The Speaker of the House: House Officer, Party Leader, and Representative

James V. Saturno
Section Research Manager

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Summary

The Speaker of the House of Representatives is widely viewed as symbolizing the power and authority of the House. The Speaker's most prominent role is that of presiding officer of the House. In this capacity, the Speaker is empowered by House rules to administer proceedings on the House floor, including the power to recognize Members on the floor to speak or make motions and the power to appoint Members to conference committees. The Speaker also oversees much of the non-legislative business of the House, such as general control over the Hall of the House and the House side of the Capitol and service as chair of the House Office Building Commission. The Speaker's role as "elect of the elect" in the House also places him or her in a highly visible position with the public.

The Speaker also serves not only as titular leader of the House but also as leader of the majority party conference. The Speaker is often responsible for airing and defending the majority party's legislative agenda in the House.

The Speaker's third distinct role is that of an elected Member of the House. Although elected as an officer of the House, the Speaker continues to be a Member as well. As such the Speaker enjoys the same rights, responsibilities, and privileges of all Representatives. However, the Speaker has traditionally refrained from debating or voting in most circumstances, and does not sit on any standing committee of the House.

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Introduction

Article I, Section 2 of the Constitution states: "The House of Representatives shall chuse their Speaker and other Officers."[1] The position of Speaker combines several roles: the institutional role of presiding officer and administrative head of the House, the partisan role of leader of the majority party in the House, and the representative role of an elected Member of the House. As the "elect of the elect" the Speaker has perhaps the most visible job in Congress. By statute, the Speaker is also second in line, behind the Vice President, to succeed to the presidency.[2]

The Constitution does not describe the office of the Speaker or its duties, nor was there any significant discussion of the office during the Constitutional Convention. The use of the title "Speaker" probably has its origins in the British House of Commons, where the presiding officer acted as the chamber's spokesman to the Crown, but any assumptions the authors of the Constitution had for the office undoubtedly also drew upon their own experiences in colonial legislatures and the Continental Congress. There does not seem to have been any grand plan or specific expectation as to how the Founding Fathers envisioned the speakership. Rather, the speakership has been largely shaped by the various individuals who have held the post, the circumstances in which they have operated, formal obligations that have been assigned to the office by House rules and by statute, the character of the House as a political and constitutional institution, and traditions and customs that have evolved over time.

Selection of the Speaker[3]

When the House of Representatives convenes at the beginning of a new Congress, its first order of business is to elect a Speaker. Because the House dissolves at the end of a Congress and must start anew at the beginning of each new Congress, the clerk of the House presides over the House under general parliamentary law until a Speaker is elected. For its first 50 years, the House elected the Speaker by ballot. In 1839, this method was changed to election by *vive voce*, meaning that each Member names aloud whom he or she favors for Speaker. Tellers then record the result. In modern practice, each party places the name of a single Member in nomination for the position, but otherwise virtually the same *vive voce* method is used to elect the Speaker. Because the election of the Speaker typically takes place before the House adopts its rules of procedure, the election process is defined by precedent and practice rather than by any formal rule.

[1] The other officers of the House are not specified in the Constitution. Currently, under House Rule II, the clerk, sergeant-at-arms, chief administrative officer, and chaplain are identified as officers to be elected by the House, although the rule also states that the clerk, sergeant-at-arms, and chief administrative officer may be removed either by the House or the Speaker. Rule II also identifies additional officers, the historian of the House, the general counsel, and the inspector general, to be appointed by the Speaker.

[2] The Presidential Succession Act of 1947 (P.L. 80-199, 61 Stat. 380) provides that if "there is neither a President nor Vice President to discharge the powers and duties of the office of the President, then the Speaker of the House of Representatives shall, upon his resignation as Speaker and as Representative in Congress, act as President." To succeed to the presidency a Speaker would also need to qualify under the terms of Article II, Section 5 of the Constitution, which requires that the President be a "natural-born citizen," at least 35 years of age, and a resident within the United States for 14 years.

[3] For more on elections of the Speaker, see CRS Report RL30857, *Speakers of the House: Elections, 1913-2007*, by Richard S. Beth and James V. Saturno.

To be elected Speaker, a candidate must receive an absolute majority of the votes cast, which may be less than a majority of the full membership of the House because of vacancies, absentees, or Members voting "present."[4] Although the major parties nominate candidates for the position of Speaker, there is no limitation on whom Members may vote for.[5] In fact, there is no requirement that the Speaker be a Member of the House.[6] None of the other officers of the House is a Member.

If no candidate receives the requisite majority, the roll call is repeated until a Speaker is elected. Again, Members may continue to vote for any individual, and no restrictions, such as eliminating minority candidates or prohibiting new candidates from being named, are imposed. For example, at the beginning of the 34th Congress in 1855, 133 ballots over a period of two months were necessary to elect Nathaniel Banks of Massachusetts as Speaker.[7]

The last occasion on which multiple ballots were required to elect a Speaker was in 1923. At the beginning of the 68th Congress, the nominees from both major parties initially failed to receive a majority of the votes because of votes cast for other candidates by Members from the Progressive Party and from the "progressive wing" of the Republican Party. After the Republican leadership agreed to accept a number of procedural reforms, the Progressives agreed to vote for the Republican candidate on the ninth ballot, making Frederick Gillett of Massachusetts the Speaker.[8]

If a Speaker dies or resigns during a Congress, the House immediately elects a new Speaker. Although it was an earlier practice of the House to elect a new Speaker under these conditions by adopting a resolution to that effect, the modern practice is to use the same practice as employed at the beginning of a Congress. The most recent example of this occurred during the 101st Congress when Thomas Foley of Washington was elected Speaker following the resignation of Jim Wright of Texas.[9]

In the 19th century, longevity of House service was not as important a criterion in selecting the Speaker as it is today. It was not unusual for a Member to be elected Speaker with only a few years service. From 1789 to 1899, the average length of House service before a Member was elected Speaker was 7.1 years. In fact, Henry Clay of Kentucky (in 1811) and William Pennington of New Jersey (in 1860) were each elected Speaker as freshmen (the first Speaker, Frederick A. Muhlenberg of Pennsylvania, was obviously a third, albeit special, case).

The 19 Speakers elected between 1899 (David B. Henderson) and 2007 (Nancy Pelosi) served an average of 22.9 years in the House prior to their first election as Speaker. The longest pre-speakership tenure in this period belonged to Jim Wright who served for 17 terms before being

[4] The controlling precedent dates to Mar. 18, 1879, when in response to an inquiry, the clerk, while presiding over the House, stated: "It requires a majority of those voting to elect a Speaker, as it does to pass a bill." Asher Hinds, *Hinds' Precedents of the House of Representatives of the United States* (Washington: GPO, 1907), vol. 1, sec. 216. (Hereafter cited as *Hinds' Precedents.*)

[5] However, a provision was added (currently House Rule I, clause 9) at the start of the 104th Congress limiting a Speaker to service for four consecutive Congresses.

[6] For example, in the election of the Speaker at the beginning of the 105th Congress, two former Members of the House (Robert H. Michel and Robert Walker) each received one vote. *Congressional Record*, vol. 143, Jan. 7, 1997, p. 117.

[7] On the 133rd ballot, Nathaniel Banks received 103 votes while his four opponents received a total of 111. Since this was not a majority, the House subsequently adopted a resolution, by majority vote, confirming the election. *Congressional Globe*, vol. 25, 34th Cong., 1st sess., Feb. 2, 1856, pp. 337-342.

[8] *Congressional Record*, vol. 65, Dec. 3-5, 1923.

[9] *Congressional Record*, vol. 135, June 6, 1989, p. 10800.

elected as Speaker. Sam Rayburn of Texas served longer as Speaker than any other Member: a tenure of 17 years (interrupted twice by Republican majorities). Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill Jr. of Massachusetts holds the record for the longest continuous service as Speaker: 10 years. The record for the shortest tenure belongs to Theodore M. Pomeroy of New York who served one day. (**Appendix A** lists all the Speakers of the House as well as their party affiliations, home state, and their dates of service in that office.)

The Speaker as Leader of the House

Although the office of the Speaker is mentioned in the Constitution, that document is silent on its duties. Today, the Speaker possesses substantial powers under House rules. Among the duties performed are

- administering the oath of office to Members (the Act of 1789 (2 U.S.C. 25) provides that, on the organization of the House, the oath shall be administered by any Member, traditionally the Member with the longest continuous service, to the Speaker and by the Speaker to the other Members);
- calling the House to order (Rule I, clause 1);
- preserving order and decorum within the chamber and in the galleries (Rule I, clause 2);
- recognizing Members to speak and make motions (Rule XVII);[10]
- deciding points of order (Rule I, clause 5);
- counting a quorum (Rule XX, clause 7(c));
- presenting the pending business to the House for a vote (Rule I, clause 6);
- appointing Speakers *pro tempore* (Rule I, clause 8) and chairs of the Committee of the Whole (Rule XVIII, clause 1);[11]
- certifying various actions of the House, including signing all acts and joint resolutions, writs, warrants, and subpoenas of (or issued to) the House (Rule I, clause 4);[12]
- appointing select and conference committees (Rule I, clause 11);

[10] This provision is augmented by the provision in Rule XVI, clause 1, which states that the Speaker shall not entertain any dilatory motions.

[11] By tradition, the Speaker does not preside over the Committee of the Whole, but instead names a party colleague as chair. According to historian DeAlva Stanwood Alexander, this tradition has its roots in Stuart England when conflicts over taxation arrayed the Crown against the Commons, and suspicion assumed the Speaker to be a tale bearer to the King. To avoid the Speaker's espionage Commons met in secret, electing a chairman in whom it had confidence. Even after any need for secrecy in its proceedings had passed, Commons continued to require that the Speaker withdraw whenever the Committee of the Whole convened. DeAlva Stanwood Alexander, *History and Procedure of the House of Representatives* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1916), pp. 257-258. The American tradition does not require the Speaker to withdraw from the deliberations of the Committee of the Whole, only that he not chair it.

[12] Responses to subpoenas are also governed under Rule VIII.

- appointing certain House officers (such as the inspector general under Rule II, clause 6, the historian of the House under Rule II, clause 7, and the general counsel under Rule II, clause 8);
- referring measures to committee(s) (Rule XII, clause 2); and
- examining and approving the *Journal* of the proceedings of the previous day's session (Rule I, clause 1).

The Speaker's powers offer him or her considerable latitude to exercise discretion. Under most circumstances, the Speaker has the authority to ask Members who seek recognition, "For what purpose does the gentleman (or gentlelady) rise?" The Speaker may then decide whether or not to recognize that Member for the specific reason given. In this way the Speaker is able to assert control over what motions may be made and therefore what measures will be considered and the general flow of House floor proceedings. House Rule XV, clause 1 allows the Speaker to entertain motions to suspend the rules on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays, as well as during the last six days of a session. Discretion over who may be recognized to make such motions gives the Speaker virtually complete control over the suspension process.

The institutional role of the Speaker also extends beyond the duty to preside over the House. The Speaker also exercises general control over the Hall of the House and the House side of the Capitol (Rule I, clause 3), and serves as the chair of the House Office Building Commission. The Speaker frequently is authorized in statute to appoint Members to various boards and commissions, and it is typically the Speaker who is the formal recipient of reports or other communications from the President, government agencies, boards, and commissions.

The role of the Speaker also extends to the requirement in House Rule V, clause 1 that he or she administer a system for audio and video broadcasting of the proceedings of the House. Rule I, clause 13 provides for the Speaker, in consultation with the minority leader, to devise a system of drug testing in the House.

Finally, although it is not prescribed in any formal way, the elevated profile of the office of the Speaker often means he must take a leading role in negotiations with the Senate or President.

The Speaker as Party Leader

Under both Republican and Democratic majorities, Speakers have played similar roles as leader of their parties. A Speaker's role as leader of the majority party is manifested in two ways: within the party conference or caucus and on the House floor.

Under the rules of the House Democratic Caucus, the Speaker recommends to the Caucus nominees for officers of the House. The Speaker's prominence within the Caucus is reinforced because she chairs the Steering and Policy Committee, and appoints two co-chairs, two vice-chairs, and up to 15 of its Members. In addition, the Speaker is empowered to appoint one Member to the House Budget Committee, as well as make appointments to joint and select committees, and various boards and commissions, giving due consideration to spreading the workload among qualified and interested Democrats. She nominates the Democratic membership on the Committees on Rules and House Administration, and recommends to the Caucus a nominee for chair of these committees. If a nominee is rejected, the Speaker may make another nomination until the position is filled.

Within the Democratic Party, the Speaker serves as a member of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) and also nominates the DCCC chair.

Previously, within the Republican Party conference, the Speaker acted as the chairman of the party's Steering Committee, and thus plays a major part in the committee assignment process because Members are nominated to serve on or chair a committee by the Steering Committee. These nominations are subject to approval by the full party conference, and subsequently by the House. In the 104th Congress, it appears that the Speaker exerted further influence in the process of nominating Members to chair committees by naming a slate of candidates before the Steering Committee had been formed. Although the Speaker's choices required the approval of the Steering Committee before they were placed before the full conference, his influence was reported to have exceeded that of recent previous Speakers.[13]

In addition, the Speaker was empowered to make nominations directly for the Republican Conference's consideration for membership (including chairs) on the Rules Committee and the House Administration Committee, as well as the chair and one Member (to serve as the second ranking Republican) on the Budget Committee.

House Republican Conference rules also provided for the Speaker to serve on the National Republican Congressional Committee. Because the Speaker's role as leader of the majority party in the House is sometimes at odds with his role as presiding officer of the chamber, House Republican Conference rules stated that:

> A Member of the elected or designated Republican Leadership has an obligation, to the best of his/her ability, to support positions adopted by the Conference, and the resources of the Leadership shall be utilized to support that position.

The success of every person to hold the Speaker's office since the late 20th century has been judged, at least in part, on the basis of their ability to use personal prestige, and the powers of persuasion and bargaining to enunciate and advance their party's vision and legislative agenda, as well as work to ensure majority control of the House. To accomplish these objectives modern Speakers have used varying personal styles and engaged in a variety of activities, not just in Congress or their party conference, but outside as well.[14] For example, they publicize their party's policies and achievements (by giving speeches, appearing on radio and television, holding press conferences, etc.); assist party members who are seeking reelection; consult with Presidents about both Administration and congressional agendas and goals; and, when the majority in the House is not the same party as the President, they act as a spokesman for the loyal opposition. In the words of one commentator:

> To an increasing degree, the way for a Speaker to win support among colleagues is to influence public opinion ... [A] House leader now needs some credibility outside the institution in order to win on the inside.[15]

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[13] Karen Foerstel, "House Chairmen: Gingrich Flexes His Power in Picking Panel Chiefs," *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, vol. 52, Nov. 19, 1994, p. 3326.

[14] Jackie Koszczuk, "Master of the Mechanics Has Kept the House Running," *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, vol. 57, Dec. 11, 1999, p. 2960.

[15] Alan Ehrenhalt, "Speaker's Job Transformed Under O'Neill," *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, vol. 43, June 22, 1985, p. 1247.

Bringing coherence and efficiency to a decentralized and individualistic legislative body requires a Speaker to use the entire range of tangible and intangible rewards that can be bestowed or withheld. In an interview, Speaker O'Neill once described how he wielded these various minor powers by saying:

> You know, you ask me what are my powers and my authorities around here? The power to recognize on the floor; little odds and ends—like men get pride out of the prestige of handling the Committee of the Whole, being named Speaker for the day.... [T]here is a certain aura and respect that goes with the Speaker's office. He does have the power to pick up the telephone and call people. And Members oftentimes like to bring their local political leaders or a couple of mayors. And oftentimes they have problems from their area and they need aid and assistance.... We're happy to try to open the door for them, having been in the town for so many years and knowing so many people. We do know where a lot of bodies are and we do know how to advise people.[16]

The power to schedule legislation for floor consideration can be used in ways that reflect both institutional and partisan considerations. The Speaker is charged with ensuring that the House processes its fundamental annual workload, but determining what, when, and in which order a measure reaches the floor can help determine its fate. A week's delay in scheduling a controversial bill may work to enhance or minimize its chances for passage. According to Speaker O'Neill, it was one of his most important powers because "if [a Speaker] doesn't want a certain bill to come up, it usually doesn't."[17]

Similarly, the Speaker's authority to appoint conferees can be a powerful tool for influencing the final provisions of a bill. The Members appointed represent a complex balance of support for House, committee, and party positions as determined by the Speaker, and are not subject to challenge.

Modern Speakers have also frequently had to act as mediators of conflicts within their parties. As one leader put it, this involves:

> Trying to mollify members who are angry with other members, trying to keep dangerous rifts from developing within the party. Sometimes getting people together of opposite viewpoints and letting them talk their problems out in a way that lets each understand that the other has a problem. Sometimes you can come to a compromise.[18]

Balancing parliamentary and partisan roles is not always easily accomplished. At the start of the 20th century, historian Mary Follett assessed this conundrum by writing:

> The Speaker ... is not only allowed, but expected to use his position to advance party interests. It must not be supposed, however, that this implies gross partisanship on the part of our Speakers. They neither attempt to use every inch of power to be conjured out of the rules, nor guide the House entirely from party motives. Their office has on the whole been administered with justness and fairness ...[19]

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[16] Michael J. Malbin, "House Democrats Are Playing With a Strong Leadership Lineup," *National Journal*, vol. 9, June 18, 1977, p. 942.

[17] Thomas P. O'Neill Jr., *Man of the House* (New York: Random House, 1987), p. 273.

[18] The unidentified leader was quoted in Barbara Sinclair, *Majority Leadership in the U.S. House* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), p. 38.

[19] Mary P. Follett, *The Speaker of the House of Representatives* (New York: Longmans Green, 1902), p. 300.

Another assessment states that:

> Tradition and unwritten law require that the Speaker apply the rules of the House consistently, yet in the twilight zone a large area exists where he may exercise great discrimination and where he has many opportunities to apply the rules to his party's advantage.[20]

The Speaker as a Member of the House

Although elected as an officer of the House, the Speaker continues to be a Member of the House as well. Accordingly, the Speaker continues to have the same rights, responsibilities, and privileges as all Members. However, because of the Speaker's position as leader, it may be notable or even controversial when he or she exercises the powers granted to other Members, such as debating, voting, and sitting as a member of a standing committee of the House.

Under the principles articulated in *Jefferson's Manual*,[21] the Speaker is typically only heard on matters of order, and it is highly irregular to speak on any other matter while presiding. The Speaker, however, may speak from the floor (as would any other Member), and the precedents of the House include examples of the Speaker leaving the chair to speak from the well, make motions[22] or debate a point of order.[23] However, in most periods in the history of the House these privileges were infrequently exercised.

Jonathan Dayton of New Jersey was the first Speaker to speak out on a matter in Committee of the Whole (during the Fourth Congress), and it was not until Henry Clay of Kentucky became Speaker that this practice became generally accepted. As late as 1850, Chauncy Cleveland of Connecticut, then a Member of the House, questioned whether it would:

> be right or just by the power of party to place a man in the Speaker's chair, and then compel him to use the influence of the chair when he had defined his position.... It was utterly impossible that the Speaker, after having taken his side upon the floor, could go back to the chair, and award the floor with the same impartiality as if he had never spoken.[24]

Even today it is not commonplace for the Speaker to participate in debate on the floor, although the Speaker may do so when he or she feels it necessary to highlight or rally support for the majority party's agenda.[25]

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[20] Floyd M. Riddick, *The United States Congress: Organization and Procedure* (Washington: National Capitol Publishers, 1949), p. 67.

[21] Prepared by Thomas Jefferson while serving as Vice President (and President of the Senate), the Manual was adopted as a part of House rules beginning in 1837 to the extent that it is applicable and "not inconsistent with" the standing rules of the House (Rule XXVIII).

[22] On Apr. 4, 1864, Speaker Schuyler Colfax of Indiana came down from the chair to move a resolution to expel Representative Alexander Long of Ohio. He justified his action on the basis of Henry Clay's frequent speeches from the floor while Speaker, but, according to Asher Hinds, Colfax evidently "confused" Clay's actions in Committee of the Whole with participation during sessions of the House itself. See *Hinds' Precedents*, vol. 2, sec. 1367 and footnote.

[23] Ibid., vol. 5, sec. 1607.

[24] *Congressional Globe*, vol. 21, 31st Cong., 1st sess., Jan. 14, 1850, p. 144.

[25] One such example occurred when Speaker Newt Gingrich claimed time in opposition to a motion to recommit the Tax Relief Act of 1997. See the *Congressional Record*, vol. 143, June 26, 1997, p. 12827.

The right of the Speaker to vote has also evolved over time. The first rules of the House provided:

> In all cases of ballot by the House, the Speaker shall vote; in other cases he shall not vote, unless the House be equally divided, or unless his vote, if given to the minority, will make the division equal, and in case of such equal division, the question shall be lost.[26]

The Speaker was thus prevented from voting on legislative matters, although the precedents of the House record several examples of Speakers voting contrary to this rule.[27] The Speaker was allowed to vote in Committee of the Whole, but most early Speakers apparently refrained from this practice as well. At least twice (in 1833 and 1837) the House debated proposals to compel the Speaker to vote on all questions, but these proposals were defeated.[28] It was not until 1850 that the rule was amended to allow the Speaker to vote at his discretion, and the modern form of the rule was not adopted until 1880. Rule I, clause 7 currently reads:

> The Speaker is not required to vote in ordinary legislative proceedings, except when his vote would be decisive or when the House is engaged in voting by ballot.

Unlike other Representatives, the Speaker does not sit on any standing committees of the House.[29] This was not always the case. The Rules Committee was for many years a select committee authorized to report a system of rules at the beginning of a Congress, and later also to report from "time to time." Beginning in 1858, and continuing after the Rules Committee was made a standing committee of the House in 1880, the Speaker served as chairman. This practice continued through 1910 when the House adopted a rule prohibiting the Speaker from sitting on the Rules Committee.[30] The formal prohibition was removed from House rules by the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946,[31] but the tradition has continued. Today, the Speaker does not sit on the Rules Committee, but does nominate the majority members in the party conference, effectively making the Rules Committee an integral part of the leadership structure.

[26] *Annals of Congress*, vol. 1, 1st Cong., 1st sess., Apr. 7, 1789, p. 99. The House customarily uses balloting only for the election of its officers, not for resolving legislative questions.

[27] *Hinds' Precedents*, vol. 5, secs. 5966-5967.

[28] Ibid., vol. 5, sec. 5964.

[29] However, the Speaker is designated as an ex officio member of the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence under House Rule X, clause 11(a)(2).

[30] This restriction was adopted as a part of the so-called revolt against Speaker Joseph Cannon of Illinois at the beginning of the 61st Congress. See the *Congressional Record*, vol. 45, Mar. 15-19, 1910.

[31] P.L. 79-601, 60 Stat. 812.

Appendix A. Speakers of the House of Representatives, 1789-2007

Speaker	Party/State	Congress	Dates
Frederick A.C. Muhlenberg	[NKPA] - PA	1st	Apr. 1, 1789-Mar. 3, 1791
		3rd	Dec. 2, 1793-Mar. 3, 1795
Jonathan Trumbull	[NKPA] - CT	2nd	Oct. 24, 1791-Mar. 3, 1793
Jonathan Dayton	[NKPA] - NJ	4th-5th	Dec. 7, 1795-Mar. 3, 1799
Theodore Sedgwick	[NKPA] - MA	6th	Dec. 2, 1799-Mar. 3, 1801
Nathaniel Macon	[NKPA] - NC	7th-9th	Dec. 7, 1801-Mar. 3, 1807
Joseph B. Varnum	[NKPA] - MA	10th-11th	Oct. 26, 1807-Mar. 3, 1811
Henry Clay	R (DR) - KY	12th-13th	Nov. 4, 1811-Jan. 19, 1814[a]
		14th-16th	Dec. 4, 1815-Oct. 28, 1820[b]
		18th	Dec. 3, 1823-Mar. 6, 1825[c]
Langdon Cheves	R (DR) - SC	13th	Jan. 19, 1814-Mar. 3, 1815
John W. Taylor	R (DR) - NY	16th	Nov. 15, 1820-Mar. 3, 1821
		19th	Dec. 5, 1825-Mar. 3, 1827
Philip Barbour	R (DR) - VA	17th	Dec. 4, 1821-Mar. 3, 1823
Andrew Stevenson	[NKPA] - VA	20th	Dec. 3, 1827-Mar. 3, 1829
	Jacksonian - VA	21st-23rd	Dec. 7, 1829-June 2, 1834[d]
John Bell	[NKPA] - TN	23rd	June 2, 1834-Mar. 3, 1835
James K. Polk	Jacksonian - TN	24th-25th	Dec. 7, 1835-Mar. 3, 1839
Robert M.T. Hunter	W - VA	26th	Dec. 16, 1839-Mar. 3, 1841
John White	W - KY	27th	May 31, 1841-Mar. 3, 1843
John W. Jones	D - VA	28th	Dec. 4, 1843-Mar. 3, 1845
John W. Davis	D - IN	29th	Dec. 1, 1845-Mar. 3, 1847
Robert C. Winthrop	W - MA	30th	Dec. 6, 1847-Mar. 3, 1849
Howell Cobb	D - GA	31st	Dec. 22, 1849-Mar. 3, 1851
Linn Boyd	D - KY	32nd-33rd	Dec. 1, 1851-Mar. 3, 1855
Nathaniel P. Banks	American Party - MA[e]	34th	Feb. 2, 1856-Mar. 3, 1857
James L. Orr	D - SC	35th	Dec. 7, 1857-Mar. 3, 1859
William Pennington	R - NJ	36th	Feb. 1, 1860-Mar. 3, 1861
Galusha A. Grow	R - PA	37th	July 4, 1861-Mar. 3, 1863
Schuyler Colfax	R - IN	38th-40th	Dec. 7, 1863-Mar. 3, 1869[f]
Theodore M. Pomeroy	R - NY	40th	Mar. 3, 1869[g]
James G. Blaine	R - ME	41st-43rd	Mar. 4, 1869-Mar. 3, 1875
Michael C. Kerr	D - IN	44th	Dec. 6, 1875-Aug. 19, 1876[h]
Samuel J. Randall	D - PA	44th-46th	Dec. 4, 1876-Mar. 3, 1881

Speaker	Party/State	Congress	Dates
J. Warren Keifer	R - OH	47th	Dec. 5, 1881-Mar. 3, 1883
John G. Carlisle	D - KY	48th-50th	Dec. 3, 1883-Mar. 3, 1889
Thomas B. Reed	R - ME	51st	Dec. 2, 1889-Mar. 3, 1891
		54th-55th	Dec. 2, 1895-Mar. 3, 1899
Charles F. Crisp	D - GA	52nd-53rd	Dec. 7, 1891-Mar. 3, 1895
David B. Henderson	R - IA	56th-57th	Dec. 4, 1899-Mar. 3, 1903
Joseph G. Cannon	R - IL	58th-61st	Nov. 9, 1903-Mar. 3, 1911
James B. (Champ) Clark	D - MO	62nd-65th	Apr. 4, 1911-Mar. 3, 1919
Frederick H. Gillett	R - MA	66th-68th	May 19, 1919-Mar. 3, 1925
Nicholas Longworth	R - OH	69th-71st	Dec. 7, 1925Mar. 3, 1931
John Nance Garner	D - TX	72nd	Dec. 7, 1931Mar. 3, 1933
Henry T. Rainey	D - IL	73rd	Mar. 9, 1933-Aug. 19, 1934[j]
Joseph W. Byrns	D - TN	74th	Jan. 3, 1935-June 4, 1936[j]
William B. Bankhead	D - AL	74th-76th	June 4, 1936-Sept. 15, 1940[k]
		76th-79th	Sept. 16, 1940-Jan. 3, 1947
Sam T. Rayburn	D - TX	81st-82nd	Jan. 3, 1949-Jan. 3, 1953
		84th-87th	Jan. 5, 1955-Nov. 16, 1961[l]
Joseph W. Martin, Jr.	R - MA	80th	Jan. 3, 1947-Jan. 3, 1949
		83rd	Jan. 3, 1953-Jan. 3, 1955
John W. McCormack	D - MA	87th-91st	Jan. 10, 1962-Jan. 3, 1971
Carl B. Albert	D - OK	92nd-94th	Jan. 21, 1971-Jan. 3, 1977
Thomas P. O'Neill Jr.	D - MA	95th-99th	Jan. 4, 1977-Jan. 3, 1987
James C. Wright Jr.	D - TX	100th-101st	Jan. 6, 1987-June 6, 1989[m]
Thomas S. Foley	D - WA	101st-103rd	June 6, 1989-Jan. 3, 1995
Newt Gingrich	R - GA	104th-105th	Jan. 4, 1995- Jan. 3, 1999
J. Dennis Hastert	R - IL	106th-109th	Jan. 3, 1999- Jan. 4, 2007
Nancy Pelosi	D - CA	110th-	Jan. 4, 2007 -

Notes: Party affiliations are indicated by initials:

[NKPA] - No Known Party Affiliation

R (DR) - Republican or Democratic-Republican Party (the Jeffersonian precursor of the Democratic Party)

W - Whig Party

D - Democratic Party

R - Republican Party

a. Resigned from office, January 19, 1814, to serve on the negotiating team that produced the Treaty of Ghent, ending the War of 1812.

b. Resigned from the speakership, October 28, 1820.

c. Resigned from office, March 6, 1825, to serve as Secretary of State.

d. Resigned from office, June 2, 1834.

e. Speaker Banks served in the House three separate times under three different party designations. In the 34th Congress, he served as a member of the American Party.

f. Resigned from office, March 3, 1869, to serve as Vice President.

g. Elected Speaker, March 3, 1869, and served one day.

h. Died in office, August 19, 1876.

i. Died in office, August 19, 1934.

j. Died in office, June 4, 1936.

k. Died in office, September 15, 1940.

l. Died in office, November 16, 1961.

m. Speaker Wright resigned the speakership on June 6, 1989, and subsequently resigned from the House on June 30, 1989.

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Author Contact Information

James V. Saturno
Section Research Manager
jsaturno@crs.loc.gov, 7-2381