



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on January 7, 2015

Boehner Retaliates, Strips Opponents of Committee Responsibilities

In the days running up to the opening of the 114th Congress, speculation was rampant that House Speaker John Boehner's bid for a third term as speaker was in jeopardy. So much so that Boehner launched a full-court press including meetings with those opposed to his reelection and phone calls to dissidents right up to the last minute before the vote.



In the end, a combination of bad weather, a funeral, and a popular Florida Republican's reluctance to oppose the speaker until the day before the vote [spelled victory for Boehner](#).

Under House rules, only a majority of those *present* — *not a majority* of the total House membership — is needed to elect the speaker. With many Democrats attending the funeral service of former New York Governor Mario Cuomo, and bad weather delaying flights into Washington, those present numbered just 401 out of House membership of 434 (New York Republican Rep. Michael Grimm resigned last week after pleading guilty to felony tax evasion). In the end, Boehner secured his position for another two years with 216 votes.

It was closer than it appears on paper, however. Anger and frustration over Boehner's willingness to cut backroom deals, cozy up to the president, and present bills without enough time to read (much less debate) them, led Rep. Louie Gohmert (R-Texas) and Rep. Ted Yoho (R-Fla.) to offer themselves as potential replacements for Boehner. This so frightened Republican leadership that Boehner met with several dissidents and potential challengers on Monday night, including Reps. Mark Meadows (R-N.C.) and Justin Amash (R-Mich.). One insider told *Politico* that leadership was "jumpy," adding that initially "they thought it was maybe eight or nine 'no' votes [but] then it really started to go south fast."

The real threat didn't come from either Gohmert or Yoho, however. It came from a last-minute entry by popular conservative Rep. Daniel Webster (R-Fla.), who received more votes than those opposing Boehner just two years ago. With fewer than 24 hours to go before the vote, Webster finally made his decision after being urged to do so by close friends Reps. Richard Nugent (R-Fla.) and Steve King (R-Iowa): "Time made the decision for me," he said, adding, "I thought I had waited long enough and I should do this."

It almost happened. All that was needed was for Boehner to fail on the first vote, and then the speakership would be up for grabs. Rep. Walter Jones (R-N.C.) stated, "We were hoping to stop [Boehner] at the first round and go into the second round. I think we came pretty close."

Said Rep. Tom Rooney (R-Fla.), "I think that if he [Webster] would have mounted a campaign last month, it may have [lent support] to his candidacy, but by doing it today, there was no chance."



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Once the votes were counted, the retributions began. As one Republican leadership aide expressed it, on promises of anonymity, “We don’t need these fringe guys as much as we did anymore. We can let them walk on certain bills, and it just won’t matter. [Boehner’s victory] gives us breathing room.”

The first to feel the pain of leaving the Republican establishment reservation was Rep. Tim Huelskamp (R-Kan.), who lost any chance to regain a seat on the Agriculture Committee. He said, “I am already hearing from my colleagues — and myself — about retaliation against those who voted their conscience, their constituents, their principles, to change the status quo. My colleagues fully expect that. That’s what they expect out of this leadership team.”

Punishment was also meted out to Webster and Nugent for their attempted insurrection by removing both of them from the influential House Rules Committee. And this could be just the beginning, as the establishment Republicans look over the list of 25 deserters and determine over the next couple of months just how much retribution they will mete out to them.

Boehner’s third term is scarred by being compared to past speakers who were also elected with less than a full majority. That’s happened only four times since 1913, according to the Congressional Research Service. As Genevieve Wood so eloquently expressed it at *The Daily Signal*: “Boehner won on the first ballot with 216 votes, thereby becoming the fifth speaker not to win a majority of the full House membership.”

With more than 20 House Republicans voting against him, Boehner wins the honor of having more members of his own party vote against him than any other sitting speaker in recent history.

With Boehner firmly planted as speaker of House for the 114th Congress, the president expressed his pleasure:

I’m confident that there are going to be areas where we disagree and there will be some pitched battles.

But I’m also confident that there [are] enormous areas of potential agreement....

It is said that a picture is worth a thousand words. If that is true, then the photograph of Boehner hugging and kissing former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) as he celebrated his victory (shown) tells all that needs to be said about the future in the House of Representatives.

Photo: AP Images

A graduate of an Ivy League school and a former investment advisor, Bob is a regular contributor to The New American magazine and blogs frequently at www.LightFromTheRight.com, primarily on economics and politics.

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