

# Jordan's GOP Backing Ebbs on Second Ballot

WASHINGTON—GOP Rep. Jim Jordan failed again to win enough votes to be elected House speaker as divisions hardened among Republicans, with some lawmakers pursuing

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new paths to break the impasse that has paralyzed the chamber.

More than two weeks after Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R., Calif.) was ousted as speaker, Republicans remained gripped in a fierce internal struggle over his successor. Jordan said Wednesday he would keep up his campaign, but he pushed off any further voting until Thursday

at the earliest as mounting GOP defections on Jordan's second ballot left Republicans snarled in warring factions over what should happen next.

“This is not about any one perfect person,” said Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (R., Pa.), a centrist who backed the hard-right Jordan. “I just want the lights on so we're a functioning branch of government.”

The chamber's operations have ground to a halt with no elected speaker. The House can't take any steps to provide additional aid to Israel or Ukraine, fueling frustration among lawmakers over the stalemate. Congress also faces a crucial deadline next month, when current government funding runs out.

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# ☆ On Try Two, Jordan Gets Fewer Votes

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Jordan, a veteran conservative whose legislative career has been largely defined by obstructing Republican leaders' plans, was hit by 22 GOP defections Wednesday, more than the 20 he lost in the first ballot Tuesday. He can lose no more than four Republicans when all lawmakers are present and vote for a candidate, if all Democrats are opposed.

“When you’re going in the wrong direction after two rounds, that’s obviously not a great sign,” said Rep. Mike Garcia (R., Calif.), who voted for Jordan.

Jordan’s allies, including McCarthy, said the Ohio Republican simply needed more time to gather support.

“It’s all about stamina here,” said Jordan backer Rep. Scott Perry (R., Pa.), chairman of the hard-line House Freedom Caucus. “We know the right guy.”

But other Republicans said it was time to move on to a new plan, with momentum building for a proposal to assign more powers to the speaker pro tempore, Rep. Patrick McHenry (R., N.C.), to get critical work done.

“We haven’t accomplished a

damn thing in two weeks,” said Rep. Dave Joyce (R., Ohio), the chairman of the more-centrist Republican Governance Group who was preparing to introduce a resolution that would empower McHenry to bring bills to the House floor for a period. “That’s what I think is important—that we get back to opening this place up.”

McHenry was chosen for the speaker pro tempore post by McCarthy under post-9/11 rules requiring the speaker to list a temporary replacement in case of a vacancy.

For McHenry to bring legislation to the floor, many lawmakers and House rules experts believe the majority of the House would have to vote to give him that authority, a step once seen as unlikely but growing more viable.

“My role here is to be determined, but I’ve constructed that as narrowly as the rules say I should,” McHenry said.

Some Republicans said such a step would amount to a temporary Band-Aid. Any effort to expand McHenry’s authority would likely require bipartisan support to pass.

House Democrats said the next step would depend on Republican moves to coalesce around an alternative plan.

“We hope that they will come to us now that there have been two votes, and Jim Jordan has been unable to put it together, and find that bipartisanship,” House Minority Whip Katherine Clark (D.,



Rep. Jim Jordan, center, conferred with colleagues Wednesday on the House floor.

Mass.) said.

Rep. Hakeem Jeffries of New York, the chamber’s Democratic leader, has suggested that Democrats might seek changes to House rules that would enable bills with significant bipartisan support to come up for a vote on the House floor more easily. The House currently has 221 Republicans and 212 Democrats.

Many of the holdouts indicated that they remained staunchly opposed to electing Jordan as speaker. Some have

bristled at the pressure applied by supporters of Jordan, an ally of Donald Trump who was a “significant player” in his attempt to stay in the White House despite his 2020 presidential election loss, according to the House committee investigating the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol attack. In social-media posts and phone calls, party chairs and leaders of grassroots groups have hounded and politically threatened lawmakers.

Jordan opponents said the pressure was backfiring. Rep.

Steve Womack (R., Ark.) said his staff has been “cussed out” by pro-Jordan callers. “We have a spine,” Rep. Don Bacon (R., Neb.) said.

Late Wednesday, Rep. Marianne Miller-Meeks (R., Iowa), who voted for Jordan on the first ballot but not the second, said she received “credible death threats and a barrage of threatening calls.”

Jordan said: “We condemn all threats against our colleagues and it is imperative that we come together. Stop.

It’s abhorrent.”

Republicans have also raised policy objections to Jordan. Womack was among a handful of GOP lawmakers on the House Appropriations Committee to vote against Jordan, saying his support for dramatic cuts of federal spending isn’t realistic when the Senate and White House are controlled by Democrats.

Some of the Republicans who dropped their support for Jordan on Wednesday are long-time allies of Majority Leader Steve Scalise (R., La.), who withdrew his own candidacy last week, including Reps. Drew Ferguson (R., Ga.) and Vern Buchanan (R., Fla.). A total of four more Republicans voted against Jordan on Wednesday, but he flipped two to his column: GOP Reps. Doug LaMalfa of California and Victoria Spartz of Indiana.

The overall tally was 199 for Jordan, 212 for Jeffries and 22 for other Republicans. The winner will need to win a majority of the House, or 217.

If Jordan withdraws, lawmakers and aides said new candidates could include Rep. Bruce Westerman (R., Ark.), Republican Study Committee Chairman Kevin Hern (R., Okla.), House Republican Conference Vice Chairman Mike Johnson (R., La.), House Budget Committee Chairman Jodey Arrington (R., Texas) and Rep. Byron Donalds (R., Fla.).

—Gabriel T. Rubin  
contributed to this article.

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# In Bid for Speaker, Jordan Loses Ground in Second Round of Votes

By LUKE BROADWATER

WASHINGTON — Representative Jim Jordan, the hard-line Republican from Ohio, lost a second bid for speaker on Wednesday after running headlong into opposition from a group of mainstream G.O.P. holdouts who vowed to block the ultraconservative from the leadership post.

Mr. Jordan said he would keep fighting to secure the majority of votes he needs to become speaker, and spent much of Wednesday afternoon meeting with some of the holdouts. But it was clear after the second ballot that there was no immediate end in sight to the stalemate that has left the House leaderless and in turmoil after two weeks of Republican infighting.

Republicans adjourned the House on Wednesday evening and were set to reconvene at noon on Thursday to find a way forward.

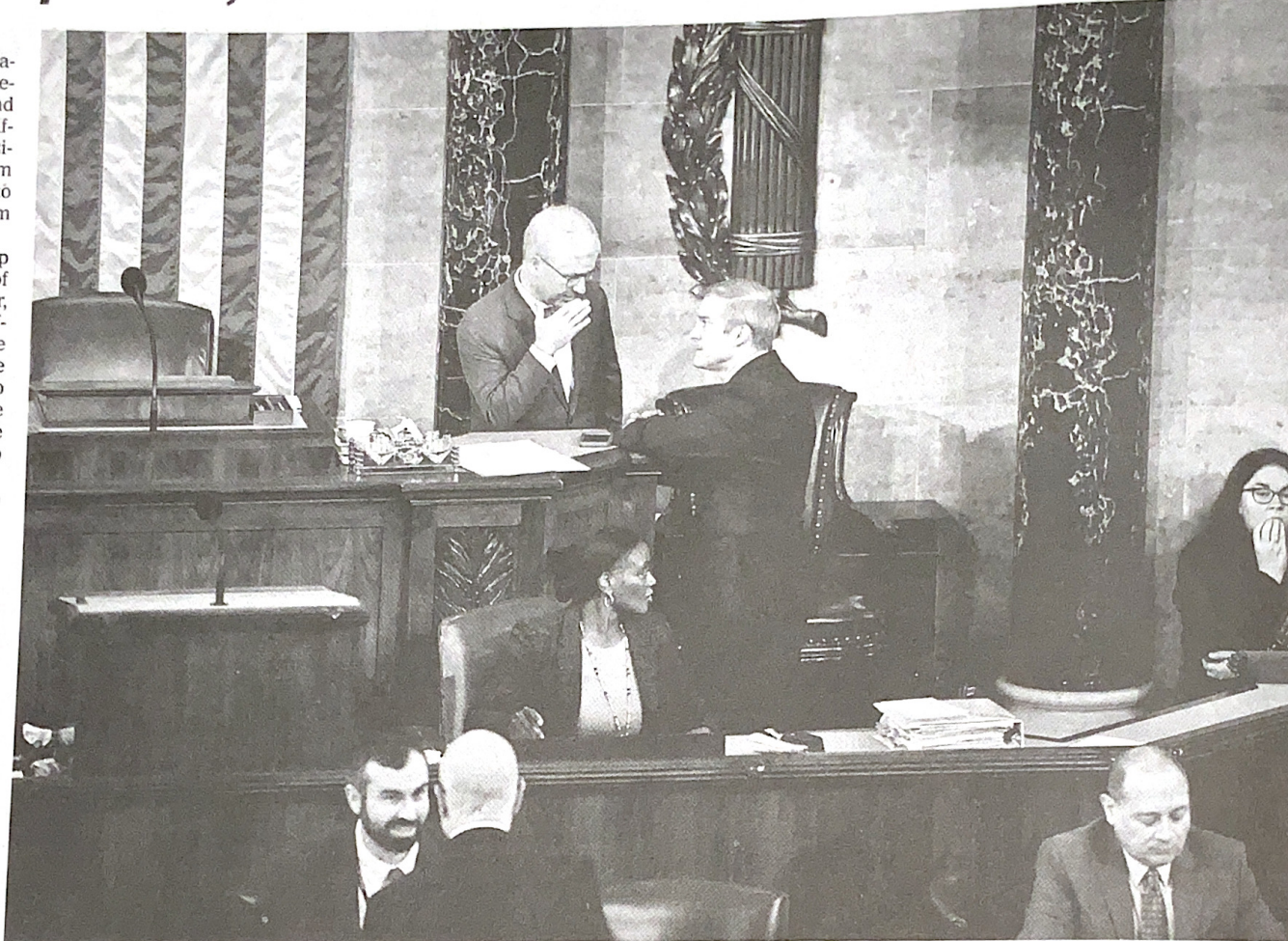
As the chaos continued, a group of Republicans and Democrats was discussing taking explicit action to empower Representative Patrick T. McHenry, the North Carolina Republican who has been serving as temporary speaker, to conduct legislative business on the House floor, which has been paralyzed for weeks. But Republicans were divided even on doing that, with some Jordan loyalists arguing that it would set a damaging precedent.

Still, many lawmakers have grown deeply alarmed about the absence of an elected speaker as wars are raging in Israel and Ukraine and the government is within weeks of shutting down if Congress fails to reach a spending agreement.

Allies of Mr. Jordan, the co-founder of the ultraconservative House Freedom Caucus and a close ally of former President Donald J. Trump, had initially hoped he would pick up momentum on the second vote. Instead, the number of Republicans refusing to back him grew by two on Wednesday. Mr. Jordan won 199 votes and Representative Hakeem Jeffries of New York, the Democratic leader, won 212 votes. Four Republicans who had voted for Mr. Jordan on the first ballot rose to oppose him, and two Republicans who had voted against Mr. Jordan on the first ballot changed their votes and supported him.

"We picked up some today, a couple dropped off," Mr. Jordan said after the vote. "But they

Reporting was contributed by Kayla Guo, Luke Broadwater, Anrië Karni, Robert Jimison and Carl Hulse.



ANNA ROSE LAYDEN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Patrick T. McHenry, the temporary speaker, and Jim Jordan, who is trying to become the real thing, on Wednesday inside the House.

voted for me before, I think they can come back again." He noted that former Speaker Kevin McCarthy's bid for the top job had also stalled after around 20 holdouts opposed him on multiple ballots.

But several of the mainstream Republicans who voted against Mr. Jordan said they were irrevocably opposed to his candidacy, and predicted that opposition to the Ohio Republican would only grow. Many of them said they were emboldened to hold their ground by the pressure campaign that Mr. Jordan's allies unleashed on them over the weekend to try to get them to cave and support him. The tactics included posting the holdouts' names and office phone numbers to social media and in some cases running robocalls in their districts.

"Somebody advising him thought it was a good idea to try to shine a spotlight on us and to try to shame us on the floor," Representative Nick LaLota of New York said. "That tactic obviously didn't work. It probably dug some

members in stronger."

Mr. Jordan and his allies had made the calculation that the lawmakers opposing him, almost entirely from the party's more mainstream wing, would fall into line when forced to vote against him on the House floor, facing pressure from conservative voters and media personalities. Those moderate lawmakers normally seek compromise, and the bet was that they would want to quickly patch over Republican divisions and move forward to get the House working again in regular order.

Instead, said Representative Mario Diaz-Balart of Florida, one of the holdouts, the strategy "backfired dramatically."

Mr. Diaz-Balart added of Mr. Jordan's path to the speakership, "I think it gets more and more difficult for him every day."

"If you succumb to threats and intimidation and all that, the rest of your life you'll just be threatened and intimidated," said Representative Carlos Gimenez of Florida, who has said he will continue voting for Mr. McCarthy.

The vote underscored the deep rifts inside the House Republican conference, but it also signaled how far the group has lurched to the right. Among the 199 Republicans who voted for Mr. Jordan were many mainstream Republicans, including a dozen from districts President Biden won in 2020, all of whom were willing to give Mr. Jordan the post second in line to the presidency.

Those were votes to elevate a lawmaker who helped Mr. Trump try to overturn the 2020 election, who has used his power in Congress to defend the former president and whose long track record of opposing compromise prompted a previous Republican speaker to brand him a "legislative terrorist."

In the absence of a clear path forward, there was growing discussion about holding a vote to approve giving Mr. McHenry control over the House floor until the deadlock could be broken, perhaps through Jan. 3.

Mr. McHenry is acting as temporary speaker under rules

adopted after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks that require the speaker of the House to come up with a list of people to fill the post in the event that it becomes vacant. When Mr. McCarthy was booted out by a right-wing rebel-

## Lawmakers explore a workaround to get bills moving again.

lion two weeks ago, the world learned that Mr. McHenry was the first name on his list.

Many House aides believe that Mr. McHenry's power is strictly confined to presiding over the election of a new speaker, as he has been doing this week. But because this situation has not come up before, some congressional scholars argue that the bounds of the acting speaker's power are largely dependent on what a ma-

## Vote Results

Ballot round	Total	Jim Jordan	Hakeem Jeffries	Other
1	432	200	212	20
2	433	199	212	22

## Second Ballot Round

Candidate	Total	Dem.	Rep.
Jim Jordan Ohio	199	0	199
Steve Scalise Louisiana	7	0	7
Kevin McCarthy California	5	0	5
Lee Zeldin Former representative Florida	3	0	3
Byron Donalds Florida	1	0	1
Tom Emmer Minnesota	1	0	1
Mike Garcia California	1	0	1
Candice Miller Former representative	1	0	1
John Boehner Former speaker	1	0	1
Kay Granger Texas	1	0	1
Bruce Westerman Arkansas	1	0	1
Hakeem Jeffries New York	212	212	0

Note: To win, a member must receive a majority of all votes cast, not counting "present" votes. The Constitution specifies that House members choose the speaker, but the speaker does not have to be a current or even a former representative. THE NEW YORK TIMES

majority of members are willing to authorize.

Some Republicans, particularly Mr. Jordan's staunchest supporters, have resisted such a move because it would sap momentum for the party to unite behind him — or any other Republican. They argued that the maneuver would set a damaging precedent.

"I violently oppose any effort to do that on the House floor," said Representative Chip Roy, Republican of Texas, calling the idea "directly contrary to the Constitution."

In the meantime, many Republicans were openly fretting that their deep internal divisions were hanging a political albatross around the party's neck ahead of the 2024 election.

"I just want to get us to an option where we can get this place functioning again," said Representative Steve Womack of Arkansas, one of the holdouts against Mr. Jordan. "We need to rebrand ourselves I think, and get back to running this government."