



AP Images
Steve Scalise

Scalise Drops Out of Speaker Race

If there's one thing everyone in the House GOP agrees on, it's that they like Representative Steve Scalise (R-La.). The House majority leader and Louisiana congressman is widely admired for his integrity and unflinching conservative values, including his defense of the Second Amendment even after being shot by a deranged gunman during an attack on a congressional baseball game.

But in the end, none of these glowing lines in Scalise's resume were enough to secure him the House speaker position, even after a secret ballot gave him the first GOP nominee for the position over Jim Jordan. Before a floor vote could even be scheduled, it was apparent that Scalise didn't have the votes to win the speakership, despite the support even from many so-called hardliners, including Matt Gaetz, who led the successful drive to oust Speaker Kevin McCarthy last week. As more and more critical GOP votes weighed in this week, the math looked worse for Scalise than for McCarthy, with at least a dozen GOP House members signaling a hard "no" in any vote.

Adding to Scalise's woes was a groundswell of disapproval from constituents in some districts: Scalise, many believed, while better than McCarthy, was still a RINO at heart, and exchanging one such for another was not what many wanted.

Scalise's record does bear out the accusations. According to *The New American's* Freedom Index, while McCarthy's overall voting record in Congress came in at an anemic 60 percent, Scalise's wasn't much better, at 67 percent. Scalise, coming from a deep red state (unlike the Californian McCarthy), is unquestionably the more conservative of the two, having compiled flawless records on many important social issues. But he also has a

The New American

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Date: October 13, 2023



neoconish tendency to approve of unconstitutional foreign-aid packages and to support overseas entanglements such as NATO and sovereignty-compromising international trade agreements. And the MAGA movement that is a large part of the driving force behind the speaker controversy is fed up with foreign entanglements, especially with zero attention being paid to safeguarding our own borders.

Moreover, Scalise has cancer. This would be challenging enough for anyone, let alone someone aiming at one of the most difficult jobs in Washington, at a time of almost unprecedented domestic and global turmoil. A number of House members, including the ever-frank Marjorie Taylor-Greene (R-Ga.), pointed to Scalise's health as a deciding factor. In the end, Scalise gracefully withdrew his candidacy, and the search is on for a new candidate.

The most likely is Judiciary Committee Chairman Jim Jordan (R-Ohio), who has Trump's endorsement and has posted a much better Freedom Index lifetime voting record of 82 percent, with two scores over 90 percent in his 16 years in Congress. If Jordan falls short, Donald Trump himself, at least on a temporary basis, is another intriguing if long-shot possibility. Either way, it looks as though the RINO wing of the GOP has zero prospect of reclaiming the speakership. Stay tuned.