

New Crop of Speaker Candidates Emerges

Nine Republicans seek job after two earlier picks failed to win a majority

BY KATY STECH FERREK

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 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 on Sunday on NBC. "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 on 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 long list of speaker can-

didates provides a new set of challenges for Republicans, whose fractures, coupled with a 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 Rep. 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 "obvi-

ously 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.

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

In the Running

Rep. Tom Emmer (Minn.)
Rep. Kevin Hern (Okla.)
Rep. Byron Donalds (Fla.)
Rep. Pete Sessions (Texas)
Rep. Mike Johnson (La.)
Rep. Jack Bergman (Mich.)
Rep. Austin Scott (Ga.)
Rep. Dan Meuser (Pa.)
Rep. Gary Palmer (Ala.)

*According to Republican Conference Chair Rep. Elise Stefanik, who announced the official list of House GOP candidates after the noon Sunday deadline to enter the race.



The House last week after an unsuccessful attempt to elect a speaker. The GOP aims to have a new nominee as soon as Tuesday.

our border, stops reckless spending, and holds Joe Biden accountable," Emmer said on social media.

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.

—Kristina Peterson and Eliza Collins contributed to this article.



Meet the 9 Republicans Seeking the Nomination to Become Speaker

By **CATIE EDMONDSON**
and **LUKE BROADWATER**

WASHINGTON — Nine Republicans have announced that they will run for speaker, after the party cast aside Representative Jim Jordan of Ohio as its latest nominee for the leadership post.

A flood of lawmakers began campaigning just hours after Republicans voted in a closed-door meeting to restart the nomination process after Mr. Jordan, his support ebbing, failed on a third floor vote to win the speakership. The vote essentially ensured that the office of the speaker would remain empty for a third week.

The lawmakers vying for the job include veterans of the House, committee chairmen, a top member of Republican leadership and a sophomore. Virtually none have the kind of commanding national profile normally required of the speaker, who is not only second in line to the presidency but a key fund-raiser for their party's efforts to protect and expand its majority.

They will have to navigate the same treacherous dynamics of a bitterly divided conference that the three men before them could not, leaving some Republicans openly questioning whether anyone can win a majority of votes on the House floor.

Some Republicans who had said they were considering running for

the position on Friday announced over the weekend that they would not seek the top job, including Representatives Jodey Arrington and Roger Williams, both of Texas.

All candidates except for two — Representatives Tom Emmer of Minnesota and Austin Scott of Georgia — voted to object to certifying President Biden's 2020 victory in last one state.

All candidates except for three — Representatives Kevin Hern of Oklahoma, Mike Johnson of Louisiana and Gary Palmer of Alabama — voted in support of a stop-gap spending bill put forward by Kevin McCarthy, the speaker at the time, to avert a shutdown. Representative Byron Donalds of Florida was absent for the vote.

Here are the Republicans who are running for speaker.

Tom Emmer of Minnesota

Mr. Emmer, 62, is the highest-ranking Republican in the race. Endorsed by former Speaker Kevin McCarthy, Mr. Emmer is the No. 3 Republican in the House, whose job is to “whip,” or count votes, to pass the speaker's agenda.

He is considered among the front-runners, though he could encounter the same issues that dogged Representative Steve Scalise of Louisiana, Republicans' first failed nominee to replace Mr. McCarthy. Far-right Republican activists have accused Mr. Em-

mer of being insufficiently supportive of former President Donald J. Trump. And some moderates in the conference were privately unhappy that he did not back an effort to temporarily empower the acting speaker, Representative Patrick T. McHenry of North Carolina.

Mr. Emmer served two terms as the chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee, helping Republican candidates across the country win elections and making inroads across the conference in the process.

Austin Scott of Georgia

Mr. Scott, 53, was a surprise candidate for the speaker nomination last week, garnering 81 votes in the conference against the better-known Mr. Jordan.

A small-business owner, Mr. Scott was the freshman class president for the 112th Congress.

He is also an ally of Mr. McCarthy and expressed outrage at the Californian's ouster at the hands of far-right rebels, denouncing them as “nothing more than grifters.”

Byron Donalds of Florida

Mr. Donalds, 44, a member of the ultraconservative House Freedom Caucus, is a favorite of the party's right wing. This is only his second term in Congress; he won his Naples-based district in 2020.

A native New Yorker, he re-

ceived as many as 20 votes for speaker on the House floor in January during the prolonged fight that resulted in Mr. McCarthy emerging as speaker.

He has already picked up endorsements from his fellow Floridians.

Kevin Hern of Oklahoma

Mr. Hern, 61, is the chairman of the Republican Study Committee, a group committed to advancing conservative ideology that a majority of the Republican conference belongs to. The post often serves as a springboard to leadership positions. Mr. Jordan and Mr. Scalise, as well as former Vice President Mike Pence, all have led the committee.

Mr. Hern has the conservative credentials that could assuage the hard-right lawmakers who bedeviled Mr. McCarthy, but he is seen as a more moderate option than Mr. Jordan.

Gary Palmer of Alabama

A former walk-on wide receiver for the University of Alabama, Mr. Palmer, 69, is the longtime chairman of the Republican Policy Committee, making him the No. 5 Republican in the House.

A member of the Freedom Caucus, Mr. Palmer keeps a lower profile than many of his deeply conservative counterparts. As a former member of Mr. McCarthy's leadership team who then backed

Mr. Jordan's candidacy for speaker, Mr. Palmer could try to present himself as a unifying force between the party's factions. He was elected to Congress in 2014.

Jack Bergman of Michigan

Few people outside of his district may be familiar with Mr. Bergman. A retired Marine Corps lieutenant general, Mr. Bergman, 76, represents Michigan's Upper Peninsula and the northern half of the Lower Peninsula.

A highly decorated naval aviator, Mr. Bergman has earned cachet with many of the mainstream conservatives — several of whom are military veterans themselves — who opposed Mr. Jordan's candidacy and want an experienced leader at the helm. Mr. Bergman has presented himself as a temporary option who would work to “steady the ship” and return normalcy to the House.

“We need a leader who shuns permanent power and recognizes the current crisis of leadership,” Mr. Bergman said in a statement.

Mike Johnson of Louisiana

Mr. Johnson, 51, is a lawyer who is the former chairman of the conservative Republican Study Committee.

An evangelical Christian who is a member of the Judiciary Committee, Mr. Johnson was a key architect of Republicans' objections to certifying the victory of Joseph

R. Biden Jr. on Jan. 6, 2021. Many Republicans in Congress relied on his arguments.

He is an ally and supporter of Mr. Jordan who only considered moving forward with his own bid after Mr. Jordan fell short.

Pete Sessions of Texas

Mr. Sessions, 68, is the longest-serving member of Congress so far who is considering running for speaker, first serving from 1997 to 2019. After he was defeated in 2018 by a Democrat, Mr. Sessions ran for a seat in a neighboring district and prevailed, returning to Congress in 2021. He has previously served as the chairman of the House Republican campaign committee and as chairman of the powerful Rules committee.

Mr. Sessions participated in a 2019 campaign by Trump allies targeting Marie L. Yovanovitch, the ambassador to Ukraine, writing to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo that she should be fired for repeatedly expressing “disdain” for the Trump administration. (Mr. Trump recalled her in April of that year.)

Dan Meuser of Pennsylvania

Mr. Meuser, 59, was elected to Congress in 2018, after serving as his state's secretary of revenue. He told National Review that he was considering running for speaker because “I'm not gonna let this kindergarten continue.”