

# [***Conservatives deal another blow to Speaker Johnson, defeating FISA rule after Trump push***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BS5-P371-DY7V-G01M-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

(CNN) &#8212; House conservatives revolted against GOP leadership and defeated a key vote on the floor Wednesday, the latest blow to Speaker Mike Johnson that comes after former President Donald Trump called on Republicans to kill a controversial surveillance law.

Trump had urged House Republicans to reject a reauthorization of the law, known as FISA, ahead of the key procedural vote on Wednesday, adding to headaches for GOP leaders who have struggled to build support for the legislation, but were still attempting to forge ahead and advance the bill.

"KILL FISA," Trump wrote on his social media platform Truth Social.

This marks the fourth time in Johnson's tenure that the House has defeated a rule vote, a major embarrassment for leadership.

The tally was 193 to 228, with 19 Republicans bucking House GOP leadership and voting with Democrats to sink the procedural vote and take down a rule to govern debate on the reauthorization bill as well as several other bills.

House Republicans have been fiercely divided over how to handle the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act reauthorization, putting pressure on [*Johnson*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/07/politics/congress-johnson-speakership-threat-greene/index.html) to find a path forward amid competing factions within his conference. With the threat of a vote on his ouster looming, the Louisiana Republican's every move is under even more intense scrutiny, and the speaker has once again found himself odds with his right flank over the surveillance law.

Johnson signaled he still believes they can find a path forward on FISA this week despite deep divisions and little progress after two lengthy conference meetings devoted to the topic Wednesday.

"We still have time on the clock this week," he told reporters. "We are going to try and find a way to unlock the rule and I think it's possible."

"We will be talking to members about it tonight, trying to figure that out," he added.

Johnson had previously announced that the House would take up a FISA reauthorization bill this week. The bill, titled the Reforming Intelligence and Securing America Act, would reauthorize Section 702 of FISA for five years and aims to impose a series of reforms. Now, the fate of the effort is up in the air after the failure of the key vote Wednesday.

Several conservatives announced they would move to sink the procedural vote earlier in the day.

Republican Rep. Matt Gaetz, said he would vote against the procedural vote. Additionally, Florida GOP Rep. Anna Paulina Luna wrote on X, "we are killing FISA," in response to Trump's Truth Social post. And Tennessee GOP Rep. Tim Burchett told CNN he would be voting no on the rule. When told that would kill it, he said, "good."

Tensions rise in House GOP conference

In a sign of rising tensions as Republican infighting intensifies, Rep. Tom McClintock stood up in a conference meeting Wednesday evening and called for "retribution" for any GOP colleagues who oppose key procedural votes, according to a source in the room.

Separately, Johnson has made plans to trek down to Mar-a-Lago on Friday to appear at a joint news conference with the former president to deliver remarks on "election integrity" - a topic Trump cares deeply about. The development was first reported by CNN.

The move comes as the House Republican leader is [*fending off a challenge to his speakership*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/09/politics/marjorie-taylor-greene-johnson-ouster-threat/index.html) amid a motion to vacate filed by Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene. The Georgia Republican has yet to take the necessary step to [*force a floor vote on the resolution*](https://www.cnn.com/2023/10/03/politics/mccarthy-gaetz-vote-motion-to-vacate/index.html), essentially keeping the threat in her back pocket for now.

Multiple sources close to Johnson and Trump said allies of the speaker have asked the former president to publicly support Johnson, or at least stay out of the back-and-forth altogether.

Johnson told members at a closed-door conference meeting Wednesday morning that he spoke with Trump Tuesday night. But, according to members, Johnson told them they didn't discuss FISA.

Authority for Section 702 was[*extended*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/07/politics/congress-johnson-speakership-threat-greene/index.html) through April 19 as part of the National Defense Authorization Act.

Controversy over surveillance law

The law as it stands allows the US intelligence community to collect the communications records of foreign persons based overseas, but it also allows the FBI to search the data it collects for Americans' information in what critics have called a "backdoor" search.

The searches of US persons' information are governed by a set of internal rules and procedures designed to protect Americans' privacy and civil liberties, but critics say that loopholes allow the FBI to search the data it collects for Americans' information - as opposed to from foreign adversaries - without proper justification.

The complicated ***politics*** surrounding the law have long united strange bedfellows: Some conservative Republicans have joined forces with progressive Democrats to push for reforms to the authority, while security-focused Democrats and Republicans have opposed major new restrictions.

One major sticking point is whether the FBI should be required to obtain a warrant before querying the database for information on US citizens.

In a sign of how challenging the issue has proved for House Republicans to navigate, leadership pulled [*a pair of surveillance law bills from the floor*](https://www.cnn.com/2023/12/11/politics/house-gop-leadership-pulls-dueling-fisa-bills/index.html) in December amid internal GOP divisions. In February, a spokesperson for the speaker [*said*](https://x.com/RajShahDC/status/1757866756641554460?s=20) the House would consider FISA reform "at a later date" to allow for more time to reach consensus on a path forward.

The authority has also become a high-profile political target of conservative Republicans after it became known that a different section of FISA was [*inappropriately used*](https://www.cnn.com/2019/12/18/politics/horowitz-hearing-russia-report-carter-page/index.html) to surveil Trump 2016 campaign aide Carter Page.

In his call to "kill FISA," Trump wrote on Truth Social, "IT WAS ILLEGALLY USED AGAINST ME, AND MANY OTHERS. THEY SPIED ON MY CAMPAIGN!!!"

"FISA and Section 702 have been essential to intercepting communications of dangerous foreign actors overseas, understanding the threats against our country, countering our adversaries, and saving countless American lives," Johnson said in a letter to colleagues on Friday. "Our responsibility now is simple: maintain the tool but strictly prohibit future abuses."

The speaker went on to say that the bill the House is expected to take up includes reforms "that will establish new procedures to rein in the FBI, increase accountability at the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court (FISC), impose penalties for wrongdoing, and institute unprecedented transparency across the FISA process so we no longer have to wait years to uncover potential abuses."

Trump's former Attorney General Bill Barr came out swinging against the former president and House Republicans for tanking the key vote in a phone interview with CNN.

"I think it's a travesty and reckless," Barr told CNN.

Barr, who has long been critical of Trump on multiple fronts, went after the former president for urging House Republicans to sink the procedural vote.

"I think that he's a flawed leader and this shows one of the reasons he is flawed," Barr said.

Addressing Trump's claim that the surveillance law was used against him during the FBI investigation into the 2016 Trump campaign and Russia, Barr stated that the provisions slated to be reauthorized "had nothing to do with what happened to him."

Barr also reflected on the national security implications if FISA does not get reauthorized.

"We're faced with probably the greatest threat to the homeland from terrorist attack and our means of defending against that is FISA. And to take that tool away I think is going to result in successful terrorist attack and the loss of life" he said.

CNN's Lauren Fox contributed to this report.

This story has been updated with additional developments.

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