



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on April 11, 2014

House Conservatives Seek to Depose Boehner

Are John Boehner's (shown) days as Speaker of the House numbered? If a company of conservative Republicans in that chamber has its way, they are — but don't start counting them down just yet.

According to [National Journal](#), "the 'nucleus' of the rebellion can be found inside the House Liberty Caucus," which counts among its members Reps. Justin Amash of Michigan, Raul Labrador of Idaho, and Thomas Massie of Kentucky, all of whom refused to vote for Boehner's reelection as Speaker in 2013. Fed up with what they see as a combination of fecklessness and betrayal on the part of the GOP leadership, the congressmen are assembling a coalition of likeminded colleagues to oust Boehner and, further, to ensure that whoever replaces him knows on which side his bread is buttered.



It is certainly true that little meaningful conservative legislation has become law during Boehner's speakership. Some of that can be blamed on the fact that Democrats have controlled the Senate and the White House throughout his tenure. At the same time, however, Boehner seemed to have no stomach for opposing many government-growing bills or using his leverage on those bills to obtain significant concessions from Democrats. In the last four years, the House has voted [54 times](#) to repeal or amend ObamaCare, but few of those bills — and, of course, none of the repeals — have become law. Meanwhile, ObamaCare funding, Planned Parenthood grants, and countless other unconstitutional expenditures have continued unabated despite the House's power to stanch their cash flow.

"There are no big ideas coming out of the conference. Our leadership expects to coast through this election by banking on everyone's hatred for Obamacare," one Republican who is organizing the rebellion told *National Journal*. "There's nothing big being done. We're reshuffling chairs on the *Titanic*."

In fact, the only time the leadership has appeared willing to play hardball was when it needed to surmount opposition within Republican ranks. One such instance, still in recent memory, has not exactly endeared House Majority Leader Eric Cantor of Virginia to his conservative colleagues, the magazine reported:

With Boehner out of town in late March, Cantor was charged with pushing a "doc fix" bill across the finish line. When it became apparent the measure might not clear the House floor, Cantor authorized a voice vote, allowing the bill to pass without registered resistance. This maneuver infuriated conservatives, who felt that leadership — Cantor in particular — had cheated them. Rep. Mick Mulvaney of South Carolina [sic] yelled "Bulls — t!" outside the House chamber.



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Some conservatives are still seething.

“I’m getting used to being deceived by the Obama administration, but when my own leadership does it, it’s just not acceptable,” Rep. Matt Salmon of Arizona said last week, after Cantor met with a group of angry Republican Study Committee members.

Cantor told conservatives that a voice vote was “the least-bad option,” given the circumstances. But many Republicans aren’t buying it. Moreover, they said that with Boehner out of town, Cantor had an opportunity to impress them with his management of the conference — and didn’t.

The event also reminded conservatives that simply ousting Boehner won’t automatically improve matters; Cantor is his likely successor. “Privately, they define success as vaulting one of their own into any one of the top three leadership spots,” wrote *National Journal*. “But they think they’re less likely to accomplish even that limited goal with a narrow effort focused on knocking out one person or winning a single slot.”

One option, explained the magazine, is “to force Boehner out and also demand that Cantor bring on a conservative deputy before agreeing to vote for him as speaker” — a deal one congressman who supports Cantor but opposes Boehner said Cantor would make “in a heartbeat.” The other possibility is to aim lower, “meeting with leadership officials this fall and making demands about steering committee appointments and chairmanships. The idea would be to redistribute the decision-making and shake up what Rep. Louie Gohmert calls the ‘centralized, stovepipe dictatorship’ that runs the congressional wing of the GOP.”

Still, the top post is the prize, and the leaders of the revolt “say between 40 and 50 members have already committed verbally to electing a new speaker,” penned *National Journal*. “If those numbers hold, organizers say, they could force Boehner to step aside as speaker in late November, when the incoming GOP conference meets for the first time, by showing him that he won’t have the votes to be reelected in January.” That’s how conservatives rid themselves of then-Speaker Newt Gingrich in 1998, and it might work again.

How likely is a Boehner abdication? One of the Ohio Republican’s longtime acquaintances in the House told *National Journal*, “I’d say about 80 percent of us expect him to step down after the elections.” Boehner spokesman Michael Steel, on the other hand, told the magazine that Boehner has “said — publicly and privately — that he plans to be speaker again in the next Congress.”

Just as simply running against ObamaCare isn’t much of an electoral strategy, neither is trying to depose a sitting speaker without having another candidate around whom to rally — a problem that plagued the last attempt to unseat Boehner. “But as of yet,” said *National Journal*, “there is no sign of a serious conservative challenger willing to run for a top leadership job, let alone for Boehner’s.”

“Somebody has to step forward,” Rep. Tim Huelskamp of Kansas, one of the 12 Republicans who opposed Boehner’s last reelection bid, told the periodical. “This is not something where after the election you can step forward. There’s going to be months and months of [planning] needed.”

One senior Republican told *National Journal* that there are currently just “three Republicans capable of winning majority support to become speaker of the House: John Boehner, Eric Cantor and Paul Ryan.” If the Liberty Caucus and its allies want someone who will uphold his oath of allegiance to the Constitution and make a serious effort to cut Uncle Sam down to size, they’d better find a capable alternative candidate — and fast.



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