



Written by [Luis Miguel](#) on November 10, 2022

McCarthy May Face Opposition to Speakership From the Right

House GOP Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) may believe he has the speakership all but locked up, but some fellow Republicans aren't jumping on the McCarthy train so readily.

Among them is Rep. Andy Biggs (R-Ariz.), a popular member of the constitutionalist House Freedom Caucus. For Biggs, the lackluster performance of the party on election night this week, contrasted with the assurances of a "red wave," is reason enough to put in doubt McCarthy's qualifications to lead not only the party, but the House of Representatives itself.



Gage Skidmore/Wikimedia Commons
Kevin McCarthy

Speaking to "The Absolute Truth" with Emerald Robinson, Biggs cautioned against treating a McCarthy speakership as a "foregone conclusion."

"I would say maybe not so fast. Maybe we should have a good discussion within the confines of our internal body," Biggs [told the conservative program](#). "Look, we were told we were going to have an incredible, incredible wave. And if that would've been the case, any 20, 30, 40-seat margin, anywhere in there you would say, okay, Kevin is the presumptive Republican nominee for speaker."

The Freedom Caucus member added, "But I think we need to have a serious discussion. He's back peddled [sic] on things like impeachment and, in some ways, that indicates a willingness to be weakening the oversight authority that we need to have and the leverage points we need to have in order to deal with a Democrat president."

Biggs also hit McCarthy and current House GOP leadership for refusing to hold up the National Defense Authorization Act — which, given the slim Democratic majority, could not have passed without Republican votes — as leverage for getting rid of vaccine mandates.

If the GOP wins only a tight majority in the House, as now looks likely, the Freedom Caucus will play a pivotal role within the party, having the ability to block McCarthy's path to the speakership. This could play out in the form of a challenge from the right for the speaker's gavel or be used to gain leverage to put more constitutionalist and conservative items on the party's agenda.

"I don't understand why this is just a foregone conclusion," Biggs reiterated. "I think we have to have a real discussion and see how people respond to the ultimate results of this election and get a feel for his agenda and what he thinks he's going to accomplish."

He continued, "If we're going to go in for eight months of performance art instead of really getting things done, then we will fail in preparing for a 2024 election where we have to win to get the White House, the Senate and the House back."

Challengers for the role of party leader and speaker have thus far not materialized. Conservative



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firebrand Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-Fla.) once again voiced his previous hope to see Ohio's Rep. Jim Jordan, the chair of the House Freedom Caucus, assume the role of House GOP leader. Jordan has previously gone toe-to-toe with McCarthy for the gavel. But this time around, Jordan has signaled his support for the status quo.

McCarthy has also been the target of conservative hardliners who blame him for using party money and infrastructure to prop up the establishment, discouraging or seeking to snuff out hard-right and MAGA Republicans in elections throughout the country.

McCarthy announced his candidacy for speaker Wednesday, right on the heels of the midterm election — even while the results of many races across the nation were still up in the air.

[In a letter](#) to his Republican colleagues in the House, McCarthy touted himself in the following terms:

This was the most expensive and arguably the most competitive House midterm in America's history. Yet in a hard-fought contest, our message and our candidates prevailed, winning key seats across the country, some in districts that President Biden carried just two years ago by double digits....

I will be a listener every bit as much as a Speaker, striving to build consensus from the bottom-up rather than commanding the agenda from the top-down.

Of course, McCarthy paints his tenure with the most glowing words. But if the GOP wants to see a new era of real, measurable conservative results, isn't now the time to buck the "wait your turn," good-ole-boy tradition of electing party leadership and instead mount a viable challenge to the establishment?



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