



## Top GOP Brass Tries to Suppress State Freedom Caucuses

Infighting within the GOP isn't limited to national politics; state legislatures have become a battleground between rival factions of the Republican Party. Even as the anti-establishment, Trump-aligned base gains electoral momentum, the traditional bosses within the party are attempting to prevent the movement from effectively organizing within capitol buildings.

The differences between the two wings of the GOP have come to a head as conservatives at the state level attempt to replicate the model of the influential House Freedom Caucus in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Active in the House since 2015, the Freedom Caucus, a group of congressional Republicans who claim to adhere to constitutional principles such as limited government and low taxes, has quickly become a force to be reckoned with and a draw for firebrands who wish to tout their conservative credentials.

The Freedom Caucus displayed its clout last October, when it was instrumental in removing Kevin McCarthy as speaker, a contentious fight that culminated with Representative Mike Johnson (R-La.) taking up the speaker's gavel.

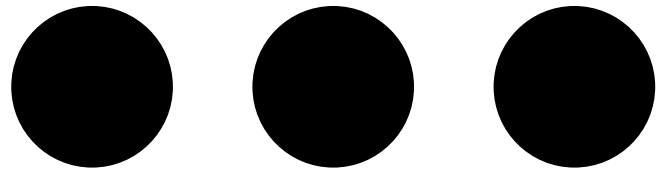
Now, state freedom caucuses are popping up in legislatures across the nation, helped along by the State Freedom Caucus Network, which began in Georgia in 2021. Now that Missouri recently christened its own Freedom Caucus, the total number of states with such factions within their legislatures is eleven — and the movement is seeking to continue that expansion.

Moreover, the Freedom Caucus Network is attempting to keep its individual state caucuses ideologically aligned by allowing them to organize only by invitation of the national leadership. Once approved, state chapters have access to staff and resources to help them devise legislation, come up with political strategies and earn publicity.

But in many of the states in which the Freedom Caucus operates, its members have ruffled feathers, prompting fervent pushback from GOP leadership.

The [Associated Press](#) details a recent skirmish in the Missouri legislature:

On the first day of Missouri's new legislative session, Senate President Pro Tem Caleb Rowden tried to cajole colleagues into congeniality with a rhetorical question: "Will we focus on principled progress or political pandemonium?"



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

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Progress was intended. But pandemonium ensued.

Within days, a newly formed Freedom Caucus — modeled after one in Washington, D.C. — ground the chamber to a halt with demands that Republican leaders act faster on GOP priorities. Tempers flared. Insults flew. And Rowden penalized prominent Freedom Caucus members by stripping them of their committee chairmanships and prime Capitol parking spots.

The Freedom Caucus isn't taking this lying down.

"We're willing to stand up and not be silenced by these guys," Missouri state Senator Bill Eigel, a Freedom Caucus Republican running for governor, told AP.

Eigel and his associates in the caucus have been pushing a measure that would make it more difficult to use ballot initiatives to amend the state constitution, as some states have recently done to codify access to abortion. To force the proposal to be brought up for debate, the caucus members stalled the Senate from working for an entire month.

Causes taken up by Freedom Caucus members in other states including supporting restrictions on transgender procedures and having National Guardsmen sent to the Texas-Mexico border to help stop the illegal entry of migrants.

Similar to the situation in Missouri, last November, the leading Republican senator in Idaho ousted specific members of the Freedom Caucus from committee leadership positions and rebuked them for their negative language directed at other senators.

In South Carolina, members of the Freedom Caucus have been sidelined from the House Republican caucus for a year. This exclusion stems from their refusal to comply with party rules prohibiting them from campaigning against fellow Republican members.

Early in the state's legislative session, members of the Freedom Caucus alleged that their Republican counterparts diluted a bill aimed at limiting transgender treatments for minors by scrapping amendments, such as one mandating teachers to promptly notify parents when children undergo gender identity changes. Some Republicans viewed the Freedom Caucus amendments as a disingenuous attempt to garner attention and force controversial votes.

In Georgia, Senate Republicans expelled a vocal member of the Freedom Caucus who attempted to get his colleagues to impeach a Democratic prosecutor for indicting Donald Trump. The Georgia Senate GOP caucus, in a statement last September, cited Senator Colton Moore for causing "unnecessary tension and hostility" and jeopardizing his colleagues' "risk of personal harm" through his efforts.

Moore is still excluded from the Republican caucus, but an inquiry has been launched by the Senate to determine if Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis misused state funds in her prosecution of Trump and other individuals. Moore asserted that the investigation proves he was right.

Andrew Roth, president of the State Freedom Caucus Network, said "there are a lot of Republicans in state legislatures who are enabling bigger government and locking arms with the Democrats to do so."

"And when they're finally being called out on it, they react punitively," Roth concluded.



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