



NEWS ANALYSIS

After Jordan Falls, House Republicans Ask What's to Come

By CARL HULSE

WASHINGTON — Representative Jim Jordan was brought down by the revolt of the rule followers.

Withstanding intense pressure, a solid bloc of more mainstream Republicans, many with military and executive experience and a desire to legislate rather than blow things up, pulled the party in their direction. They believed that installing Mr. Jordan, a hard-right Ohioan and political brawler, would reward colleagues who had played dirty in unseating Speaker Kevin McCarthy and undermining the candidacy of Representative Steve Scalise of Louisiana.

It particularly galled them that Mr. Scalise, the No. 2 Republican, defeated Mr. Jordan, the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, in the initial party vote to choose a replacement for Mr. McCarthy only to then watch Mr. Jordan's allies immediately pivot to denying Mr. Scalise the speakership on the floor. The anti-Jordan lawmakers then found themselves under a withering social media attack from the right and confronting violent threats against them and their families for balking at voting for Mr. Jordan.

It only reinforced the resistance among the Republicans who see themselves as institutionalists. They insist that they just want to legislate in a conservative but orderly fashion and escape the chaos that has rocked Republicans for more than two weeks, damaging their image and their prospects for holding the House in next year's elections.

"These are the folks who are the ultimate team players," said Representative Mario Diaz-Balart, Republican of Florida and an informal ringleader of the rule-follower caucus, about those who joined with him and others to beat back the Jordan candidacy. "These are the folks that fall on their swords on tough votes."

It wasn't just their tactics that finished off Mr. Jordan, who found himself on the wrong end of a lopsided secret vote that he should drop out. It was Mr. Jordan's ideology and record. Many



The withdrawal of Representative Jim Jordan, center, touched off what could be the most wide-open speaker contest in recent memory.

HAIYUN JIANG FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

in the resistance were members of the Appropriations Committee, and they saw Mr. Jordan as a disrupter who had engineered past government shutdowns and represented a likelihood of more ahead.

They were also people with extensive military backgrounds, like Representative Steve Womack of Arkansas, as well as some with executive experience at high levels of local government, like Representative Carlos Gimenez of Florida, the former Miami fire chief and mayor of Miami-Dade County.

"I take no glee," said Representative Don Bacon, Republican of Nebraska, a former Air Force general who refused to bend on Mr. Jordan's candidacy, saying the election process that led to his nomination was tainted and that Mr. Jordan himself had

excessive baggage. "I just didn't feel he was right for the leadership role."

But the decision to clean the slate and start anew by trying again to choose a speaker beginning on Monday has not stemmed the Republican chaos. Nor is a weekend cooling-off period likely to heal the deep wounds caused by the internal turmoil. Those who supported Mr. Jordan as their best chance for a hard-right takeover of the House were fuming as they stormed out of the Capitol on Friday.

Representative Matt Gaetz, the Florida Republican who touched off the tumult with his successful ouster of Mr. McCarthy, said Mr. Jordan had been "knifed by secret ballot, anonymously, in a closed-door meeting in the bowels of the Capitol."

There are also deep ideological differences among House Republicans that must be bridged somehow, with some of the more mainstream members eager to pass spending bills that can be negotiated with the Senate and White House while those on the far right want to use their leverage to push extremely conservative policies with no chance of becoming law.

The end of Mr. Jordan's candidacy also touched off what could be the most wide-open speaker competition in recent memory. The main contenders for that top job are typically fairly obvious. That is clearly not the case this time.

The explosion of possible candidates after Mr. Jordan's withdrawal made it clear that Republicans were going to have to sort through an extensive field

on an abbreviated timeline.

Many of those announcing or taking the pulse of their colleagues about a bid are little known outside their districts or are committee chairs without national profiles. Their backgrounds raised the question of who had the level of experience and legislative acumen to go toe-to-toe not only with House Republicans' own fractious members but with Senate Democrats and the Biden administration. The speaker also typically serves as chief fund-raiser for the party's House campaign operation, not to mention being in the constitutional line of succession to the nation's highest office.

"On a very serious note, this is talking about the person third in line to the presidency," said Mr. McCarthy, who lost the job early this month. "A lot of people here

that might put their name in might not have the knowledge of what it takes."

"I'm concerned about where we go from here," he said.

Still, Republicans said they believed they could and would move quickly, particularly in light of the administration's request for new funding for the conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East and a fast-approaching Nov. 17 deadline for deciding on how to fund the federal government.

"There is still a tremendous pool of talent, people who love this country and understand the need for us to address things like the border and the looming government shutdown," said Representative Dusty Johnson, Republican of South Dakota and a leader of the Main Street Caucus, a group of more pragmatic, business-oriented Republicans.

With so many interested, it is hard to gauge who might emerge from a group of House Republicans badly splintered by serious ideological disputes, differences over the role and scope of government, even generational disputes over how to engage in contemporary politics.

And getting elected speaker, which just proved to be out of reach for two of the most seasoned House Republicans after Mr. McCarthy's fall, is just the beginning. Any new speaker will have to find a way to advance spending bills that have been bogged down in intramural Republican fights and handle the new administration spending request that will again underscore the Republican divide over assistance to Ukraine.

Whether any person can knit House Republicans together to address these difficult issues after what has transpired in recent weeks is a legitimate question.

"I've heard it said in our conference that Jesus can't get to 217," said Representative Thomas Massie, Republican of Kentucky and a backer of Mr. Jordan, referring to the number of votes required to become speaker while Republicans hold just 221 seats. "And I've also heard it said that nobody can get to 217."

That proposition will now be tested anew.