



# MCCARTHY FAILS IN MARATHON VOTES FOR SPEAKER, HOUSE ADJOURNS - ASSOCIATED PRESS

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*Photo: Rep. Steve Scalise, R-La., nominates Rep. Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., for the third round of votes for Speaker of the House on the opening day of the 118th Congress*

Failing to elect party leader Kevin McCarthy as the new speaker of the House, Republicans adjourned in disarray Tuesday night, ending a raucous first day of the new Congress but hoping to somehow regroup on Wednesday from his historic defeat.

The abrupt end to a long, messy Day One showed there is no easy way ahead for McCarthy who promised to fight to the finish to claim the gavel despite opposition from the chamber's most conservative members. Needing 218 votes in the full House, McCarthy got just 203 in two rounds — less even than Democrat Hakeem Jeffries in the GOP-controlled chamber — and fared even worse with 202 in round three.

Tensions rose as night fell on the new House majority, and all other business came to a halt. The House agreed to return at noon Wednesday.

"Kevin McCarthy is not going to be a speaker," declared Rep. Bob Good, R-Va., among the holdouts.

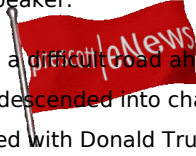
McCarthy had pledged a "battle on the floor" for as long as it took to overcome right-flank fellow Republicans who were refusing to give him their votes. But it was not at all clear how the embattled GOP leader could rebound after becoming the first House speaker nominee in 100 years to fail to win the gavel with his party in the majority.

Without a speaker, the House cannot fully form — swearing in its members, naming its committee chairmen, engaging in floor proceedings and launching investigations of the Biden administration.

"We all came here to get things done," said the second-ranking Republican, Rep. Steve Scalise, in a rousing speech urging his colleagues to drop their protest.

Railing against Democratic President Joe Biden's agenda, Scalise, himself a possible GOP compromise choice, said, "We can't start fixing

those problems until we elect Kevin McCarthy our next speaker."



It was a chaotic start to the new Congress and pointed to a difficult road ahead with Republicans now in control of the House. Lawmakers' families waited around, as what's normally a festive day descended into chaos, kids playing in the aisles or squirming in parents' arms. A new generation of conservative Republicans, many aligned with Donald Trump's MAGA agenda, want to upend business as usual in Washington, and were committed to stop McCarthy's rise without concessions to their priorities.

"The American people are watching, and it's a good thing," said Rep. Chip Roy, R-Texas, who nominated fellow conservative Rep. Jim Jordan of Ohio as an alternative for speaker.

It was the second time conservatives pushed forward a reluctant Jordan, the McCarthy rival-turned-ally, who earlier had risen to urge his colleagues, even those who backed him, to drop vote for McCarthy.

"We have to rally around him, come together" Jordan said.

In all, a core group of 19 Republicans — and then 20 — were voting for Jordan, denying McCarthy the majority he needs.

Smiling through it all, McCarthy appeared intent on simply trying to wear down his colleagues. Earlier, he strode into the chamber, posed for photos, and received a standing ovation from many on his side of the aisle. He was nominated by the third-ranking Republican, Rep. Elise Stefanik of New York, who said the Californian from gritty Bakersfield "has what it takes" to lead the House.

But a challenge was quickly raised by Rep. Andy Biggs, R-Ariz., a conservative former leader of the Freedom Caucus, who was nominated by a fellow conservative as speaker.

The mood was tense, at least on the Republican side, as lawmakers rose from their seats, in lengthy in-person voting. Democrats were upbeat as they cast their own historic votes for their leader, Rep. Jeffries of New York.

In the first-round tally, McCarthy won 203 votes, with 10 for Biggs and nine for other Republicans. In the second, it was 203 for McCarthy and 19 for Jordan. On the third vote, McCarthy had 202 to Jordan's 20. Democrat Jeffries had the most, 212 votes, but no nominee won a majority.

"The one thing that's clear is he doesn't have the votes," Rep. Byron Donalds, R-Fla., told CNN before joining with those voting McCarthy. "At some point, as a conference, we're gonna have to figure out who does."

The standoff over McCarthy has been building since Republicans appeared on track to win the House majority in the midterm elections. In November a new generation of Trump-aligned Republicans led the opposition to McCarthy, believing he's neither conservative enough nor tough enough to battle Democrats.

While the Senate remains in Democratic hands, barely, House Republicans are eager to confront Biden after two years of the Democrats controlling both houses of Congress.

After a private GOP morning meeting, a core group of conservatives led by the Freedom Caucus and aligned with Trump were furious, calling the meeting a "beat down" by McCarthy allies and remaining steadfast in their opposition to the GOP leader.

"There's one person who could have changed all this," said Rep. Scott Perry, R-Pa., the chairman of the Freedom Caucus and a leader of Trump's effort to challenge the 2020 presidential election.

The group said McCarthy had refused the group's last-ditch demand for rules changes in a meeting late Monday at the Capitol.

"If you want to drain the swamp you can't put the biggest alligator in control of the exercise," said Rep. Matt Gaetz, R-Fla.

McCarthy's backers grew angry as well. Rep. Dusty Johnson, R-S.D., a leader of a more pragmatic conservative group, said "frustration was rising" with the minority faction opposing McCarthy.



As the day began, outgoing House Speaker Nancy Pelosi gavelled closed the last session, moving aside for new House leadership in her Democratic Party, to a standing ovation from colleagues on her side of the aisle.

The chaplain opened with a prayer seeking to bring the 118th Congress to life.

Democrats enthusiastically nominated Jeffries, D-N.Y., who is taking over as party leader, as their choice for speaker — a typically symbolic gesture for the minority but one that took on new importance with Republicans at odds with each other.

"A Latino is nominating in this chamber a Black man for our leader for the the first time in American history," said Rep. Pete Aguilar of California, the third-ranking Democrat, in nominating his colleague.

But there was only negative history for the Republicans. as McCarthy fell short, even with an endorsement from former President Trump.

Next steps are uncertain. The second-ranking House Republican, Scalise of Louisiana, could be a next choice, a conservative widely liked by his colleagues and seen by some as a hero after surviving a gunshot wound suffered during a congressional baseball game practice in 2017.

A speaker's contest last went multiple rounds in 1923.

This year's Republican deadlock was in stark contrast to the other side of the Capitol, where Senate GOP leader Mitch McConnell will officially become the chamber's longest-serving party leader in history. Democrat Chuck Schumer of New York will remain majority leader.

Despite being in the minority in the Senate, where Democrats hold a slim 51-49 majority, McConnell could prove to be a viable partner as Biden seeks bipartisan victories in the new era of divided government. The two men are expected to appear together later in the week in the GOP leader's home state of Kentucky to celebrate federal infrastructure investment in a vital bridge that connects Kentucky and Ohio.