



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on August 28, 2014

Cantor, Toppled in Primary, Didn't Fall From Hunger

If former House Majority Leader Eric Cantor was a weakened candidate in his failed primary campaign against dark horse David Brat, it was surely not from hunger. The Virginia Republican's campaign spending report showed he spent more on food in the primary contest than Brat did on his whole campaign, *USA Today* reported.



Cantor's overall campaign expenditures of more than \$5 million were more than 40 times greater than those of his challenger. Brat, a little-known economics professor at Randolph-Macon College in Ashland, Virginia, brought down the seven-term incumbent and House majority leader with a mere \$122,000 in campaign expenditures that included pay for two staffers and a \$689 purchase of office supplies from Walmart. Cantor's filing with the Federal Elections Commission showed food expenditures totaling \$567,575 from the beginning of 2013 to May 21 of this year. Brat had only one food expenditure in his filing, showing an expenditure of \$789 at Honey Baked Ham in Henrico, Virginia.

Cantor stepped down as majority leader, succeeded by Kevin McCarthy of California, after his surprising loss to Brat in what is believed to be the first time a House leader of that rank was defeated in a party primary. He resigned from his congressional seat in August. Post-mortem analyses of his defeat have focused on his support for, and Brat's opposition to, immigration reform that would grant legal status and a path to citizenship for millions of aliens living in the United States illegally, an issue that energized Brat's Tea Party supporters. Some have also pointed to Cantor's support for renewing the charter of the U.S. Export-Import Bank, due to expire at the end of September. The bank, which grants loans and loan guarantees at below market interest rates for purchase of U.S. exports, has been another target of Tea Party activists who have labeled the institution as a source of corporate welfare or "crony capitalism." Others contend the ambitious Cantor was focused too much on becoming the next speaker of the house and not enough on the voters in Virginia's Seventh District.

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"Cantor lost his race because he was running for Speaker of the House of Representatives while his constituents wanted a congressman," wrote Erik Erickson, editor of the blog site Red State.com.

Maybe he was spending too much time with high rollers at steakhouses. Cantor's dining out on campaign dollars was not only more frequent and far more expensive than Brat's, it also covered a far



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greater geographical area, with stops at steakhouses in New York, Chicago, Atlanta, and Boca Raton, Florida, as well as restaurants in Virginia and the District of Columbia. A large portion of the total was for catered events, no doubt wining and dining, wooing and rewarding actual or potential campaign contributors. But it also included stops at Starbucks, Dunkin' Donuts, and a Glen Allen, Virginia eatery called Jimmy John's, which bills itself as "Freaky Fast, Freaky Good." Cantor even included purchases of groceries at supermarkets such as Costco and Safeway as campaign expenditures, *Investor's Business Daily* reported. Well, a candidate has to eat, after all.

Candidates are forbidden to use campaign money for personal expenses, but the line between personal and campaign expenses is often blurred, *USA Today* reported, noting that the late Rep. Bill Young (R-Fla.), who died last October, spent \$240,000 since 2011 on what were listed as meal expenses for "constituents/visitors," though many of the restaurants were more than 20 miles away from Washington, D.C., and 700 miles from his Florida district.

House candidates and members spent \$14.5 million in campaign money on food since 2011, and the trend is not likely to end any time soon. Even Brat, regarded as the likely winner of the November election in the heavily Republican district, may be acquiring princely dining habits. A recent filing showing he spent \$731 at a Morton's steakhouse less than two weeks after defeating Cantor.



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