



Written by [Luis Miguel](#) on February 1, 2024

Kevin McCarthy Running Revenge Plot Against Republicans Who Ousted Him

Kevin McCarthy may have retired from Congress, but he's far from done with politics. The former GOP leader who was ousted from the speakership by the hard-right flank of his own party last October has a new project that he's passionately devoting himself to: Seeing to it that the Republicans who contributed to his downfall are defeated in their upcoming elections.

A recent [Politico](#) piece cites close allies of the California lawmaker, who spent 12 years on Capitol Hill climbing to the top of the House of Representatives' Republican caucus and 16 years vying for the coveted position of House Speaker — only to see himself suddenly thrust out of the role after a mere nine months.



AP Images
Kevin McCarthy

According to those allies, McCarthy is out for revenge, deeply involved in efforts to recruit primary challengers against the eight Republican members of Congress who precipitated his removal from the speaker's chair. The targets include Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-Fla.), Nancy Mace (R-S.C.), Bob Good (R-Va.) and Eli Crane (R-Ariz.).

Brian Walsh has been tasked with leading the recruitment effort, handling the day-to-day affairs of the effort while keeping McCarthy and top donors briefed on his progress. He told *Politico* those selected will have the backing of McCarthy's donor network.

"These traitors chose to side with Nancy Pelosi, AOC and over 200 Democrats to undermine the institution, their fellow Republicans and a duly elected Speaker," said Walsh. "There must be consequences for that decision."

Nancy Mace, a former McCarthy ally who joined with his detractors to help oust him, is at the top of the list for Walsh and is arguably the most vulnerable of McCarthy's revenge targets.

Late last year, Walsh went to Charleston to start the interview process with more than a dozen potential Mace challengers. One of the most viable of those, set to announce her candidacy next week, is Catherine Templeton, an unsuccessful 2018 gubernatorial candidate.

Templeton has a strong reputation in South Carolina politics. She served in the Nikki Haley gubernatorial administration, first as director of the South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation and then as director of the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control; she was appointed by former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor as the national coordinator for iCivics, a civics education project; she was chair of the State Emergency Response Committee; and she was appointed by Haley to the Savannah River Maritime Commission.



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Templeton met with Donald Trump at Trump Tower when he was assembling his Cabinet and was offered a position in his Department of Labor, although she turned the job down; at one point she was on a shortlist of four individuals to lead the department when Trump's first nominee, Andrew Puzder, withdrew from consideration.

McCarthy's allies have already signaled that they're ready to direct major money and resources in Templeton's direction.

Up in Virginia, McCarthy and his gang have their sights set on defeating House Freedom Caucus Chair Bob Good, who already has a primary challenger in state Sen. John McGuire.

Politico further notes:

Outside of South Carolina and Virginia, recruitment has been slower — despite McCarthy's packed coffers and access to crucial donors from his time in leadership.

Crane's membership in the "Gaetz Eight" is particularly galling to McCarthy allies. Elected in 2022 with massive financial help from a McCarthy-backed PAC, he was the only first-term participant in the ouster push.

Crane told POLITICO that he's aware of efforts to interview primary opponents to take him down. Asked why he suspects McCarthy is behind it, Crane replied with a laugh: "Common sense."

Allies of McCarthy have been exploring potential challenges to Crane and to Rep. Andy Biggs (R-Ariz.). While the pool of hopefuls is reportedly thin, the McCarthy team still has a few months until the filing deadline of April 8.

Rep. Matt Rosendale (R-Mont.), another member of Congress who was instrumental in bringing McCarthy down, has told those close to him he plans to run for Senate (although he has yet to formally announce). And Ken Buck (R-Colo.) is set to retire, which will deprive McCarthy of a chance at revenge.

As for the most visible instigator of the ouster, Matt Gaetz, McCarthy isn't likely to get electoral payback anytime soon. Not only is Gaetz popular in his district and nationally, he is part of a wealthy and powerful political family. His father, Don Gaetz, has for years been influential in Florida Republican politics; he served as president of the state Senate from 2006 to 2016, and is running for the state Senate again in the 2024 cycle.

Will McCarthy have any success in his efforts? It remains to be seen whether his assistance will help or hurt those he recruits. Already, in places like South Carolina and Virginia, the incumbents are painting the opposition as McCarthy's "puppets," which could potentially doom their prospects among a Republican base that is increasingly aligned with Donald Trump and glad to be rid of a "RINO" like McCarthy.



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