



Written by [Luis Miguel](#) on November 24, 2023

Members of Congress Retiring Over Frustration With “Broken” System

It’s no controversial statement to say that a broad swath of the American public is frustrated with Congress. But it’s not just the public. Many congressmen are reportedly just as frustrated — and are opting to jump ship.

Many members of Congress are now retiring. Some are pursuing other public offices, while others are abandoning politics completely. The number of lawmakers choosing this route has gone up in recent months, after a period of high tension that saw Kevin McCarthy become the first speaker of the House to ever be removed from the role during a legislative session.



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Representative Debbie Lesko (R-Ariz.), in her statement announcing her retirement, said, “Right now, Washington, D.C. is broken. [I]t is hard to get anything done.”

Currently, 30 members of the House — 19 Democrats and 11 Republicans — say they won’t run for reelection in the next cycle.

About half of the retirement announcements were made in October and November amid the fallout of the heated speaker battle in the House, which saw Rep. Mike Johnson (R-La.) end up with the speaker’s gavel after a brutal fight within the GOP during which RINOs (Republicans In Name Only) and conservatives shot down each other’s preferred candidates.

Laura Blessing, a senior fellow at Georgetown University’s Government Affairs Institute, told [The Hill](#): “With the October that we had, I think the American people could be forgiven for thinking that the word unprecedented was just another name for Tuesday for a while.”

The outlet further reported of the lawmakers calling it quits:

The list includes, most recently, Rep. Bill Johnson (R-Ohio), who accepted an offer to lead Youngstown State University as president; and Rep. Anna Eshoo (D-Calif.), who is hanging up her hat in Congress after 30 years. They are joined by Rep. Derek Kilmer (D-Wash.), the 49-year-old lawmaker who had a stint running the New Democrat Coalition; Rep. Adam Schiff (D-Calif.), who is one of three House members jockeying for a Senate seat; and Rep. Ken Buck (R-Colo.), who frequently draws media attention for criticizing the GOP’s stance on election denialism.

Additionally, Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee (D-Texas) is running for Houston mayor, and Rep. Dean Phillips (D-Minn.) is mounting a longshot bid for the Democratic nomination for president. Both, however, can remain in Congress and run for reelection if they lose or drop out of their other races.



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Per polling, just 13 percent of Americans approve of Congress' performance, the lowest approval rating for the institution since November 2017.

Some of the lawmakers who are leaving cite "toxicity" on Capitol Hill and claim important work cannot be done in the current culture.

Colorado's Buck, for example, told CNN that Congress "refuses to deal with the big issues that we have to deal with," such as devising a plan for the sustainability of Medicare and Social Security.

"Too often elected officials chase the 24-hour news cycle, focusing on the issue of the day, and when you look back there is little to show for it," said Rep. Brian Higgins (D-N.Y.), who is retiring after 18 years in the House.

Matthew Green, a professor of politics at Catholic University, told *The Hill* that the retirements are "indicative of possibly some deeper dissatisfaction with Congress" and that if "members are unhappy because Congress is a toxic place, it would not surprise me to see a lot more retirements in the next several weeks."

The retirements may also have an effect on the makeup of Congress after 2024. With a slim Republican majority, the 2024 election could easily go either way, resulting in either a Democratic majority or a bigger GOP majority. Because incumbents are more likely than newcomers to win, the loss of many incumbents truly creates an uncertain scenario where anything can happen.

But is the cause really "toxicity" as some of these congressional "moderates" and establishment voices would have the public believe? Certainly the political divide is widening as the Democratic Party moves further and further away from the moral, political, and cultural norms that were once standard in the United States and embraces outright socialism.

The talking points from establishment voices give the impression, however, that it is the few freedom-minded lawmakers on Capitol Hill who are the extremists that must move to the rational "center" in order to return to the status quo of bloated budgets, out-of-control spending, and rising debt.

In one sense, it can be seen as a good thing for some of these so-called centrists — at least those in the Republican Party — to retire because they can't get things done. After all, what they want to "get done" is continue the many unconstitutional, big government practices they are used to greenlighting without a second thought.

If these politicians retire, they can potentially give way to a new generation of elected officials who are much more abrasive and unwilling to compromise when it comes to defending the Constitution. But the key, of course, is how informed voters are — and become. Without the understanding of our Constitution and system of government, there is no reason to expect that the newcomers who fill open seats will be any better than the representatives they replace.



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