

# Majority Whip Faces Hurdles in Speaker Bid

BY SIOBHAN HUGHES  
AND KATY STECH FERREK

WASHINGTON—A bid by House Majority Whip Tom Emmer (R., Minn.) to serve as the House Republicans' pick to be speaker will test whether the strong ties he built recruiting candidates and counting votes will overcome doubts from some antiestablishment lawmakers aligned with former President Donald Trump.

Candidates were 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. Beyond winning the GOP ballot, the speaker nominee will face the uphill battle to unite almost all Republicans to have a chance of winning the House vote, given Republicans' narrow 221-212 majority.

Emmer, 62 years old, is the highest-ranking candidate among the eight Republicans looking to serve as the House speaker designate, as the party looks to unite behind another leader, three weeks after eight holdouts engineered the ouster of Kevin McCarthy (R., Calif.). Since then, two candidates to succeed him, Steve Scalise (R., La.) and Jim Jordan (R., Ohio), won the party's nod only to fail to get enough votes to be elected speaker, forcing the GOP to start over.

The large field sets the stage for an unpredictable result. While Emmer has the backing of McCarthy, many members were keeping their cards close to their chest, unlike in previous speaker selection rounds, when candidates got dozens of public endorsements. On Monday night, Rep. Dan Meuser (R., Pa.) dropped out of the race, reducing the field to eight from the initial nine.

Most of the seven other



WIN MCNAMEE/GETTY IMAGES

Tom Emmer is the highest-ranking of the GOP candidates.

candidates have lower profiles than Emmer, with only Rep. Kevin Hern (R., Okla.), currently the chairman of the Republican Study Committee, Rep. Mike Johnson (R., La.), the House Republican conference vice chairman, and Pete Sessions (R., Texas), a former head of the House Republicans' campaign arm, having any prior experience serving atop either the Republican conference or in other leadership roles.

Emmer, by contrast, has started his campaign several steps ahead by having jobs within the party that required him to build relationships with individual members since he was elected to Congress a decade ago. He served as the chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee, the House Republicans' recruiting arm, from 2019 through 2022 before winning the No. 3 position in the House Republican conference.

His allies say nobody is better equipped to raise money or manage the conference, having raised more than \$7.6 million so far this year, spent 81 days on the road and assembled a battle-tested team of aides.

"This is not a moment in time to play around with

learning on the job," McCarthy said Sunday on NBC. "We need someone who understands how to do this job."

But in a party that already threw out McCarthy and blocked the rise of Scalise, the No. 2 House Republican, Emmer's institutional advantages risk turning into liabilities. Beyond that, Emmer doesn't have a close relationship with Trump, whose allies are starting to target Emmer. Former Trump strategist Steve Bannon on Friday called Emmer "the biggest never-Trumper in the House," saying he has no chance to become speaker.

Other candidates include Byron Donalds of Florida, a rising star within the party with ties to Trump, and Rep. Gary Palmer (R., Ala.), who was part of McCarthy's inner circle as a member of the House Elected Leadership Committee. On Monday, Donalds was endorsed by the Tea Party Patriots Action, an ultraconservative group. The other hopefuls are Jack Bergman of Michigan and Austin Scott of Georgia.

"I'm staying above it—I have to right now," Trump, the front-runner for the 2024 GOP presidential nomination, said Monday at a campaign event in New Hampshire.

# Speaker Fight Exposes Dynamics That Make G.O.P. Hard to Govern

By LUKE BROADWATER

WASHINGTON — First, House Republicans chose an establishment guy to be their speaker. But the hard right got sick of him and dumped him after nine months. Then they turned to his No. 2, another mainstream conservative, who was promptly blocked. Then they tried an ultraconservative candidate, but mainstream members struck back, quickly killing his candidacy.

Back at square one after 20 days without a speaker, many House Republicans have found themselves asking: Are we simply too dysfunctional to govern?

With a free-for-all raging in their ranks, House Republicans were huddling behind closed doors on Monday evening to hear from no fewer than eight contenders for speaker even after a lesser-known candidate, Representative Dan Meuser of Pennsylvania, dropped out as the meeting began. They were to meet again on Tuesday morning to grind through several rounds of voting by secret bal-

Michael Gold contributed reporting.

lot, eliminating the lowest vote-getter as they go, a process that could take hours.

But the tangle of crosscurrents dividing them means that there is no guarantee that the victor can actually win the post on the House floor.

The speaker saga has exposed the dynamics that have made the House G.O.P. nearly impossible to govern. There are too many conflicting ideologies, too many unyielding personalities and too much bad blood for the party to unite behind any one person.

"There's only one person that can do it all the way," former President Donald J. Trump, the Republican presidential front-runner, said on Monday in New Hampshire. "You know who that is? Jesus Christ. If Jesus came down and said, 'I want to be speaker,' he would do it. Other than that, I haven't seen anybody that can guarantee it."

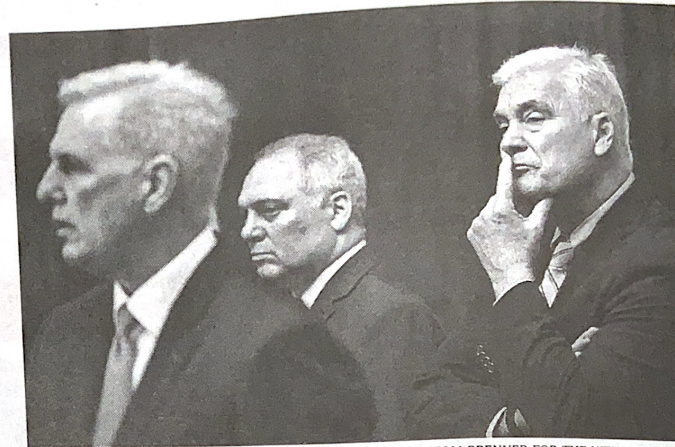
Republicans have made no secret of their divisions. They openly refer to their various factions as The Five Families — a reference to warring Mafia crime families. They consist of the right-wing House Freedom Caucus, the

conservative Republican Study Committee, the business-minded Main Street Caucus, the mainstream Republican Governance Group and the bipartisan Problem Solvers Caucus.

During his nine months as speaker, Representative Kevin McCarthy of California tried to smooth over the tensions by holding weekly meetings of those groups. But the job proved almost impossible.

There are factions within the factions. A hard-right group calling itself The 20 includes many members of the Freedom Caucus, but some lawmakers who are not. Some members are loyal to others from their home states; some to their committee chairs. There are wild cards who are members of no ideological caucus. There are personal vendettas that have nothing to do with ideology.

Mr. McCarthy's ouster was in part because of bad blood between him and Representative Matt Gaetz of Florida. Allies of Mr. McCarthy, who has an icy relationship with Representative Steve Scalise of Louisiana, the No. 2, helped block him from the job. When Representative Jim Jordan



TOM BRENNER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

of Ohio, the co-founder of the Freedom Caucus, was dumped last week, it was in large part at the hands of members of the Appropriations Committee with long memories of his dilatory tactics, particularly on spending bills.

Now Representative Tom Emmer of Minnesota, the No. 3 Republican widely believed to be the next front-runner, is facing some similar hurdles. Feelings remain raw from a contentious race for his current post against Representative Jim Banks of Indiana.

"There's a lot of historical relationships that some are not going to ever be able to work around," said Representative Kevin Hern of Oklahoma, the chairman of the Republican Study Committee, the

largest of the G.O.P. ideological groups on Capitol Hill, and another contender for the post.

To become speaker, a Republican must hold together 217 votes, losing no more than four, a task that seems almost impossible in the current circumstance.

Mr. Emmer has allies among both the conservative and the establishment wings of the party. He 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.

But Mr. Emmer is hitting headwinds from allies of Mr. Trump, who view him as insufficiently loyal to the former president and

From left, former House Speaker Kevin McCarthy and Representatives Steve Scalise and Tom Emmer.

cite his vote to certify the 2020 election for Joseph R. Biden Jr.

"First thing to do is stop Emmer," said the right-wing podcast host Stephen K. Bannon, who predicted that the D.C. establishment would be "decapitated" should Mr. Emmer lose.

Aware of Mr. Bannon's sway over House Republicans, Mr. Emmer has tried to get in front of the criticism. Mr. Emmer and Mr. Trump spoke by phone this weekend, according to a person familiar with the conversation. Allies of Mr. Emmer began pointing out that Mr. Emmer was one of the first members to endorse Mr. Trump in 2016, endorsed him in 2020 and has said he will endorse the G.O.P. nominee this cycle.

The outreach did not necessarily appear to mollify Mr. Trump.

"I'm trying to stay out of it as much as possible," Mr. Trump said of the speaker's race, after noting that Mr. Emmer had only in the previous 24 hours called to proclaim himself "my biggest fan."

Among the eight candidates, all except for two — Mr. Emmer and Representative Austin Scott of Georgia — voted to object to certifying Mr. Biden's 2020 victory in at least one state.

# Still Without a Speaker, Republicans Are a 'Captainless Pirate Ship'

By LISA LERER  
and MICHAEL C. BENDER

Kevin McCarthy, the ousted speaker, was making his way through the Capitol when reporters asked what he thought of the chaos consuming House Republicans, who for nearly three weeks have been trying and failing to replace him.

His answer veered into the existential. "We are," he said on Friday, "in a very bad place right now."

That might be an understatement.

In the House, Republicans are casting about for a new leader, mired in an internecine battle marked by screaming, cursing and a fresh flood of candidates. In the Senate, their party is led by Senator Mitch McConnell, who spent weeks arguing that he remained physically and mentally fit enough for the position after freezing midsentence in two public appearances. And on the 2024 campaign trail, the dominant front-runner, Donald J. Trump, faces 91 felony charges across four cases, creating a drumbeat of legal news that often overwhelms any of his party's political messages.

As national Democrats largely stand behind President Biden and his agenda — more united than in years — Republicans are divided, directionless and effectively leaderless.

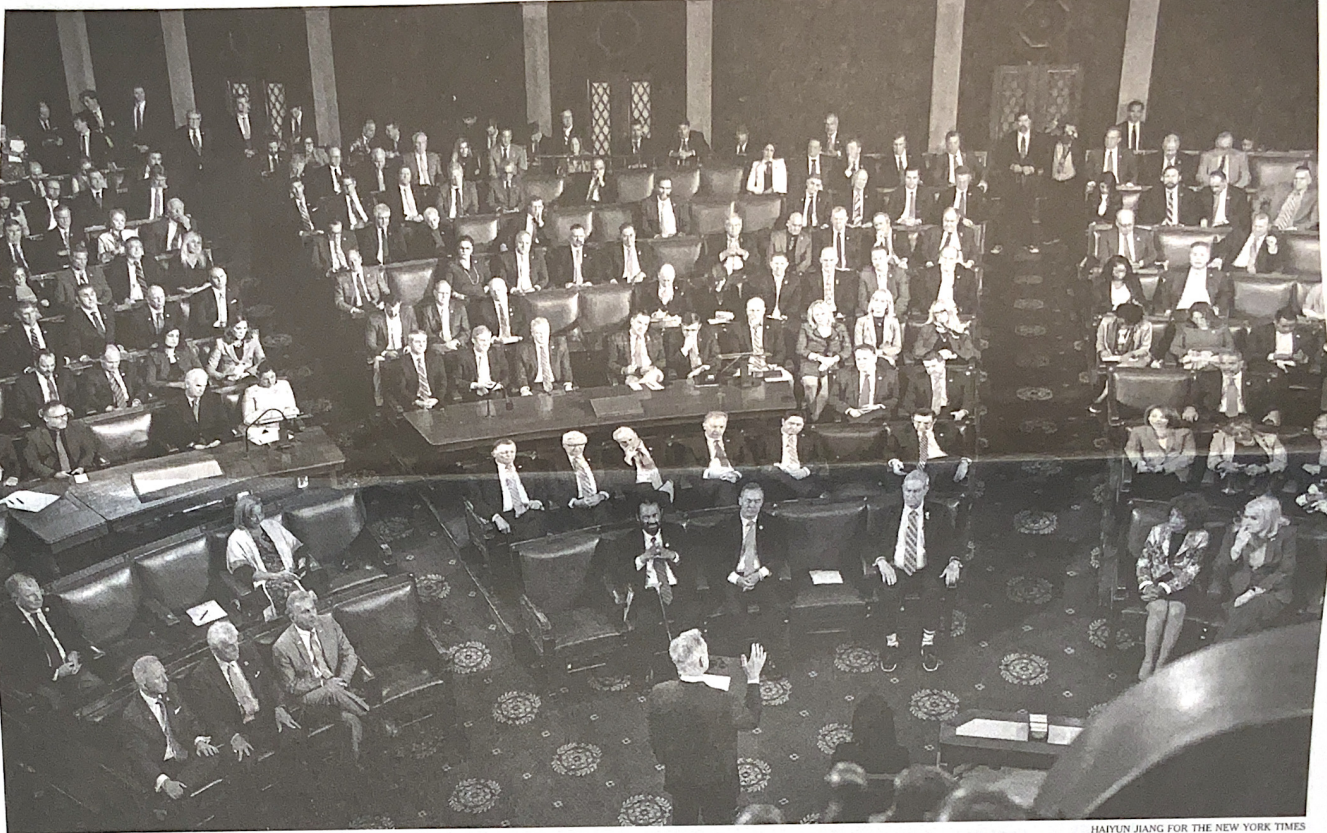
For years, Mr. Trump has domineered Republican politics, with a reach that could end careers, create new political stars and upend the party's long-held ideology on issues like trade, China and federal spending. He remains the party's nominal leader, capturing a majority of G.O.P. voters in national polling and holding a double-digit lead in early voting states.

And yet his commanding position has turned Republicans into a party of one, demanding absolute loyalty to Mr. Trump and his personal feuds and pet causes, such as his false claims that the 2020 election was stolen. The result is an endless loop of chaos that even some Republicans say once again threatens to define the party's brand heading into an election in which Republicans — after struggling to meet the basic responsibilities of governing the House of Representatives — will ask voters to also put them in charge of the Senate and the White House.

"This looks like a group of 11th graders trying to pick the junior class president, and it will hurt our party long term," said former Gov. Chris Christie of New Jersey, who is challenging Mr. Trump for the party nomination. "It's going to be very hard to make the case that the American people should turn over control of the government to Republicans when you can't even elect a speaker."

In recent months, the former president has focused more on his own legal peril than on his party. Flouting pressure from the Republican National Committee, Mr. Trump has largely opted out of some of the party's biggest moments. He skipped the first two Republican primary debates for his own events and plans to skip the third, forgoing a chance to present his party's message to an audience of millions.

And he has largely taken a hands-off approach to the fight over the House speakership. Nine months ago, he helped install Mr. McCarthy as speaker. But he did not come to Mr. McCarthy's rescue this fall when Representative Matt Gaetz led the charge to oust him. He then endorsed Representative Jim Jordan, who has failed to win



HAIYUN JIANG FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Political parties out of power typically lack a strong leader, but the drawn-out turmoil among Republicans is putting the internal dysfunction on public display.

enough support.

Political parties out of power typically lack a strong leader. In 2016, Mr. Trump's election plunged Democrats into years of ideological battles between a restive liberal wing and a more moderate establishment. But what's less typical — and perhaps more politically damaging, some Republicans said — is the drawn-out, televised turmoil putting the internal dysfunction on public display.

"It's kind of a captainless pirate ship right now — a Black Pearl with no Jack Sparrow," said Ralph Reed, a prominent social conservative leader, who argued that the issues would eventually be resolved. "But on the bright side, we will have a speaker at some point."

"These Republicans are complete idiots," Ann Coulter, the conservative commentator, said on a radio program last week.

Mr. McConnell all but threw up

his hands in interviews on the Sunday talk shows. "It's a problem," he said on "Face the Nation" on CBS. "We're going to do our job and hope the House can get functional here sometime soon."

And The Wall Street Journal editorial board, long a bastion of establishment Republican thought, wrote more than a week into the drama: "As the current mess in choosing another House Speaker shows, never underestimate the ability of Republicans to commit electoral suicide."

Most frustrating to some Republicans is the fact that the messy battle is largely symbolic. Democrats control the Senate and the White House, meaning that whoever becomes speaker has little chance of making their agenda into law.

Still, there could be real-world political implications. As Republicans battled one another, Mr. Biden focused on an actual war.

He spent much of last week building support for Israel, with a wartime visit and an Oval Office prime-time appeal for \$105 billion in aid to help Israel and Ukraine — funds that face an uncertain future in a House frozen by infighting.

It's a split screen Democrats are more than happy to highlight.

"The president of the United States, a Democrat, gave the strongest pro-Israel speech, at least since Harry Truman, maybe in American history," said Representative Jake Auchincloss, a moderate Democrat from Massachusetts. "The division is on the Republican side of the aisle, where they are so fractured they can't even elect a leader of their conference."

Mike DuHaime, a veteran Republican strategist who is advising Mr. Christie, said the inability to pick a speaker was a "new low" for Republican gov-

ernance. "If you don't have the presidency there is no clear leader of the party," he said. "That's natural. What's unnatural here is that we can't run our own caucus."

But others say that Mr. Trump, along with social media and conservative media, has turned the very incentive structure of the party upside down. With a broad swath of the conservative base firmly behind the former president, there may be little political cost in causing chaos. The eight Republicans who voted to oust Mr. McCarthy, for example, are likely to face no backlash for plunging the party into disarray. As their message is amplified across conservative media, they're more likely to see their political stars rise, with a boost in fund-raising and attention.

"What's happening is you have people who don't want to be led, but also want to engineer a situation where they can be betrayed

and use that to rail against leadership," said Liam Donovan, a Republican strategist and former National Republican Senatorial Committee aide.

Some Republicans doubt the incident will have a lasting impact. In the summer, the party will pick a nominee at its national convention, and that person will become Republicans' new standard-bearer.

Nicole McCleskey, a Republican pollster, said the messy dust-up in the House would be forgotten by next November's elections, washed away as just another moment of broken government amid near-record lows for voters' trust in Congress.

"People are used to Washington dysfunction, and this is just another episode," she said. "It's Republicans and Democrats, and they're all dysfunctional. For voters, it's just further evidence that Washington can't address their problems."

## Editors' Note

On Oct. 17, The New York Times published news of an explosion at a hospital in Gaza City, leading its coverage with claims by Hamas government officials that an Israeli airstrike was the cause and that hundreds of people were dead or injured. The report included a large headline at the top of The Times's website.

Israel subsequently denied being at fault and blamed an errant rocket launch by the Palestinian faction group Islamic Jihad, which has in turn denied responsibility. American and other international officials have said their evidence indicates that the rocket came from Palestinian fighter positions.

The Times's initial accounts attributed the claim of Israeli

responsibility to Palestinian officials, and noted that the Israeli military said it was investigating the blast. However, the early versions of the coverage — and the prominence it received in a headline, news alert and social media channels — relied too heavily on claims by Hamas, and did not make clear that those claims could not immediately be verified. The report left readers with an incorrect impression about what was known and how credible the account was.

The Times continued to update its coverage as more information became available, reporting the disputed claims of responsibility and noting that the death toll might be lower than initially reported. Within two hours, the headline and other text at the top

of the website reflected the scope of the explosion and the dispute over responsibility.

Given the sensitive nature of the news during a widening conflict, and the prominent promotion it received, Times editors should have taken more care with the initial presentation, and been more explicit about what information could be verified. Newsroom leaders continue to examine procedures around the biggest breaking news events — including for the use of the largest headlines in the digital report — to determine what additional safeguards may be warranted.

Contact the Newsroom  
To contact the newsroom regarding correction requests, please email [corrections@nytimes.com](mailto:corrections@nytimes.com).

## Corrections

### NATIONAL

An article on Thursday about the impact of voting rights legislation on the governor's race in Mississippi misstated the status of a law that had stripped voting rights from people convicted of a range of felonies in Mississippi. While a court had overturned the law in August, that decision was vacated and an appeal is pending; it is not the case that the law has fallen.

### SPECIAL SECTION: FINE ARTS & EXHIBITS

An article on Sunday about the growing number of renovations, new buildings and upgrades to museum spaces around the country misstated the name of an architecture firm that was a collaborator on a project involving the

floor of the Rockefeller Wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. It is Beyer Blinder Belle Architects and Planners, not Beyer, Blinder, Belle Architects.

An article on Sunday about a show of about 300 photographs by Annie Leibovitz at the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, Ark., misstated Alejo Benedetti's role at the museum. He is its curator of contemporary art, not its acting curator of contemporary art.

Errors are corrected during the press run whenever possible, so some errors noted here may not have appeared in all editions.

Watch The Times.  
[NYTimes.com/Video](https://www.nytimes.com/video).

## Opinion

The New York Times

## The People Who Broke the House

Michelle Cottle

A domestic correspondent for Opinion and a host of "Matter of Opinion."

WHEN it comes to Congress, Americans have come to expect a certain baseline of dysfunction. But I think most of us can agree that the current House Republican majority is something special. Overthrowing a speaker for the first time in history. Rejecting multiple nominees to replace him. Members publicly trashing one another. One faction's supporters threatening opposing members.

And so here we languish, with the government's most basic functions held hostage by a conference divided over everything from ideological differences to petty personal slights: *Candidate X broke his promise! Candidate Y ignores me! Candidate Z never votes for my bills!* It's like watching a pack of middle schoolers hopped up on hormones and Skittles.

To help make sense of this dark farce, it is useful to dig into the warring factions that have already destroyed the speaker dreams of multiple colleagues. Boiling down the action so far: A tiny gaggle of eight Republicans, mostly hard-right extremists, took down Kevin McCarthy. Then a larger group of hard-liners quashed the candidacy of Steve Scalise, the majority leader, before it even came up for a floor vote, with an eye toward elevating one of their own, the chronically belligerent Jim Jordan. But a coalition of moderates, institutionalists and members who just can't stomach Mr. Jordan struck back, voting him down again and again and again — and again, if you count Friday's closed-conference ballot effectively stripping him of the nomination.

These were not — are not — sharply delineated factions. The rings overlap and include outliers with more particular grievances. And don't even try to suss out actual versus professed motives. That way lies madness. But as this crisis drags on into a fourth week, we should pause to appreciate some of the people and forces that have mired us in this mess.

## Matt Gaetz

The man who started it all. Since the January speaker's battle, this Florida Man has been the face of the anti-establishment, slash-and-burn hard-liners looking to upend how the House operates, devolve power to the rank-and-file — and maximize their faction's influence, of course. On Oct. 2, Mr. Gaetz filed the motion to vacate the speaker's chair against Mr. McCarthy, just two days after Mr. McCarthy worked with Democrats to pass a stopgap bill to keep the government running through mid-November. For the coup crew, this was the final, unpardonable sin.

## Nancy Mace

A relatively moderate Republican representing a relatively moderate district in South Carolina, she was the striking outlier among the anti-McCarthy eight. Why did she posse up with the wingers? She says Kev broke his word. "I made deals with Kevin McCarthy, with the speaker, that he has not kept to help women in this country. And we have done nothing for them," she told reporters after the vote. And she complained on social media that he had "not lived up to his word on how the House would operate" and failed to take "action on many issues we care about and were promised."

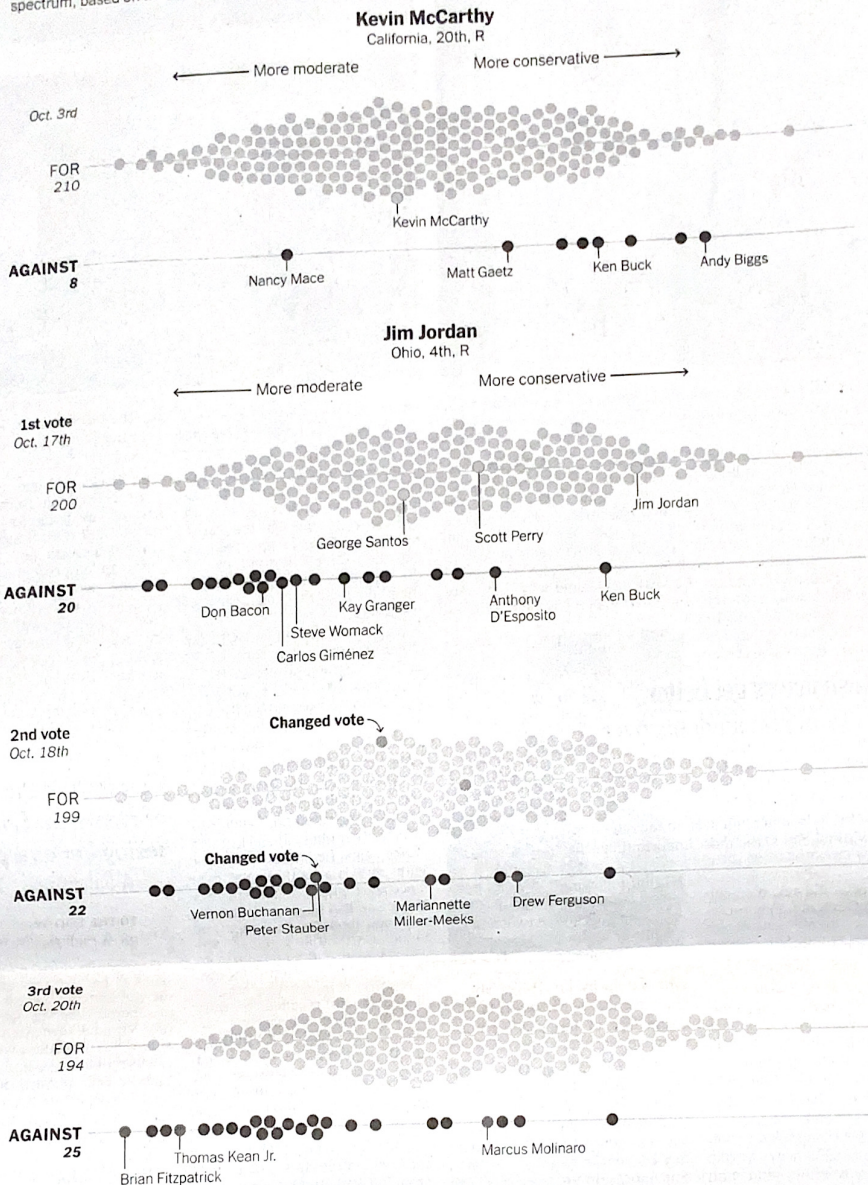
From there, things just got weird. The following week, Ms. Mace showed up on Capitol Hill in a white shirt emblazoned with a giant scarlet "A" — which, as she told it, symbolized her "being a woman up here" who had been "demonized" for her "vote" and her "voice."

Ms. Mace also announced that she would oppose Mr. Scalise for speaker because, while a Louisiana state legislator, he appeared at an event sponsored by white supremacists. (The details of the 2002 episode remain a bit murky.) Fair enough. Wouldn't want people to think the G.O.P. condoned racist nonsense from anyone other than Donald Trump!

But Ms. Mace's decision to jump on the Jordan

## The Republicans Who Blocked Jordan and McCarthy From the Speakership

Across four votes in the House, both conservative and moderate Republican holdouts ousted Kevin McCarthy and denied Jim Jordan the speaker's gavel. The darker dots show where those holdouts fall on the ideological spectrum, based on their voting records.



Note: "Present" votes and absences not included. Source: Ideology scores are from DW-NOMINATE, based on congressional voting records.

TAYLOR MAGGIACOMO/THE NEW YORK TIMES

dan bandwagon seemed odd on both political grounds — she has warned that moderate Republicans will lose in 2024 if bullied into taking conservative positions, which is what Mr. Jordan & Company live for — and personal ones. She is an advocate for victims of sexual assault, and Mr. Jordan has been credibly accused of turning a blind eye to sexual assaults by a team doctor during his stint as an assistant wrestling coach at Ohio State in the 1980s and 1990s. (He has denied any wrongdoing.)

Asked about this on "Face the Nation," Ms. Mace claimed to be unfamiliar with the allegations, though they have been the focus of news accounts for years. Whatever. Her behavior thus far has been a head-scratcher.

## Scott Perry

Most members of the anti-Scalise voting bloc

were allies or members of the House Freedom Caucus, of which Mr. Perry is the chairman. These hard-liners made clear that Mr. Scalise was too establishment for their taste. "No matter what happens, I will never vote for the status quo," Mr. Perry wrote, explaining his preference for Mr. Jordan.

## Ken Buck

The Colorado conservative helped boot Mr. McCarthy. But he then refused, publicly and proudly, to back his fellow Freedom Caucuser Mr. Jordan. He instead repeatedly voted for Tom Emmer, the majority whip, though he says he doesn't even like the guy.

Mr. Buck may have a host of problems with Mr. Jordan — which would speak well of him — but he has specifically called out his colleague's election denialism. "I also want to

make sure that we don't have somebody who was involved in the activities surrounding Jan. 6," he told CNN. Giving aid and comfort to insurrectionists is apparently a red line for Mr. Buck. How refreshing!

## Don Bacon

The Nebraska lawmaker hails from a district Joe Biden won in 2020, so it makes sense that he might not be cuckoo for Mr. Jordan. He also takes issue with the bullying behavior of the hard-liners. "You can't have a minority of the majority run the House, and that's what's going on," he told the Nebraska Examiner. And he was among those who spoke up about the threats lawmakers and their families were receiving from pro-Jordan nutters.

## Drew Ferguson

The Georgia conservative supported Mr. Jordan in his first round of voting. But the pro-Jordan thuggery ticked him off, so he went anti-Jordan in Rounds 2 and 3. "When the pressure campaigns and attacks on fellow members ramped up, it became clear to me that the House Republican Conference does not need a bully as the speaker," he said in a statement.

## Carlos Giménez

Incensed at what had been done to Mr. McCarthy, Mr. Giménez, who represents the southernmost tip of Florida, is among those to proclaim themselves OK — that is, Only Kevin — until the bitter end. "I will not partake in this despicable coup," he wrote last week. "Speaker McCarthy should have never been removed to begin with."

## George Santos

This one was personal. Congress's most notorious fabulist declared himself an "Anyone but Scalise" voter. Why? He has grouched that Mr. Scalise has ignored him all year and so did not deserve his support. Forget ideology or policy or politics — or the 23-count indictment against him. Hell hath no fury like a House member with hurt fee-fees.

## Anthony D'Esposito

The New York freshman is among the half-dozen Jordan opponents representing districts Mr. Biden won. More specifically, he objected to Mr. Jordan's history of opposing funding vital to New Yorkers, and he voiced concerns about Mr. Jordan's approach to the current funding battle. "The people that I represent back home — they don't want our government to shut down and neither do I," he told The Wall Street Journal.

## Kay Granger

Mr. Jordan was opposed by more than a half-dozen Republican members of the powerful Appropriations Committee, of which Ms. Granger is the chairwoman. Tasked with getting the government funded, appropriators are known as a fairly pragmatic bunch. Mr. Jordan's antagonistic, block-everything approach was of concern to several. "This was a vote of conscience and I stayed true to my principles," Ms. Granger wrote, explaining why she stuck with Mr. Scalise over Mr. Jordan. "Intimidation and threats will not change my position."

## Steve Womack

The Arkansas lawmaker was among the appropriators to oppose Mr. Jordan. He said he voted against Mr. Jordan at least in part "on principle" because of how badly Mr. Scalise had been treated. "He defeated Mr. Jordan in our conference vote and then was promptly kneecapped before he could win over his opponents," Mr. Womack said in a statement.

By no means is this a comprehensive list of the players and their concerns. And, as new candidates pile into the Thunderdome for the next round, who knows what fresh divisions may surface? Don't look away, America — no matter how tempted you may be. This is your House majority in action.

A look at some of the Republicans who have made the chamber speakerless.