

# After intervention from Trump, Republicans re-elect far-right Mike Johnson as House Speaker

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After roughly two hours, on Friday the incoming 119th Congress re-elected Republican Representative Mike Johnson as Speaker of the House. Prior to the vote, Johnson was endorsed by President-elect Donald Trump in part for his leading role in providing the pseudo-legal justification for Republicans to reject the 2020 election results.

The Speaker of the House is one of the most powerful positions in the US government. The Speaker decides which bills come to the floor for a vote and is second in line in the order of succession behind the vice president.

Republicans will hold a thin majority in the House, 219-215. Before Friday's vote, the House Clerk confirmed that Florida lawmaker and top Trump ally Matt Gaetz had submitted a letter of resignation and would not be serving in the upcoming Congress.

Johnson, with Democratic support, was first elected Speaker in October 2023 after former Speaker Kevin McCarthy was removed by fellow House members after just 269 days in office. Johnson was able to secure Democratic support after promising to bring forward massive military spending bills that would continue to fund the Israeli genocide in Gaza and the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine.

Following Johnson's election, late Friday night House Republicans in a 215-209 vote adopted a new set of House rules that would prevent a single member from filing a motion to vacate. Under the new rules, at least nine Republican lawmakers would have to file a privileged motion to remove the Speaker. Former Representative Gaetz was the single member that filed the "motion to vacate" that toppled McCarthy's speakership.

The updated rules state that the new resolution can only be offered by "a member of the majority party" after it has "accumulated eight cosponsors from the majority party." In other words, Democrats cannot remove Johnson as Speaker under the new rules.

For a brief period on Friday, it appeared Johnson would not be elected on the first ballot. Prior to McCarthy's marathon election for Speaker in January 2023, for 100 years every Speaker had been elected on the first ballot. In Friday's initial roll-call vote, several Republicans remained silent, and three far-right Republicans, Keith Self (Texas), Ralph Norman (South Carolina) and Thomas Massie (Kentucky) voted for Republicans other than Johnson.

Several members of the House Freedom Caucus, the most right-wing members of the House, refused to initially vote for Johnson over his willingness to work with Democrats to pass spending bills that kept the government open and raised the debt ceiling. Prior to Friday's vote, Massie, an ultra-right libertarian, made clear that there were no circumstances in which he would vote for Johnson.

Several outlets reported that, after it appeared Johnson would lose on the first round of voting, Republican Nancy Mace of South Carolina personally called Trump while he was golfing to have him speak individually to Norman and Self on behalf of Johnson. Following the intervention from Trump, Self and Norman switched their votes to Johnson, providing him with a 218-215 majority.

Every single Democrat, including Michigan Representative Rashida Tlaib, New York Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Minnesota Representative Ilhan Omar, voted for New

York Representative Hakeem Jeffries for Speaker. Jeffries, an ardent supporter of Israel, was recently honored by the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York for his role in securing “\$14 billion in aid to Israel,” the organization noted in December 23, 2024 press release.

In his speech presenting Johnson the Speaker’s gavel, Jeffries promised “bipartisanship” with Republicans and the Trump administration. “The American people need us as their elected representatives in this season to put down our partisan swords and pick up bipartisan plowshares,” Jeffries said, adding, “It’s time for us to come together, not as Democrats or Republicans, but as Americans to get things done for the people.”

Less than two months ago, leading Democrats, including Vice President Kamala Harris were characterizing Trump as a “fascist.” After Trump’s election, that word has disappeared from their lexicon. On Friday, Jeffries promised that “House Democrats will work hard to find bipartisan common ground with our Republican colleagues in the incoming administration on any issue, whenever and wherever possible...”

Signaling Democratic support for Trump and the Republicans’ plans for a massive attack on immigrants, Jeffries said, “We will work with anyone to secure our borders, and we will work with anyone to fix our broken immigration system in a comprehensive and bipartisan manner.”

After pledging to work with fascistic Republicans in waging war on immigrants, Jeffries promised that Democrats will also “fight to defend the free enterprise system.”

In his speech accepting the role as 56th Speaker of the House, Johnson pledged to carry out Trump’s “America First” agenda, which he said starts with Congress providing “our border and immigration enforcement agents the resources that they need to do their job. We will secure the border wall.”

Smiling at Jeffries, Johnson added, “You said you’d work with us on that, Hakeem. I’m counting on it.”

Johnson added that Republicans would “extend the Trump tax cuts” for the ultra-wealthy, pass legislation to “eliminate the Green New Deal” and “expedite new drilling permits.”

Promising to enact massive social spending cuts and eliminate potentially tens of thousands of jobs across

the federal government, Johnson said, “We are going to pass legislation to roll back the size and scope of government. ... And in coordination with President Trump and his administration, we are going to create a leaner, faster, and more efficient federal workforce.”

While social programs such as Medicaid and SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, food stamps) are on the chopping block, Johnson pledged no expense would be spared for the Pentagon. “It is time now to reinstate fear in our enemies, refocus our mission on lethality, and realign commitment to peace through strength right now. We have to prioritize the things that matter most. We have to make adequate investments in defense.”



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