

In new gesture to fascist right, House Speaker purges two Democrats from committee while promoting Marjorie Taylor Greene

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In a series of actions to appease the fascist right wing of the Republican caucus in the House of Representatives, Speaker Kevin McCarthy has barred two Democrats from the House Intelligence Committee, while naming ultra-right conspiracy theory advocate Marjorie Taylor Greene to a key investigative panel.

McCarthy rejected the renomination of representatives Adam Schiff and Eric Swalwell, both of California, which was proposed by House Democratic Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries. The move is unprecedented in both cases. Schiff was the outgoing chairman of the committee, while Swalwell had been a member for several years. Jeffries sent McCarthy a letter Saturday nominating both men.

The Intelligence Committee is a select committee, with members chosen by the Speaker in consultation with the Minority Leader, but with the final decision entirely in McCarthy's hands.

The rejection of Schiff and Swalwell is a demand backed by many members of the Republican caucus, which now has a narrow nine-seat majority in the House. There is particular support from the Freedom Caucus, the ultra-right group whose members blocked McCarthy's election as speaker for 14 ballots.

Only on the 15th ballot did 20 holdouts agree either to vote for McCarthy or vote "present," a maneuver that allowed him to win, in return for a raft of concessions, some public, on House rules, some private, on issues like committee nominations.

McCarthy claimed the exclusion of the two Democrats was necessary to uphold the "standard" of the House Intelligence Committee, which oversees the CIA, the NSA and the rest of the vast US intelligence

apparatus. In relation to Schiff, he cited the former chairman's deceitfulness in relation to the investigation into then-president Trump, which led to Trump's first impeachment, when Schiff claimed there was irrefutable evidence of Trump's connection to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

This was, of course, a brazen lie, peddled for political purposes. But the charge by McCarthy is nonetheless cynical, since if every representative who lied about US intelligence secrets was removed, there would be no one left to sit on the Intelligence Committee.

The committee does not exist to regulate or oversee the intelligence agencies, but to give a congressional rubber stamp to the assassinations, illegal spying, coups and other crimes and provocations in which the CIA and its associated agencies are engaged. Both Schiff and his Republican predecessor Devin Nunes were collaborators trusted by the intelligence apparatus.

As for Swalwell, he has become a political target of the fascist right because a woman, alleged to be a Chinese intelligence agent, helped to fundraise for his 2014 congressional campaign. When the FBI informed Swalwell of her alleged role, he broke off all contact with her. Subsequent House Speakers, including Republicans John Boehner and Paul Ryan, and Democrat Nancy Pelosi, made no objection to Swalwell's presence on the intelligence panel.

But the pro-Trump, fascist right singled out Swalwell after he served as an impeachment manager against Trump. The California congressman has received numerous death threats and other abuse from their sympathizers.

McCarthy himself justified the attacks on Swalwell by declaring that "if you got the briefing I got from the

FBI, you wouldn't have Swalwell on any committee.”

At least in part, the exclusion of Schiff and Swalwell is retribution for the exclusion of Republican representatives Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia and Paul Gosar of Arizona from committee positions by the Nancy Pelosi-led, Democratic-controlled House in 2021.

Both were removed for threats of violence against Democratic members of Congress: Greene for an internet posting endorsing the killing of Pelosi, Gosar for posting an anime cartoon showing himself killing Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and then marching on President Biden, sword in hand.

Neither Schiff nor Swalwell has been accused of such actions.

In a further gesture to the ultra-right, McCarthy nominated Marjorie Taylor Greene to a position on a House subcommittee formed to investigate the origins of COVID-19. Its main purpose is to promote the lying claims of the corporate media and both Democratic and Republican politicians that the virus was created in the Wuhan Institute of Virology, a leading Chinese research establishment, and then leaked either deliberately or inadvertently.

The committee is expected to summon leading US public health officials, including now-retired Dr. Anthony Fauci, and question them over claims that the US government financed the Wuhan lab, at least in part, for research into so-called “gain of function” experiments to improve the transmissibility of a virus similar to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.

To give it the appearance of scientific credibility, McCarthy named Representative Brad Wenstrup, a medical doctor in private life, to chair the committee, and added at least two other doctors, Representative Ronny Jackson of Texas, formerly Trump's White House doctor, and Representative Rich McCormick of Georgia.

McCarthy is proposing to take action against one other Democrat targeted by the fascist right, Ilhan Omar of Minnesota. The two-term representative, a Somali-American Muslim, was rebuked by the House for comments defending the Palestinians and decrying the influence of the Zionist lobby in Congress, which were condemned as anti-Semitic.

The Speaker proposes to remove her from the House

Foreign Affairs Committee, but this would require a majority vote of the full House and several Republicans have declared their opposition to the action. McCarthy can afford to lose only four votes, since all Democrats have agreed to support Omar's continued membership on the panel.



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