

Trump-backed election denier Jim Jordan fails in second vote for House speaker

Barry Grey
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On Wednesday, Representative Jim Jordan (Republican, Ohio) failed for the second time in two days to secure the votes required to become Speaker of the House. Jordan's vote actually declined to 199 from the 200 he won on Tuesday, leaving him 18 votes shy of the 217 required to win a majority in the chamber.

As on Tuesday, all 212 House Democrats voted for Democratic Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries of New York, meaning Jordan could afford to lose only four of the 221 Republican votes in the narrowly divided chamber. In fact, the number of Republicans who voted against Jordan increased from 20 on Tuesday to 22 on Wednesday, as four who had voted for Jordan the previous day voted instead for other Republicans, more than offsetting the one Jordan voter who was absent on Tuesday and the two who flipped and moved into his camp in the latest ballot.

Jordan, a far-right ally of ex-President Donald Trump, who has endorsed Jordan's bid for the speakership, vowed to continue his effort to win the post, announcing a third vote for Thursday. However, his prospects seem increasingly remote, as more House Republicans are threatening to desert his camp, warning of the political costs of extending the paralysis of the House, and therefore Congress as a whole, which cannot consider or pass legislation without a speaker.

The House has been at an impasse since October 3, when a small group of far-right Republicans led by Florida's Matt Gaetz, backed by Trump, called a "motion to vacate" and removed Republican California Representative Kevin McCarthy from the speaker's office. This was in retaliation for McCarthy's agreeing to a bipartisan deal with the Democrats to avert a government shutdown on October 1 and pass a stop-gap spending bill that keeps the federal government running until November 17.

Following McCarthy's removal, Republican House Majority Leader Steve Scalise of Louisiana won majority support within the Republican Conference to succeed him, but Scalise pulled out when it became clear that members even further to the right than he would block his election in a vote on the floor of the House, at which point Jordan

announced his candidacy and won the Republican nomination in an internal vote.

The very fact that Jordan, a fascistic political provocateur and co-conspirator with Trump to overturn the 2020 election, could be nominated by the GOP as House Speaker testifies to the violent and ongoing lurch of the entire political system to the right. It is one symptom of the terminal breakdown of American democracy, as US imperialism wages war against Russia over Ukraine, arms Israel in its genocidal war against the Palestinians, and prepares for war against China.

But Jordan reflects the transformation of the Republican Party as a whole into a fascistic party. The entire leadership of the GOP in the House, including McCarthy, Scalise and Jordan, voted with two-thirds of House Republicans in the early morning hours of January 7, 2021 against certifying Biden's victory in the Electoral College vote—hours after Trump's insurrectionists had ended their siege of the US Capitol.

Emboldened by the cowardice and duplicity of Biden and the Democratic Party, who have refused to hold Trump and his Republican co-conspirators accountable, seeking instead bipartisan unity in conducting the war against Russia, Jordan has become a dominant figure in US politics. As chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, he has presided over impeachment investigations into Biden's shady business relations with his son, Hunter, led investigations of federal and state prosecutors who have indicted Trump, and pursued a far-right agenda of violent attacks on immigrants, criminalization of abortion and persecution of left-wing and progressive ideas.

Jordan advocates the gutting of social programs on which tens of millions of American workers rely, including Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. This, however, is a basic plank of the Republican agenda.

A co-founder of the far-right House Freedom Caucus, Jordan was Trump's key contact in Congress in plotting to overthrow the results of the 2020 election. He defied a subpoena to testify before the House January 6 Committee.

January 6 Committee Co-Chair Liz Cheney, the former Republican Representative from Wyoming, said earlier this month: “Jim Jordan knew more about what Donald Trump had planned for January 6 than any other member of the House of Representatives. Jim Jordan was part of the conspiracy in which Donald Trump was engaged as he attempted to overturn the election.”

Cassidy Hutchinson, former top aide to Trump’s Chief of Staff Mark Meadows, said recently, “Jim Jordan was privy to about everything, if not everything, pertaining to January 6.”

None of this, however, would prevent his being elevated to the position of House Speaker, denoted in the US Constitution as the second in line to the presidency after the vice president. The focus of opposition from the Democrats and a section of House Republicans to Jordan’s becoming Speaker is his stated opposition, again in line with the positions of Trump, to further military aid to Ukraine.

The Democrats did nothing to oppose the ousting of McCarthy as House Speaker earlier this month because he had adapted to opposition among far-right House Republicans to US-NATO escalation of the war against Russia, refusing to include additional military aid in the continuing resolution that averted a government shutdown and backtracking on his secret agreement to pass a separate Ukraine spending bill.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* wrote in a statement on McCarthy’s removal posted on October 4, the Democrats were prepared to concede to Republican demands for more money and more brutal measures to crack down on refugees at the US/Mexican border in return for guarantees on Ukraine war funding. We wrote that the Democrats will “collaborate with the domestic agenda of the Republicans in exchange for guarantees that funding for Ukraine is untouchable. The Democrats have no problems working with fascists in the Republican Party; after all, they are in an alliance with fascists in Ukraine.”

And indeed, on that very day, Biden announced he had ordered the construction of a 20-mile extension of Trump’s border wall along a section of the US-Mexico border.

That the same issue—guaranteed funding for the escalation of the war against Russia—remains central to the ongoing crisis in the House of Representatives emerged clearly in the floor votes Monday and Tuesday on Jordan’s bid to become Speaker. In his remarks in support of Jordan on Wednesday, Rep. Tom Cole of Oklahoma, the chair of the powerful Rules Committee, stressed the agreement between the two parties on support for Israel’s war on Gaza. Noticeably, however, he was silent on Ukraine.

Speaking in opposition to Jordan and in support of Jeffries, California Rep. Pete Aguilar made a point of Cole’s silence

on Ukraine, saying: “My colleague and good friend, the gentleman from Oklahoma, mentioned ... supporting assistance to Israel. But what he left out was assistance to Ukraine,” which Aguilar defined as a central “national security objective.”

This was framed, as are all of the Democrats’ interventions in the crisis over the House Speaker, from the standpoint of promoting moderation, compromise and bipartisanship so as to end the paralysis in Congress, avert a government shutdown when the stopgap spending bill ends on November 17, and establish a united home front in the expanding wars around the world.

Jeffries has repeatedly called on Republican “moderates” to unite with the Democrats in a bipartisan coalition. He has strongly hinted that the Democrats would support proposals to expand the powers of the temporary House Speaker, Patrick McHenry of North Carolina, a close ally of McCarthy, until January or even April in order to pass bills to fund the war in Ukraine, provide expanded military aid to Israel, step up military operations in support of Taiwan and increase funds to seal the southern border.

In particular, the Biden administration has made it clear it intends to propose a bundled package of military and border funding totaling \$100 billion. Asked if Democrats would support expanding McHenry’s powers to temporarily end the crisis in Congress so that legislation could be passed, Jeffries said there were “informal conversations that have accelerated over the last few days.” He added that McHenry was “respected on our side of the aisle.”



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