

# [***Johnson won't change rules over removing him from speakership after hardliners revolt***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BTW-K041-DY7V-G00C-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

Speaker Mike Johnson announced he will not [*change the procedure*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/17/politics/mike-johnson-foreign-aid-analysis/index.html) for removing him from the speakership, after hardliners reacted with fury to a proposed [*change to House rules.*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/16/politics/mike-johnson-foreign-aid-plan-republican-reaction/index.html)

"Since the beginning of the 118th Congress, the House rule allowing a Motion to Vacate from a single member has harmed this office and our House majority," Johnson wrote on X.

"Recently, many members have encouraged me to endorse a new rule to raise this threshold. While I understand the importance of that idea, any rule change requires a majority of the full House, which we do not have. We will continue to govern under the existing rules."

CNN and other outlets reported Thursday morning that, according to multiple GOP sources, Johnson was being lobbied by his members to raise the threshold required to trigger the procedure to oust the speaker - a move that would help ensure the Louisiana Republican [*can pass foreign aid bills*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/17/politics/mike-johnson-ukraine-aid/index.html) and still keep his job without needing to rely on Democrats to bail him out. Currently, any single member can force a floor vote on the motion to vacate - part of the deal Kevin McCarthy made to become speaker last year.

The suggestion set off another round of fury amid conservative lawmakers who are unhappy with the speaker over his proposed package of bills to send aid to Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan among other priorities. An effort has been brewing for weeks to potentially oust Johnson, led by Georgia Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, and the proposal to change the rules around ousting the speaker has ignited intense speculation over Johnson's future.

In recent days, rank-and-file House Republicans had privately encouraged Johnson to insert language into the text of a rule for the foreign aid bills to alter the motion to vacate and make it harder for any single member to use.

The House is finished with floor action for the day, which means that the earliest that Greene could make a motion to oust Johnson would be on Friday. If Greene takes that consequential step, the House will have to consider it within two legislative days. A floor vote to oust Johnson would require a majority to succeed.

House leadership will have to decide how to handle the issue. A motion to table - or kill - the resolution could be offered and voted on first. That would also only require a simple majority to succeed.

News that Johnson was being lobbied to raise the threshold was first reported [*by Punchbowl News.*](https://punchbowl.news/article/speaker-mike-johnson-foreign-aid-leadership-considers-making-it-harder-to-oust/)

Hardliners furious with Johnson

Tensions were running high in the House on Thursday morning. At one point, Johnson was surrounded on the House floor by a number of far-right lawmakers in a heated discussion. Johnson was essentially pinned against the back wall of the House floor with members on all sides of him, with the speaker constantly pivoting his head as he responded to members speaking to him.

The group implored Johnson to give them assurances that he would not raise the threshold on the motion to vacate, and the speaker would not commit, leaving many of the lawmakers fuming and some even saying this was their red line that could propel the motion to oust him forward.

"We notified him that any effort to change the threshold of motion to vacate would likely induce the motion to vacate," GOP Rep. Matt Gaetz, who participated in the conversation, told CNN.

GOP Rep. Derrick Van Orden entered the 20-minute heated floor conversation as it was ongoing and dared his right-wing colleagues to move on the motion to oust Johnson, even calling Gaetz "tubby."

One GOP lawmaker who participated in the conversation with Johnson, who was granted the anonymity to speak freely, said Van Orden started "threatening everyone to go ahead with a motion to vacate."

The GOP lawmaker described Johnson as "very frustrated."

Greene warned the speaker against trying to change the threshold and refused to rule out moving to remove him on Thursday.

"Mike Johnson owes our entire conference a meeting, and if he wants to change the motion to vacate, he needs to come before the Republican conference that elected him and tell us of his intentions, and tell us what this rule change to the motion to vacate is going to be," Greene told CNN's Manu Raju.

"It's unprecedented. This has never happened in history, and it's completely wrong. He owes our conference the truth, and he owes Republicans answers," she added.

On top of discussing motion to vacate on the floor, lawmakers said they tried to persuade Johnson to change his course on the foreign aid bills, but the speaker was not receptive.

Conservative Rep. Anna Paulina Luna said she suggested to Johnson on Wednesday night that he take a step back as he tries to push through the supplemental package against hardliners' wishes. Luna said there is concern supporting the motion to vacate could potentially cost Republicans the majority.

"I think a bigger issue at hand, though, right now is why is it that we have messaging coming from the speaker that's contradictory to what happened with few months back," she said.

Democrats weigh how to proceed

The House Rules Committee is meeting Thursday morning to begin considering the foreign aid bills. Text of the rule will be unveiled after the committee approves it, which is expected later in the day.

Democrats will be needed in that committee vote and on the floor to advance the rule, as the House Democratic Caucus is still weighing how to proceed as Johnson's job is on the line and as the critical three-part supplemental aid package for Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan hangs in the balance.

Democrats are still divided on the question, with some arguing it's imperative the party overcomes the bitter partisanship that has been a hallmark of this Congress to deliver critical aid to Ukraine and others arguing it's up to Republicans to pass their own rules.

"I mean, it's just another layer for sure," Democratic Rep. Dan Kildee, a Democrat told CNN, adding, "It's a ridiculous rule, which, you know, whether or not it's doing the right thing in this moment where we have a global security challenge, we ought to be trying to bail them out of their ***politics*** is another question."

Rep. Pramila Jayapal, a Washington state Democrat, said she wouldn't support a Republican rule regardless of whether it included changes to the motion to vacate.

"I mean, I think they need to pass the rule on their own, but I've thought from the beginning that Kevin McCarthy never should have agreed to that," Jayapal said. "He sold his soul early on and he thought he could control everybody."

Democratic Rep. Mike Quigley said he was inclined to back the rule and would think about even supporting it if it included a change to how the motion to vacate functioned.

"I think dysfunction is everybody's problem. And I'd be open to whatever it takes so that we can function appropriately," Quigley said.

Democratic Rep. Jared Moskowitz said leadership needed to weigh in before he decided whether to support such a change.

One thing that is hanging over discussions is that many Democrats view Johnson as a more honest broker than McCarthy. Despite the fact they don't agree with him on many issues, they also believe that he's been a fair partner at a critical moment to pass government funding and now this aid to Ukraine.

This story has been updated with additional developments.

CNN's Haley Talbot contributed to this report.

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