

National Legislative Division Weekly

CONGRESS



Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) sit in the House Chamber during votes for House Speaker of the 118th Congress.

The Senate met on Tuesday and elected Sen. Murray (D-WA) as President pro tempore. She is the first woman to hold that position. Sen. Schumer (D-NY) continues as the Majority Leader, and Sen. McConnell (R-KY) is the Minority Leader. McConnell is now the longest serving Senate leader, beating the record of Sen. Mansfield (D-MT) who served as Majority Leader for 16 years until his 1977 retirement. The Chamber then adjourned, except for pro forma sessions, until January 23, when the real work will begin.

The House is starting the 118th Congress much less smoothly. Between Tuesday and Thursday, Rep. McCarthy (R-CA) failed to achieve sufficient votes to become Speaker of the House on eleven tries. In fact, Democratic leader Rep. Jeffries (D-NY) got more votes on each ballot (212) than McCarthy achieved each time, due to a group of 20 Republican holdouts. Rep. Donalds (R-FL) has come forward as the leading challenger to McCarthy on the Republican side of the aisle, although he only received a handful of votes each time.

Due to the slim Republican majority, McCarthy can only afford to lose four Republican votes in order to clinch the Speaker position. Among the 20 Republican opponents, some are seeking more concessions while several (probably more than five) simply do not like or trust McCarthy and are unlikely to support him regardless of concessions. McCarthy appears determined to continue holding votes and negotiating away concessions until he is elected. His supporters, as of Thursday morning, started muttering to reporters their doubts on the wisdom of this approach.

McCarthy has reportedly offered up significant concessions. One would include in the House rules the ability for a single Member to call for the Speaker to be removed, which would leave McCarthy on incredibly shaky political ground. Other concessions would allow individual holdouts to assume subcommittee chairs for which they would not otherwise be considered.

WHAT DOES THE HOUSE CHAOS MEAN?

The House cannot operate until there is a Speaker in place. The Members cannot even be sworn in. Committees will not know how many members of each Party they will have, and staff cannot get paid. In fact, there are no specific rules in place, which has made some of the floor Speaker debates murky.

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Staff has told reporters that their requests to Executive Branch agencies to help constituents are being delayed. One letter, from the IRS, said the agency could not help because the Member was technically only a Member-elect, as no one has been sworn in.

Members involved in oversight of the military and intelligence community routinely receive briefings of secure and secret information. Currently, those Members' security clearances have been paused, briefings are not occurring, and the lawmakers cannot even access the sensitive compartmented information facility (SCIF) located in the Capitol.

LEGIONNAIRE OF THE WEEK

In an effort to recognize the weekly accomplishments of our Legionnaires, we will spotlight an individual every week. These individuals demonstrate exceptional grassroots activism by meeting with/contacting their Congressional Representative/Senator to advocate for veterans. Efforts like these truly make a difference and give veterans a voice in Congress.

Daniel Burks, Oregon

This week, we are excited to recognize Daniel Burks from the Department of Oregon for meeting with Rep. Bentz (R-OR) at the Veterans Memorial Hall Ontario Oregon Post 67. Mr. Burks held an open forum with the Congressman and local veterans to discuss various issues surrounding veterans. Specifically, they discussed the Congressman's vote on the PACT Act.

Thank you, Mr. Burks!

If you have made a grassroots effort and would like to be considered for next week's "Legionnaire of the Week," please fill out the Congressional Contact Report Form [here](#). You can also email me at kisaacson@legion.org.

UPCOMING HEARINGS

There will be no hearings this week.