

Kevin McCarthy becomes the first Speaker ever to be ousted from the Office

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Why in news?

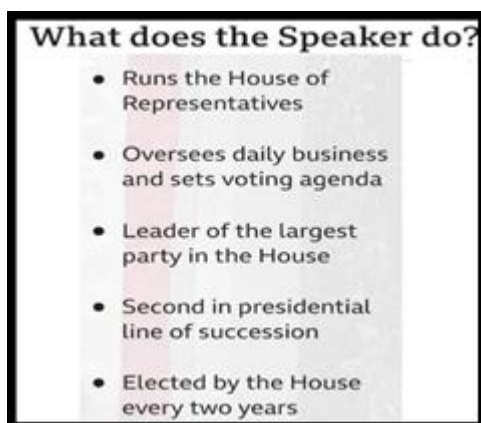
- The Speaker of the United States House of Representatives Kevin McCarthy was voted out of the job by a handful of hand-liner Republican leaders.
 - These leaders criticised McCarthy for mishandling government spending and budget fights since the GOP took over the House in January.
 - They also accused McCarthy of cutting a secret side deal with US President Joe Biden on providing additional funding to Ukraine.
- This is the **first time ever that a House Speaker has lost a no-confidence vote**.
 - The final tally stood at 216-210, with eight Republicans voting with 208 Democrats.
 - This marked the end of McCarthy's tumultuous nine-month-long leadership of the Republican majority in the lower chamber of Congress.

Speaker of the United States House of Representatives

What is a Speaker of the House?

- The US Constitution established the role of Speaker of the House, which oversees the lower chamber of Congress.
- The Speaker is both traditionally and historically a sitting member of the majority party, though this is not a constitutional requirement.
- Therefore, in addition to leading the House of Representatives, they are also leader of the majority party in the chamber.

What is the role of the Speaker?



- At a practical level, the Speaker:
 - sets the House's legislative agenda,
 - controls committee assignments,
 - sets the vote and work calendar, and
 - is responsible for keeping their party members unified behind major initiatives.

- The Speaker is second in line for the presidency, following the Vice-President, in the event of the President being incapable of continuing in office.

Why is the Speaker of the House so important?

- Depending on the partisan makeup of Congress, they can make or break a US president's agenda, stymie opposition, and spearhead their party's biggest legislative initiatives.
- A shrewd and effective Speaker will be able to marshal their members behind their party's agenda, and control rebellious lawmakers by doling out incentives or punishments.

How is a Speaker chosen?

• No House without a speaker

- The House of Representatives functions on a two-year cycle, known as a "session."
 - The mid-term elections were held in the United States on 8 November, 2022.
 - The new Congress began on 3 January 2023 and Republicans will be in the majority.
- The very first thing a new session of the House of Representatives must do is vote for a Speaker of the House.
- Without that person in place, the chamber cannot move on to any other function, including swearing-in members.
- The chamber must continue to hold votes until a Speaker is elected.

• Nomination for Speaker

- In the weeks after an election, the Republican conference and the Democratic caucus hold an informal vote among their members.
 - This voting is done to decide who they want to nominate to lead their party.
- But members are not obligated to vote for the party's chosen candidate.
- While it has been the tradition for the speaker candidate to be a member of the House, **it is not required.**

• Voting

- The vote for Speaker requires a candidate to receive the support of a majority of the House – 218 votes (out of the 435 members of the House).
- The existing leader of the majority party is usually presumed to be the person to assume the speakership.
- For more than a century, the Speaker of the House was decided on the first vote.
 - However, this time, a record-making 15 voting rounds were conducted before McCarthy succeeded in acquiring the Speaker's gavel.

Removal of the speaker of the House

- Under the newly adopted rule (in January 2023), any single member of the House could offer a **privileged resolution** declaring the Office of Speaker vacant.
 - The term “privileged” refers to a matter that has precedence over regular House business.
- Procedural votes could be offered to slow down the motion, but when it does come to the floor, it would need only a simple majority of the House — or 218 members currently — to pass.

News Summary: Kevin McCarthy becomes the first Speaker ever to be ousted from the Office

- The United States House of Representatives has removed its speaker, a Republican, for the first time in the body’s 234-year history.

Acting speaker after McCarthy’s removal

- Republican Representative Patrick McHenry, a McCarthy ally, was temporarily appointed acting speaker.
- He can only serve for a very limited time – up to three legislative days in this case.
- The acting speaker temporary duties are vague. According to a guide to the chamber’s rules and procedures:
 - That person may exercise such authorities of the office of speaker as may be necessary and appropriate pending the election of a speaker or speaker pro tempore.

Q1) What is US Congress?

The US Congress is made up of two parts – the House of Representatives and the Senate. There are total of 535 Members of Congress – 100 serve in the U.S. Senate and 435 serve in the U.S. House of Representatives. Control of these two houses is decided by the midterm election.

Q2) How long do members of Congress’ terms last?

Members of the House of Representatives serve two-year terms and are considered for reelection every second year. Senators however, serve six-year terms and elections to the Senate are staggered over even years so that only about 1/3 of the Senate is up for reelection during any election.

Source: [How Republican leader McCarthy became the first ever US House Speaker to be removed from office](#) | [NBC News](#) | [ALJAZEERA](#) | [The Hindu](#)

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