



The Speaker of the House, a [constitutionally mandated position](#), plays a significant role in the U.S. Congress and in the policy making process. Perhaps most importantly, the Speaker is [second in line to the presidency](#). If for some reason the president and vice-president are unable to serve, the Speaker becomes acting president (assuming the Speaker is a native-born citizen and meets all other presidential qualifications)., When it comes to the workings of the U.S. House of Representatives, [the Speaker has a great deal of power](#). The Speaker swears in new representatives, sets the agenda, addresses committee assignments, helps establish rules of operation, and governs over the day-to day-workings of the House. Generally speaking, the Speaker's powers are one of the key reasons why political parties want to win the majority of House seats, giving the majority party a leg up on electing one of their own members as the new Speaker, and thus a great deal of control over what happens in the House of Representatives. [So how does the Speaker election work, and who runs it?](#)

After every national election, [each political party meets in a caucus and nominates a candidate that most of the party caucus can agree on](#). In most cases, each party's leader will be nominated for Speaker. Every person to hold the Speakership has also been a sitting member of the House of Representatives [although the U.S. Constitution includes no qualifications to be Speaker and technically a non-representative can be nominated](#). Often, candidates will attempt to make deals with House members of their party to ensure their votes. Such deals might include promises to make appointments to particular committees, initiate an investigation, secure votes for their bills or even change House rules.

**All the Times the House Failed to Elect a New Speaker So Far**

The effort to elect a speaker has required more ballots than at any time since before the Civil War

By Wall Street Journal  
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The House of Representatives has yet to elect a new speaker after a historic 11 rounds of voting so far this week. A candidate must win the majority of those present and voting.

Once the candidates are nominated by the representatives-elect (representatives-elect become representatives once they are sworn in by the Speaker; [without a Speaker they are not yet sitting representatives!](#)), the modern process involves an open and public roll call vote where each representative-elect names their preferred candidate. [Current rules require that the winning candidate achieve a majority of the 435 voting members, or 218](#). If there are members that do not vote, the total required for a majority would be reduced.

Should no candidate achieve a majority, there will be additional rounds of voting until a candidate wins. [Between 1923 and 2023 just a single vote was required to secure a majority vote](#) although the 118th Congress, [meeting in January 2023, has required multiple voting rounds](#). House members may also change voting rules such a requiring an anonymous vote or allowing a plurality of votes where the candidate who receives more votes than any other candidate, even without a majority of the votes from among three or more candidates, is elected Speaker.

The election of the Speaker of the House is vitally important because it sets the tone for each session of Congress. A contentious Speaker election may lead to a difficult congressional session. By contrast, for the majority party to select a clear winner on the first vote may be a good first step for the majority party as it shapes its agenda for the congressional session.

**To Think and To Do:** Review the [vote rolls for the most recent election for Speaker of the House](#). How did [your representative-elect](#) vote? What question might you ask your representative-elect about their vote?

### Learn More:

- [Speakers of the House by Congress](#)
- [The Evolution of the Speaker of the House](#)



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