

THE GOP'S MORONIC HOUSE SPEAKERSHIP FIGHT

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“Who are these five boneheads? How can they be so stupid?”

Fox News host Mark Levin

After four years of legislative malfeasance by Nancy Pelosi and her Democrat myrmidons, the Republicans will soon have a 222–213 majority in the House of Representatives.

It should be obvious to anyone with a 3-digit IQ that, to accomplish anything useful with such a narrow majority, the House Republican Conference has to close ranks and prepare for a war with a radicalized Democrat minority that will continue its ongoing effort to undermine the will of the voters.

The new Republican majority will get its first chance to present a unified front on Jan. 3, when the House meets to elect a new speaker to replace Pelosi. Yet a small cadre of GOP opportunists vows not to vote for the only realistic choice — current Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.).

On Nov. 15, the Republican House Conference elected McCarthy to be its nominee for House speaker. He defeated his only challenger for the gavel, Rep. Andy Biggs (R-Ariz.), 188–31. The latter nonetheless insists he will challenge McCarthy again in January.

Aside from Biggs, McCarthy's loudest critics are Reps. Matt Gaetz (R-Fla.), Bob Good (R-Va.), Scott Perry (R-Pa.), and Matt Rosendale (R-Mont.). The GOP majority is so narrow that, if they remain intransigent, it could prevent McCarthy from becoming speaker of the House.

To prevail on Jan. 3, he must garner a majority of those voting in the full House – that is, 218 votes – and he won't get any Democrat votes. All of this would be less perverse if McCarthy's GOP critics backed a viable alternative. But, as Rep. Don Bacon (R-Neb.) told Fox News, they don't:

“Eighty-five percent of the Republicans voted for Kevin McCarthy to be the next speaker, 15% voted for Andy Biggs, and by doing what they're doing, the five or six people holding out, it just takes five to derail this because we need 218 votes, you know, roughly to get Kevin McCarthy in the speakership.

They don't even have a viable alternative that they're putting out on the floor. So it's just to say no without an alternative after 85% of the Republicans have selected Kevin.”

Moreover, while McCarthy is hardly above criticism, he has been a far bigger asset to the GOP than many conservatives seem to realize.

He has, for example, been a remarkably prolific fundraiser. Indeed, without his PAC money, there probably would be no Republican majority next year. OpenSecrets reports that the Congressional Leadership Fund (CLF) spent more than \$227 million to get Republicans elected in 2022.

Much of this money went to GOP candidates who won seats in deep blue states like California, Oregon, and New York.

In the Empire State, for example, McCarthy's CLF PAC spent \$7.5 million to help Republican Mike Lawler deliver a humiliating defeat to Sean Patrick Maloney — chair of the Democrat Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) — in the 17th District.

McCarthy's strategic spending also helped Republican George Santos beat Democrat Robert Zimmerman in the 3rd District, Anthony D'Esposito to prevail against Democrat Laura Gillen in the 4th District, and Republican Marc Molinaro to defeat Democrat Josh Riley in the 19th District.

McCarthy's PAC also invested \$7.1 million in California's 13th Congressional District, enabling Republican John Duarte to upset Democrat Adam Gray in the contest for that open seat. Likewise, the CLF PAC spent \$6.8 million to help Republican Lori Chavez-DeRemer defeat independent Jamie McLeod-Skinner in Oregon's 5th District.

None of these victories in New York, Oregon, and California would have affected the balance of power in the House if McCarthy hadn't built the foundation for a majority in 2020. As Newt Gingrich writes:

“Remember that McCarthy's leadership began with his amazing recruiting and support in the 2020 cycle. He shocked the experts who expected the House Republicans to lose 25 seats. Thanks to his leadership, Republicans won 14 seats. That was a swing of 39 seats from the predictions.

McCarthy has been the most aggressive recruiter in history. He has found and pulled in an historic number of new members – and significantly broadened the GOP.”

For a little perspective, compare McCarthy's record in the House to that of Mitch McConnell in the Senate.

During the last two cycles, the former picked up 23 seats and the House majority. Meanwhile, the latter lost four seats *and* the Senate majority.

If McCarthy's record looked like McConnell's record, the antics of the “never Kevin” caucus might be understandable. As it is, there is no rational basis for their position. They are obviously taking advantage of the GOP's narrow majority to grab a few headlines and make ridiculous demands.

In return for their support, for example, they want a rule change that would allow any House member to call a

vote to replace the sitting speaker. If McCarthy were crazy enough to agree to this, Rep. Biggs and his accomplices would hold him hostage for the next two years.

Biggs wrote in a recent op-ed that he opposes McCarthy because he wants to “dislodge the establishment.” His clumsy crusade is far more likely to create a chaotic situation that the Democrats will exploit to render the slim GOP majority all but powerless.

It is little wonder that Rep. Biggs was trounced so badly on Nov. 15, when the Republican Conference nominated McCarthy to be Speaker of the House. Biggs will *never* become speaker, and his motley band of malcontents doesn’t have the political or intellectual heft to “dislodge the establishment.”

If they really want to do the country some good, they will stop holding their own party hostage and learn that politics is a team sport.

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