



Written by [Steve Bonta](#) on January 6, 2023

What the House Speaker Saga Teaches Us

As of the time of this writing, after three days and 11 contentious votes, Kevin McCarthy's path to the House speakership remains blocked by roughly 20 refractory House Republicans, some of whom have publicly vowed never to vote for McCarthy regardless of the circumstances. To the delight of Democrats and the Establishment media, for which the occasional Capitol Hill game of legislative chicken is little more than diverting blood sport, McCarthy cannot receive the speaker's gavel unless 218 out of the total 222 House Republicans fall into line, a figure that seems well-nigh unattainable, given the consistency and the passion of the "never McCarthy" cadre. This, in the gloating cadences of Democrat shills in the press, is an indicator of how dysfunctional the GOP has become. Lacking a clear popular mandate and split down the middle by irreconcilable internal divisions, the GOP has shown its inability to govern.



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But is the current kerfuffle in the House really a sign of dysfunction? Or is it — as one of the holdouts, Lauren Boebert, insists — actually a sign that our government is starting to work again as intended and that, at long last, much-needed procedural reforms, including sensible limits on the power of the Speaker, are on the way? The complaints against Kevin McCarthy are wide-ranging, but really boil down to this: McCarthy, rightly or wrongly, is perceived as just another RINO (Republican In Name Only), more concerned with securing his own power and with perpetuating the corrupt status quo than with genuine procedural and legislative reforms. In service of these ends, he has reportedly threatened to deny committee seats to anyone refusing to support his candidacy, the sort of time-hallowed strong-arm tactics that are part of the problematic House institutional culture.

What we are now seeing unfolding in the House, far from an institutional meltdown, is in fact the bare beginning of what will have to happen, on a much larger scale and for a considerable duration, in order to reverse the direction our federal government has been following for several generations. And it is palpably the fruit of many years of patient education, which has now changed the complexion of the House GOP.

For decades, the strategy of The John Birch Society and *The New American* (a JBS affiliate) has been to advocate for a more educated electorate, with the goal of changing the makeup of Congress to a more Constitution-friendly gathering. During long decades of usurpation and dysfunction, we generally saw at most one or two principled constitutionalists — a Larry McDonald (D-Ga.) or a Ron Paul (R-Texas) — valiantly trying to stem the tide of Big Government, all the while being marginalized by a bipartisan establishment.



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But the last 15 years or so has seen a new thing under the sun, the emergence of an entire wing of the House GOP passionately dedicated to restoring American liberties, reining in government spending, and bringing back limited, constitutional government. It started with the Ron Paul presidential candidacy of 2008 and the Tea Party movement, and has since coalesced into the House Freedom Caucus, a group of as many as 50 House members who aren't afraid to buck the GOP establishment. They are led by the likes of Congressman Jim Jordan (R-Ohio), and their ranks appear to have grown with the latest election. While not all Freedom Caucus members have chosen to oppose McCarthy as of this writing (both Jordan and Thomas Massie (R-Ky.), two of the House's most principled constitutionalists, have been supporting his candidacy), a significant number have (at least 20, at the latest count).

More telling, though, are the scores received by those 20 House members on *The New American's* biannual [Freedom Index](#). For decades, *The New American* has been compiling twice-yearly scorecards for every member of the House and Senate based on their voting performance, called the Freedom Index (formerly the Conservative Index). And for many years, until recently, congressmen receiving scores of 90 percent or better were few and far between, with a perfect 100 percent being almost unheard of (with the notable exception of former congressman Ron Paul). But in the most recent Freedom Index — the last of four for the outgoing 117th Congress — no less than 11 House members and one senator received perfect 100 percent scores for their votes on the most recent pieces of legislation and other agenda items. And of those 11 House members, six are among Kevin McCarthy's 20 detractors. What's more, three of those have *cumulative* Freedom Index scores of 100 percent in the 117th Congress (2021-22), meaning that they have voted with perfect constitutional and freedom-loving consistency during the entire two-year congressional period. These three standouts are Arizona's Andy Biggs (R), Montana's Matt Rosendale (R), and Texas' Chip Roy (R). Two other members of the group, Paul Gosar (R-Ariz.) and Dan Bishop (R-N.C.), achieved cumulative scores of 98 percent, while Matt Gaetz (R-Fla.) and Michael Cloud (R-Texas), were right behind at 97 percent. Next in line are Ralph Norman (R-S.C.) and Lauren Boebert (R-Colo.) at 95 percent. Mary Miller (R) of Illinois weighed in at 92 percent, while three others of the group — Andrew Clyde (R-Ga.), Bob Good (R-Va.), and Byron Donalds (R-Fla.), who has been nominated as Speaker — achieved a 90 percent cumulative score. In fact, the only two House members to vote against McCarthy who have scored less than 90 percent on the Freedom Index are Pennsylvania Republican Scott Perry (a still-respectable 87) and Maryland Republican Andy Harris (79). The other five House members in the group — Josh Brecheen (R-Okla.), Eli Crane (R-Ariz.), Ana Luna (R-Fla.), Andy Ogles (R-Tenn.), and Keith Self (R-Texas) — are freshmen and have no Freedom Index score yet.

Some additional data on these 20 House mavericks, compiled by the *New York Times* in an attempt to highlight their "extremist" status, should leave no doubt as to their patriotic and constitutionalist bona fides:

- 12 of them denied the results of the 2020 election.
- 14 of the 15 House incumbents were "objectors," i.e., they voted on January 6, 2021, to overturn the Electoral College results.
- 17 were Trump endorsees.
- Nearly half of them come from Texas, Arizona, and Florida, the three electorates most detested by Washington liberal elites.

Bearing in mind that, in addition to these 20, a number of other excellent House members, like the aforementioned Jordan and Massie, are reliable constitutionalists and principled partisans of liberty,



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and we see the fruit of several decades of quiet, diligent education and information at the grassroots level. From one or two lone voices in the wilderness we now have an entire voting bloc able to stop the Washington Establishment in its tracks. And if a dedicated minority of 20 or 30 such can accomplish this much, we can only imagine what 100 or 200 such could achieve!

The new state of affairs in Congress points up the dangerous error, embraced by many, that only a Constitutional Convention and sweeping constitutional reforms can save us. What has now become clear is that, far from embarking on the perilous course of rewriting our founding document, all that is needed is to follow the provisions in that document. And the only thing needed to bring that about is a better-informed electorate producing better congressmen — and holding them strictly to account once elected!

The trend lines are now clear: bringing back limited, constitutional government and a rebirth of economic and personal liberty are possible without resorting to any radical means, and, in fact, the process is already well underway. All that is needed is more education and a little time.



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