



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on June 20, 2014

Establishment Republicans Secure Leadership Roles Following Cantor's Defeat

Almost immediately following the surprise defeat of House Majority Leader Eric Cantor (shown), the Republican Party [moved quickly](#) to fill his slot with clones of Cantor: Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) and Rep. Steve Scalise (R-La.) who will take McCarthy's spot. The change will take place when Cantor officially relinquishes his seat July 31.



The media was full of references to "conservative" in describing the two new faces, including *The Hill* which referred to the "conservative Rep. Steve Scalise to replace McCarthy as majority whip" while noting his chairmanship of the "conservative Republican Study Committee" that he used "as a springboard to the party leadership position." *The Hill* made only passing reference to the "handful of members who have long opposed Boehner and his leadership team."

The *Washington Times* concluded that all is well now that the leadership of the House remains firmly in control of establishment Republican figures: "Both men were elected handily, with each winning on the first ballot, in an election conservatives said should calm some of the discontent that had seethed over the last year and a half."

Scalise said following his election as majority whip: "This is a win for America because we're going to be a more united team moving forward."

The new majority leader, McCarthy, is the one who will be responsible for deciding which bills come to the floor for a vote, while the whip's job is to build consensus by twisting arms and beating back challenges from discontents more interested in following the Constitution. Simply put, House Speaker John Boehner is the mouthpiece for the establishment Republicans, McCarthy is the man behind the scenes who determines which bills fit the establishment's agenda, while Scalise rounds up support and beats back the opposition: the mouth, the agenda, and the muscle.

Typical of the response from those committed to the agenda, rather than the Constitution, was Rep. Steve King (R-Iowa), who rejoiced:

In both cases [the votes showed] a strong consensus....

That means they're our leaders and that means we want to give them every opportunity to succeed, and I intend to do that.



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Others weren't quite so taken with the outcome. Rep. Thomas Massie (R-Ky.), one of the few members of the House with a 100 percent voting record according to The John Birch Society's Freedom Index (FI), said that "of the 80 [true constitutionalist] conservatives, I think [McCarthy] is the 81st."

It didn't take McCarthy long to find favor with the establishment. Entering Congress in 2006 from California, within two years McCarthy was picked by John Boehner to chair the Republican Platform Committee that produced the party's political platform for 2008. In late 2010, he was selected by the House Republican Caucus to be the House majority whip, making him the third-ranking Republican behind Speaker Boehner and Majority Leader Eric Cantor.

Once Cantor was defeated, McCarthy called in his chips and moved into second place behind Boehner, with Scalise right behind him.

McCarthy made clear he was one of the "Young Guns" by co-authoring a book by the same name, along with Cantor and another establishment Republican, Paul Ryan (R-Wis.). The book was accurately portrayed as being nothing more than a rehash of old Republican promises without substance. One reviewer, for instance, asked:

In the midst of today's severe economic crisis, where American families are losing their jobs and their homes every day, you have to wonder about a book that presents three politicians on the cover wearing \$1800 suits....

Overall, the book paints a picture of the self-styled young guns as aloof, arrogant and removed from the problems that really matter to their constituents.

McCarthy's voting record shows the indelible mark of a true establishment politician. His Freedom Index rating, currently at just 68 percent, has been as low as 50 percent, reflecting his lack of commitment to the limits put in place in the Constitution 227 years ago (to say nothing of his oath of office). For instance, on October 16, 2013, McCarthy voted in favor of the party's "cave-in" that suspended the federal debt limit while continuing to fund the federal government. The same bill also failed to make any attempt to defund the unconstitutional ObamaCare law.

Earlier that same year McCarthy turned back an attempt to limit military spending without a declaration of war as required by the Constitution.

Scalise suffers from the same affliction: following the establishment without concern over any potential conflict with the provisions of the Constitution. Representing Louisiana's 1st District, his voting record according to the FI is scarcely any better than McCarthy's at 74 percent. For instance, he joined McCarthy in voting to continue military spending without an official declaration of war but went further in June 2013 by voting in favor of indefinite detention of those deemed enemies under the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF). This is a violation of guarantees in the Bill of Rights under the Fourth and Sixth Amendments.

If there's any good news to come out of the apparent steamroller victory for the establishment in the House votes on Thursday this week, it was a last-minute unsuccessful challenge to the leadership by Rep. Raul Labrador (R-Idaho), who sports a much better FI rating of 89 percent. Because House rules prohibit any public announcement of the vote totals for the positions secured by McCarthy and Scalise, it can't be known how close the vote was. But, as the *Washington Times* put it just before the election:

His candidacy signals a growing unrest with the status quo in the GOP's leadership, and even if Mr. Labrador doesn't pull off a victory, several Republicans said a strong showing ... could set the stage



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for a shake-up later this year.

This was reiterated by Rep. John Fleming (R-La.) whose FI is 82 percent:

All I can tell you is that [true] conservatives have been very concerned that we haven't had a voice at the leadership table. This may be a good opportunity to have that voice.

That voice may not be muted for long. If informed voters allow true conservatives to expand their numbers in November, Boehner, McCarthy, and Scalise will have more to worry about than how to manipulate the House to press its present agenda to be soft Democrats.

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