

COMMITMENTS TO THE CONFERENCE: A ROADMAP TO UNITY FOR THE NEXT SPEAKER

THE REPUBLICAN MAJORITY

Before he took the Speaker's gavel, the then Minority Leader John Boehner said, "[t]he truth is, much of the work of committees has been co-opted by leadership. In too many instances, we no longer have legislators; we just have voters."

Unfortunately, even with a historic Republican majority we have been unable to change this culture. Over time:

- the number of hearings has decreased;
- markups and amendment debate have shortened;
- the number of annual authorizations considered has decreased;
- outside of Appropriations bills, structured and closed rules have become the norm;
- leadership has become the primary legislators rather than members and Committees;
- Conference committees have become less common when negotiating between the two chambers.

THE SPEAKERS RACE

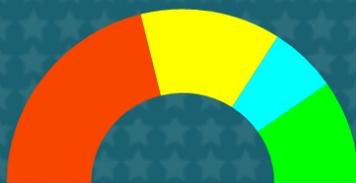


Congress has moved away from its core function of deliberation, and instead moved towards favoring process efficiency and electioneering. There has been an ever increasing trend of important pieces of legislation coming to the floor without being reported out of committee and with heavy-handed rules limiting amendments and debate. At times there also has been a breakdown in communication between leadership and all conference members.

The U.S. Constitution requires that members of the U.S. House of Representatives select a Speaker and we should not take this duty lightly. Before selecting the next Speaker, we should take some time to reflect on the current situation.

As a Conference, we are adrift, fractioned and leaderless. Those few members who are fit to unite us and lead the Conference have been reluctant to step forward. Trust must be rebuilt from the bottom up. Such a transition begins with internal conference, process, and communication reforms.

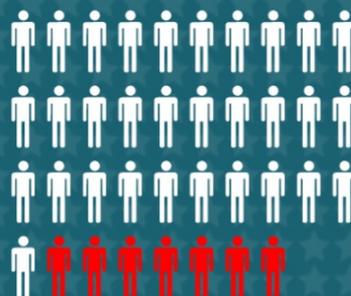
CONFERENCE REFORMS



- Elected before 2009 (42%)
- Elected in 2010 (26%)
- Elected in 2012 (13%)
- Elected in 2014 (19%)

House Republican Conference

STEERING COMMITTEE VOTES



Elected Prior to 2010 ■ Elected After 2010

The Steering Committee should be restructured to reflect the wealth of experience and ideological differences within the Conference. In theory, the Steering Committee should reflect the diverse makeup of the Conference. In practice, the Committee is stacked with senior members loyal to leadership. For instance, almost 60% of the Conference was elected after 2010, yet these members account for less than 18% of the votes on the Steering Committee.

CONFERENCE RULES

The Conference Rules need to be amended. As we've learned, the rules are vague and open to differing interpretations. In addition, several members of the Conference have proposed amendments to the rules, which warrant consideration. Some specific member proposals include:

1. SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRS

We need to change Rule 19 of the Conference Rules and allow for Subcommittee Chairs to be elected by the Committee rather than, in some instances, handed out at the discretion of the Chairs. Legislative business should begin at the Subcommittee level and progress from there. By empowering the Subcommittees, we strengthen the regular order process.

2. MODIFY SPEAKER ELECTIONS

Unlike other Elected Leadership positions for the Conference, the Speaker requires a majority vote of those present in the full Congress to assume office. There has been discussion of amending Rule 4(c) to require a super majority threshold for the Speaker office in order to avoid a contentious floor vote.

3. RESIGN TO RUN

The Conference Rules currently allow members of Elected Leadership (including Committee Chairs) to rule for higher office without vacating their positions. Members have certain proposals to modify Rule 2(f) to require resignation from other offices. This is distinguished from the current requirement of 2(f) for there to be an actual vacancy prior to holding an election.

All of the proposals need to be formally discussed and reviewed by the Conference, it would be my hope any reforms adopted are intended to make the Conference more inclusive and we avoid punitive measures, which could further divide our conference.



PROCESS REFORMS

Allow the Majority Leader to Restore Regular Order

Our Leader needs to reinstate the power of the will of the people and return Congressional business to regular order. Members of Congress are elected by the people of their district and they need to be allowed to represent their constituents to the best of their ability. Members should have the ability to advance their priorities by building the support of a majority of colleagues rather than the staff of leadership. For example, if a bill has at least 125 cosponsors, it should advance to a Subcommittee markup; if it passes out of the Subcommittee, it should receive a full committee markup. During both of these markups, the bill should be open to any germane amendment. Once passed out of Committee, it should be brought to the Full House – as passed by the Committee of jurisdiction – for a vote under an open rule. Our leadership needs to allow for members to legislate, not dictate the results.

RULES REFORMS

The Rules Committee should only be used to determine the terms and conditions of debate. Right now the Rules Committee has the authority to do virtually anything during the course of consideration of a measure, and unfortunately, it has become common practice for the Rules Committee to insert language to legislation outside of regular order. The Rules Committee was never intended to be a policymaking body and Conference rules need to be amended to reflect that.

COMMUNICATIONS

An organization cannot function without communication. Too often, members learn from sources outside of Conference what legislation is coming together and what the proceedings on the Floor will be. To be a unified Conference, our communication problems must be fixed and that starts with the Speaker. The Speaker needs to grow its role with House Conference to strengthen its communication department to advance the message of the majority to its members and to the public. The Speaker needs to re-establish lines of communication with all members, not just a select few. One way this could also be achieved is through the restoration of regular order and the strengthening of Subcommittees.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

The Speaker should have weekly meetings with Conference members to discuss the weekly agenda and messaging which should not be longer than an hour. In addition, the Speaker should meet weekly with members by four regions in an open format to allow their input.

Members should also be informed of the status and content of votes before the media or the minority. Too often Leadership bypasses members and key legislative developments are known by the press before the membership. The Speaker should meet weekly with Committee Chairs to discuss movement of legislation pending before the Committees and legislation moving to the floor, establishing a clear, transparent path for members' legislation. Committee Chairs must be empowered to take their legislation initiatives into the national debate in order to advance our conservative agenda.

EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

The next Speaker needs to commit to an inclusive communication strategy. As a Conference, we need to more effectively communicate to our constituents and the American people that we hear them and we are working for them. There is a massive disconnect between the work we do here in Washington and the American people. The next Speaker needs to be the bridge for that disconnect.

CONCLUSION

There is obvious frustration amongst our Conference on the current legislative process. As we transition to a new leadership team, we would be remiss not to take this opportunity to change the process. I hope our new Speaker will be open to doing things differently and I believe these few changes will get us on path to come together and will restore power to the people in the people's House.

SO WHO IS THE NEW SPEAKER GOING TO BE?

Before we select a person, we as a Conference need to agree what the Speaker's job description will be. At a basic level, the Speaker must serve as: institutional administrator, member of Congress, and party leader. We must ask ourselves, what more do we need?

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