was made. “We don’t have time to waste. We need to get President Trump’s agenda enacted as soon as possible.”

In a Thursday night appearance on Fox News's "Hannity," Stefanik said she had "multiple conversations" with Trump on Thursday and that she was "proud to be a team player."

"I know the stakes as an elected representative," Stefanik told former White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany. "Because I'm not pending confirmation, the American people will be hearing a lot more from me."

Republicans have raised alarms about lackluster fundraising ahead of a slate of special elections in Florida, as well as anger from [constituents during town halls](#) over decisions made by the Trump administration and Elon Musk's U.S. DOGE Service to slash staff and government services.

Johnson praised Stefanik for her "selfless decision" to stay in the House. "It is well known Republicans have a razor-thin House majority, and Elise's agreement to withdraw her nomination will allow us to keep one of the toughest, most resolute members of our Conference in place to help drive forward President Trump's America First policies," Johnson said in a statement.

Stefanik gave up her post as chair of the GOP conference, the No. 4 leadership position, which is now filled by Rep. Lisa C. McClain (Michigan). Johnson could create a new role specifically for Stefanik, taking cues from House Democrats who have an "assistant" to the speaker title in their leadership rung.

Johnson and Stefanik spoke Thursday amid the news of her nomination getting pulled by the White House, a person familiar with the call said. There will need to be more conversations about what role Stefanik could have in GOP leadership, according to the person.

Stefanik was expected to easily be confirmed as the ambassador to the United Nations. She was also considered the front-runner to chair the House Education and the Workforce Committee, particularly after garnering significant recognition for [her grilling of several university presidents](#) over antisemitism on their campuses amid the war in Gaza.

CBS News first reported on her likely nomination withdrawal.

Trump's decision [to pull Stefanik's nomination](#) will give Republicans slightly more breathing room in the House, where Republicans won only a three-seat

majority in the 2024 election. There are currently 218 Republicans and 213 Democrats, after the recent deaths of two Democratic members and two Republicans vacated their seats.

Trump plucked only one other representative to serve in his Cabinet, Michael Waltz (R-Florida), who is his national security adviser. Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-Florida) resigned his seat after Trump nominated him to be attorney general. (Trump later withdrew Gaetz's nomination.) The special elections to fill those seats are next week, and Republicans have noticed that Democratic candidates have been outperforming them in those ruby-red Florida districts.

House Republicans' margin is also set to narrow temporarily in August when Rep. Kat Cammack (R-Florida) is expected to give birth. Any narrower margin could threaten deadlines to raise the debt ceiling by August and fund the government in late September.

"Debt ceiling and reconciliation votes are going to be tough already due to Democrats and slim margins, and we can't make it tougher on ourselves," the White House official said.

Concerns over Stefanik's eventual departure had persisted since she was tapped by Trump to be U.N. ambassador shortly after his election victory. Johnson publicly recounted telling Trump shortly after her nomination that he should refrain from picking any more Republican lawmakers to serve in his administration, given their narrow majority.

Stefanik had been asked to stay in the House until Republicans passed a budget resolution — a key step to begin enacting Trump's legislative agenda — as well as a government funding bill earlier this month, according to multiple people familiar with the conversations, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss private deliberations within House GOP leadership circles. Stefanik's departure was seen as better delayed until April, once Gaetz's and Waltz's seats in Florida would be filled in special elections.

But concerns persisted that Stefanik's seat could stay empty for months after she joined the administration, given that it is up to New York Democratic Gov. Kathy Hochul to schedule the special election, they said.

“This seat would have been vacant for most of the year,” the White House official said.

House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries also pointed to the worries of the GOP over their standing with voters.

“Donald Trump won the Elise Stefanik district by 21 points in November 2024. He withdrew her nomination to be U.N. Ambassador because the extremists are afraid they will lose the special election to replace her. The Republican agenda is extremely unpopular, they are crashing the economy in real time and House Republicans are running scared. What happened to their so-called mandate?” Jeffries said in a statement.

The move also spares Republicans a special election to fill Stefanik’s seat in an Upstate New York district. Trump’s margin in 2024 could make the seat competitive in a special election under ideal conditions for Democrats. Former Democratic congressman Conor Lamb [won a special election](#) in 2018, for instance, in a Pennsylvania district Trump had carried by nearly 20 points.

Dairy farmer Blake Gendebien was running for Stefanik’s seat on the Democratic ticket and had already raised more than \$2 million, according to his campaign.