



Client Note: Freedom Caucus Turns Up the Heat on McCarthy

Nearly five months ago, we started watching a crash in slow motion as Kevin McCarthy gave the reins of the U.S. House of Representatives over to the Freedom Caucus in order to secure his Speakership. This week, we watched the impact as they exercised their power and brought the House to a screeching halt.

What happened?

On Tuesday afternoon, almost a dozen Republicans – most of whom are members of the conservative House Freedom Caucus – rebelled against their own leadership joining with Democrats in voting against a normally-routine [procedural resolution](#), making it the first time in more than 20 years that a resolution of this kind has failed. This move put all floor activity on hold as Republican leadership scrambled to determine why this happened and how to proceed.

The sudden revolt was a reality check for Speaker McCarthy, who has been taking a victory lap following the passage of the bipartisan Fiscal Responsibility Act last week, with Democrats making up the majority of the yes votes despite being in the minority in the House. Members of the Freedom Caucus expressed significant frustration over the deal that McCarthy cut with President Biden to suspend the debt ceiling until 2025 while reducing federal spending. After voting against the procedural resolution, [Rep. Matt Gaetz \(FL-1\)](#) said:

“We took down the rule because we’re frustrated at the way this place is operating. ... We’re concerned that the fundamental commitments that allowed Kevin McCarthy to assume the Speakership have been violated as a consequence of the debt limit deal.”

The revolting members were also frustrated by the treatment of their colleague Rep. Andrew Clyde (GA-9). Clyde alleged that leadership threatened to block his bill regarding pistol stabilizing braces if he opposed the rule on the debt ceiling bill, [telling reporters](#):

“I was threatened that if I voted against the closed rule to the debt ceiling agreement, it would be very difficult to bring my pistol stabilizing brace bill to the House floor.”

Members, such as Matt Gaetz, said they were upset at the punishment that Clyde received.

In the Weeds with Pioneer: The procedural resolution that failed is commonly called a rule, and it includes the instructions for how the House will proceed with a bill. For example, the

rule outlines the length of the debate on the bill and which, if any, amendments will be considered. A rule vote typically is down party lines. However, just last week, we saw a similar incident when Republicans bucked their party leadership and opposed the rule for the debt limit deal.

So, what happened after the rule failed this week? Majority Leader Steve Scalise (LA-1) offered a motion to reconsider, which was approved by voice vote, but a recorded vote was requested (a majority vote is needed for passage). Since it was unclear at the time if Republicans had the votes, the Chair postponed further consideration. From there, the House would have had two legislative days to vote on the motion to reconsider, but the House Rules Committee announced that it would reconvene on Monday to determine next steps, abandoning any efforts to pass the failed rule vote.

What comes next?

As we've noted here in the past, although Republicans are in disarray, they are still the majority in the House and control what Congress prioritizes. This revolt should sound alarms that a minority of the majority is running the show and proving they are willing to take extreme action like sabotaging other Republican priorities. Congress still has several major responsibilities to complete this year, including FAA reauthorization, NDAA reauthorization, the Farm Bill, and annual appropriations. McCarthy has suggested that the debt ceiling debate could be a template for future must-pass bills, recognizing the bill lost the ideological fringes of both parties, but [telling reporters](#) on Monday (before the Tuesday standoff) that dynamic proves the bill was right. Whether Republicans or Democrats in the House agree with the Speaker is an open question. Though unlikely to happen now in response to this latest revolt by the Freedom Caucus, it remains an open question whether, or when, members of the Freedom Caucus will introduce a 'motion to vacate' to oust McCarthy from the Speakership.

The Postponed Gas Stoves Fight

Had the Freedom Caucus not stalled the House this week, the chamber would have voted on two bills on gas stoves, the *Gas Stove Protection and Freedom Act* ([H.R. 1615](#)) and the *Save Our Gas Stoves Act* ([H.R. 1640](#)). These bills, both introduced by Republican members, would limit the federal government's ability to regulate gas stoves - one bill prohibiting the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) from using federal funds to curtail or prohibit the use or sale of gas stoves, and the other prohibiting the Department of Energy from finalizing a rule that would require consumer cooking equipment be energy efficient.

In December 2022, new [peer-reviewed research](#) from RMI, the University of Sydney, and the Albert Einstein College of Medicine found that nearly 13% of childhood asthma cases in the United States can be linked to having a gas stove in the home. This research adds to the growing scientific evidence of the health and climate hazards associated with gas stoves. A [2021 report](#) suggested that a child living in a home with a gas stove faces a similar risk of asthma to a child living in a home with cigarette smoke. [A 2022 study](#) found that over a 20-year timeframe, annual methane emissions from all gas stoves in U.S. homes have a climate impact comparable to the annual carbon dioxide emissions of 500,000 cars. Moreover, this week as the East Coast was blanketed by smoke from wildfires in Canada, experts encouraged people to [avoid cooking with gas stoves](#) as they would create additional indoor air pollution.

Despite this, Republicans have made gas stoves a target of their political ire and brought the issue center stage. As early as October 2022, [oil and gas lobbyists](#), anticipating that Republicans would control the House, prepared to push back on Biden administration initiatives that would give rebates for transitioning away from gas stoves. Fuel was added to the fire when, earlier this year, CPSC Commissioner [Richard Trumka Jr.](#) told reporters that “This is a hidden hazard. Any option is on the table. Products that can’t be made safe can be banned”. These comments [sparked outcry](#) from Republicans, even though Trumka [clarified](#) that, “CPSC isn’t coming for anyone’s gas stoves,” with members such as Rep. Jim Jordan (OH-4) [tweeting](#) “God. Guns. Gas stoves.”

Now that legislation is moving in Congress, this issue is creating tricky votes for some Democrats. Both bills, H.R. 1615 and H.R. 1640, received bipartisan support as they moved through the committee markup process. Although the procedural resolution dictating consideration of these bills failed, the bills can still come up for future consideration. Earlier this week, President Biden released a [Statement of Administration Policy](#) criticizing the legislation; however, he stopped short of issuing a veto threat, likely because this battle will continue into the appropriations process.

DOE Funding Opportunity Announcements (FOAs)

This week, the Department of Energy [announced](#) \$80 million in grant funding for small- and medium-sized manufacturing firms (SMMs) to support projects that improve energy efficiency, lower costs, and reduce industrial emissions. Applications are due Friday, July 14.

If you are interested in applying to the [\\$30 Million FOA for Grid Planning and Operations Tools](#), or DOE’s [Ride and Drive Electric Program](#), be sure to submit your concept papers by Monday, June 12, and Friday, June 16, respectively.

For other FOAs open for engagement in the energy space, please see this [memo](#).

Pioneer and Clients In The News

Pioneer partner [Charlie Ellsworth](#) was quoted in [this NBC article](#) on how the recently enacted debt limit bill sets up high stakes for the 2024 election.

[Jay Duffy](#), litigation director for the [Clean Air Task Force](#), [testified](#) in front of a House Energy and Commerce subcommittee [hearing](#) this week—check out [the biggest takeaways](#).

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