

# [***As Chaos Mounts in Congress, are House Republicans Throwing in the Towel?***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BBP-MBC1-DY68-12HG-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Highlight:** "We've seen moments where there are more heavy exits from Congress, and that it is like a canary in the coal mine," Grant Reeher of Syracuse University said.

**Body**

The House Republican Conference has seen an unusual flurry of high-profile retirement announcements that has some political observers wondering whether this trend is a silent admission that the GOP will lose its majority this year.

So far, 15 House [*Republicans*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/republicans?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) have announced their retirements, doing so without plans to seek higher office. However, more unusual than the sheer number of retirements is some of the individuals who've chosen to leave.

Tennessee Representative Mark Green, who announced his retirement Wednesday, is 59 and chairs the Committee on Homeland Security. Wisconsin Representative Mike Gallagher, who announced his retirement on February 10, is just 39 and has been described as a "rising star," in part due to his high-profile work chairing the Select Committee on Strategic Competition between the United States and the Chinese Communist Party.

Washington Representative Cathy McMorris Rodgers, the 54-year-old chair of the powerful Energy & Commerce Committee, announced her retirement on February 8. And 48-year-old North Carolina Representative Patrick McHenry, chair of the powerful Financial Services Committee and the former speaker *pro tempore*, said he'd retire on December 5.

"We've seen moments where there are more heavy exits from [*Congress*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/congress?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships), and that it is like a canary in the coal mine," Grant Reeher, a political science professor at Syracuse University's Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, told *Newsweek*. "If I'm the speaker, I'm definitely worried."

Reeher said the exiting of governance-oriented members should be a sign of concern, particularly when their exit will create open seats that could be vulnerable to a challenge from the opposing party. This could be especially worrying for Republicans representing districts that expect their elected officials to deliver results.

The 118th Congress has been one of the least productive in history, passing just 39 bills since its inception in January 2023. [*ABC*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/abc?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) News reported that this puts it on track to be "one of the least functional sessions ever."

While the Democratic-controlled [*Senate*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/senate?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) has maintained some semblance of bipartisanship, passing an aid bill on February 13 to fund war efforts in Ukraine and Israel, the House has faced heated division.

Not only have [*Democrats*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/democrats?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) and Republicans come into conflict, making the body's most basic job of funding the federal government an arduous task, but Republicans have faced bitter intraparty divisions.

It took former Speaker [*Kevin McCarthy*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/kevin-mccarthy?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) 15 rounds to become speaker, and he was removed from the position just 269 days into his tenure after conservative Representative [*Matt Gaetz*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/matt-gaetz?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) of Florida filed a "motion to vacate" that resulted in eight Republicans joining Democrats to vote for his removal.

Under his successor, Speaker [*Mike Johnson*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/mike-johnson?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships), Republicans have continued to argue over policy priorities, sometimes [*sinking bills*](https://www.newsweek.com/republicans-turn-their-own-after-mayorkas-impeachment-fail-1867674?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) supported by the speaker publicly on the House floor. The conference briefly unified to elect Johnson in October, but after the Louisianan moved to extend government funding deadlines to March, [*chatter emerged*](https://www.newsweek.com/republicans-talk-ousting-speaker-johnson-amid-spending-deal-fervor-1859302?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) from some Republicans calling for his ouster.

"They're quitting because they know that they're going to lose, and they're sick of the bulls\*\*\*—plain and simple," Democratic Representative [*Jim McGovern*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/jim-mcgovern?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) of Massachusetts told *Newsweek*. "I think that's why you're seeing so many people leave. Some of these people are in key positions, and they would remain in key positions, even in the minority."

McGovern, who has served in the House since 1997 and is the top Democrat on the Rules Committee, said some of the people leaving are his friends, and while they may not speak ill of their party publicly, they'll talk about their dismay with its dysfunction behind closed doors.

The National Republican Congressional Committee, which is responsible for maintaining the GOP's majority, did not return *Newsweek*'s inquiry into whether the retirements should serve as a warning sign to the party. Neither did Johnson's office.

However, Florida Representative Byron Donalds, an emerging star within the party and a member of the conservative Freedom Caucus, dismissed concerns. He noted that some of the people leaving, like the 81-year-old chair of the powerful Appropriations Committee, Kay Granger of Texas, are term limited in their positions.

"We have a lot of members who are nearly done with their term as chairman, so why stay around at that point?" Donalds told *Newsweek*. "I think chairmen leaving after they're done makes sense."

Donalds said with veteran lawmakers leaving, Republicans will see a wave of fresh talent that may hold ideologies more cohesive with younger members of the conference, which could lead to less infighting.

Additionally, the U.S. House of Representatives Press Gallery reported that 23 Democrats are retiring from the House as opposed to 21 Republicans. The caveat to this, however, is that 12 of the 23 are doing so to seek higher office while just six of the 21 Republicans are seeking political promotions.

Regarding term limits, while Granger and McHenry may have to forfeit their positions under GOP rules, McMorris Rogers, Green and Gallagher are not term limited. Some of those leaving have openly admitted to contentious House ***politics*** as influencing their decision.

In a January interview with the Indiana-based newspaper *The Republic*, Republican Representative Greg Pence—brother of former Vice President [*Mike Pence*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/mike-pence?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships)—admitted that when people ask whether "chaos in the House of Representatives" is a reason behind his decision to retire, he responds by saying, "that certainly didn't incentivize me to change my mind."

For Democrats looking to flip the House and elect Democratic Leader [*Hakeem Jeffries*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/hakeem-jeffries?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) as speaker, such comments are music to their ears.

"House Republicans are sprinting for the exits because they know they are going to lose the majority," Jacob Haythorn, a spokesperson for the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, told *Newsweek*. "They are either too embarrassed or too exhausted by their litany of legislative failures and complete surrender to extremist ***politics*** to stick around."

[*Link to Image*](https://d.newsweek.com/en/full/2350382/republicans-leave-house-droves.jpg)

**Graphic**

Republicans Leave the House in Droves

Photo by Kevin Dietsch/Getty Images

Speaker of the House Mike Johnson addresses a crowd at the U.S. Capitol on February 15, 2024 in Washington, D.C. The rookie Speaker will face wave of retirements among his party's veterans come 2024.

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