

# **Exhibit 13**

[https://www.nola.com/news/politics/steve-scalise-dream-to-be-speaker-and-by-hardball-politics/article\\_19431f68-6f85-11ee-ba5d-73611afd20e7.html](https://www.nola.com/news/politics/steve-scalise-dream-to-be-speaker-and-by-hardball-politics/article_19431f68-6f85-11ee-ba5d-73611afd20e7.html)

# How did Steve Scalise's dream for speaker get squashed? Hardball politics are to blame.

BY MARK BALLARD | Staff writer  
Oct 23, 2023



U.S. Rep. Garret Graves, R-Baton Rouge, discusses House passage of the Lower Energy Costs Act, H.R. 1, during a March 30, 2023 press conference in the U.S. Capitol. House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., is to Graves' right. Beside McCarthy is House Majority Leader Steve Scalise, R-Jefferson and chief sponsor for H.R. 1, on which Graves contributed a section.

Staff Photo by Mark Ballard

**WASHINGTON** – Steve Scalise’s lifelong dream of being speaker of the House was sidetracked by the hardball tactics of a group of über-conservatives — including former President Donald Trump — with assists from former Speaker Kevin McCarthy and at least one colleague in Louisiana’s GOP delegation.

The Jefferson congressman was on the cusp after he won a slim majority of fellow House Republicans in an Oct. 10 secret ballot, a contest that pitted him against U.S. Rep. Jim Jordan, the pugnacious Ohio Republican.

But Scalise, whose amiability is often viewed as a weakness by the far right, needed the support of 107 more Republicans to claim the speaker’s gavel in the full House.

About 20 would not be persuaded. He could only afford to lose four. On the evening of Oct. 12, Scalise withdrew from the race.

Jordan, who was then elected the speaker-designate, also failed to reach 217 votes in three tries. He dropped out Friday afternoon after 25 Republicans withheld their support. Scalise said he would not run this time.

From the moment on Oct. 4 when he announced his intentions to run through the 32-hour period when he was speaker-designate, Scalise's opponents within the GOP sought to undermine him with questions – some whispered, some broadcast -- about his fitness for the job in public statements.

Scalise was too sick with cancer to serve, Trump said after he endorsed Jordan, a message echoed by other congresspersons. A speech he gave to a gathering of White supremacists in 2002 – which had never created serious problems for Scalise within the GOP caucus – was dusted off again. And his opposition to proposed rules that would have changed generations of tradition on how a speaker is chosen was held up as a sign of his self-interest. Those proposed rules were quickly jettisoned when Jordan became the lead candidate.

The campaign to defeat Louisiana's most powerful congressman highlighted schisms not only within the fractious GOP House majority, but among the five Republicans in Louisiana's six-member House delegation.

One notable thorn in Scalise's side was U.S. Rep. Garret Graves, R-Baton Rouge.

Scalise supporters say Graves was among those who undercut his campaign for the speakership, which would have put him behind the vice president in the presidential succession. Graves was one of former Speaker McCarthy's most trusted lieutenants. McCarthy had criticized Scalise earlier this year and he was reported to have worked against Scalise's ascendance, while later promoting Jordan.

Nineteen people with a close view of events – including members of the Louisiana delegation, other congresspersons, staffers, confidants, donors and lobbyists – were interviewed for this report. All described the situation surrounding Scalise's campaign but all spoke on condition of anonymity. They didn't want to anger either Scalise or Graves. Graves, who did speak on the record, denies he undermined his fellow House member.

"I'm sorry Steve didn't make speaker," Graves said Thursday. "It's clear that there's not a path for anyone. Jesus couldn't get 217 votes right now. I committed to support Steve."

Scalise released a statement Saturday expressing frustration with his intraparty opponents, but not naming names.

"There are some folks who really need to look in the mirror and decide: Are we going to get back on track? Or are they going to continue to pursue their own agenda? You can't do both. Our country is counting on us to come back together," the statement said. "Ultimately, we have to unite for the country, and it needs to happen soon."

## Public comments, private comments

While Scalise was pursuing the speakership, Graves' public statements surprised some Louisiana politicians and media watching the action unfold from afar.

Graves told reporters after McCarthy's Oct. 3 sacking that the result should not be "to just give everybody one rung of promotion."

He did not name Scalise, but it was obvious that not moving people up the ladder would deny Scalise -- who holds the House's No. 2 spot -- the top job. Graves has said his real focus was on fundamentally changing the majority's rules.

The next day on Baton Rouge radio, Graves told interviewer Brian Haldane he had concerns about Scalise serving given his medical challenges.



"I want to remind you he is going through an incredible bout of cancer right now and I don't know that that's the best decision for him or his family at this point," Graves said. "That is one of the most stressful jobs that you can even imagine. His timing is not ideal for him. Obviously, we'd love to have a speaker from Louisiana."

Graves repeated his view that the Republican Conference needed to change the rules that had handcuffed House leadership and allowed eight Republicans to instigate McCarthy's ouster.

Meanwhile, when reporters asked him about Jordan, Graves found ways to praise him. In an Oct. 5 interview, Graves said he believed the fiery Ohioan had "matured" during his years in the House.

On Oct. 10, Graves stormed out of a closed-door GOP conference after it rejected an idea he had championed that would have changed how the Republicans would select a speaker. The plan was defeated on a motion by one of Scalise's supporters. Soon after, Scalise was voted speaker-designate, with 113 votes to Jordan's 99.

Rep. Chip Roy of Texas, who had officially proposed the change, said that Scalise's defeat of the rule made him a "hard no" on Scalise.

As Scalise was trying to round up support from the additional 107 Republicans he needed, at least a half-dozen Scalise loyalists say Graves began reminding some colleagues of a controversial Scalise comment from years ago, in which he described himself as "David Duke without the baggage."

Graves also brought up a 2002 speech Scalise gave in Metairie to a group Duke organized, according to five Scalise supporters. Scalise apologized when the story emerged in 2014, saying he didn't know what the group stood for.

In an interview Thursday in the Capitol, Graves emphatically denied he did anything to resurface those episodes.

"That is bulls--t. That is something they have said and that's just not true," Graves said.

## 'A little bit of tension'

While insisting he supported Scalise's speakership bid, Graves acknowledged that relations aren't always great among the five Republican House members Louisiana has sent to Washington.

"I'll admit there's a little bit of tension," Graves said. "But most of us talk regularly."



He made note of recent interactions with his GOP colleagues: Reps Mike Johnson, Julia Letlow and Clay Higgins. “I had lunch with Julia the other day. I talked on the phone with Mike today, talked to him face-to-face twice. Clay and I talk. We’re not drinking buddies, but...”

He trailed off.

Notably, Graves wasn't the only Louisiana delegation member who didn't go to the mat for Scalise.

Neither Clay Higgins, of Lafayette — Louisiana's only member of the Freedom Caucus, which Jordan founded — nor Mike Johnson, of Benton, a close friend of Jordan's, committed publicly to Scalise when he announced his candidacy.

They both said they voted for Scalise on the secret ballot. Once the leader of their delegation withdrew, both Higgins and Johnson almost immediately gave full-throated support to Jordan.

Higgins said little after Scalise's bid tanked. But after Jordan flopped, Higgins' disappointment was plain.

“Well, the swamp won this round,” he posted on X, formerly known as Twitter. “I’m feeling very Old Testament.”

Old politicians who have watched the House imbroglio from afar said this week that regardless of how Scalise's bid was scuttled, the whole affair suggested that egos overtook a higher loyalty to what's best for Louisiana.

"I like Steve Scalise," said former U.S. Sen. John Breaux, who represented Louisiana for 33 years in Congress. "Even if I hated Steve Scalise, I would have held my nose and voted for him because that's in the best interest of the state of Louisiana. It's beyond party stuff."

Being speaker of the House requires skills that everyday ideologues don't need. For instance, a speaker needs to build intra-party and bipartisan coalitions in order to forge majorities to approve legislation on which members of both parties have strong and often unyielding opinions.

## No side deals

The job description seemed ready-made for Scalise, many opponents and supporters agree.

Since 2008, when he joined the House, Scalise had worked his way up through GOP leadership, leading the Republican Study Committee, the largest ideological caucus. He corralled votes for nearly nine years as whip before being elected majority leader, the post just below speaker.

But Scalise wasn't able to win over opponents to his candidacy during the penultimate Oct. 12 meeting, which ended with Scalise withdrawing his speaker bid, said seven people either in the meeting or briefed on it. All seven agreed on the fundamental account of the meeting but stressed different aspects depending on what side they championed.

Four sources said Scalise refused to negotiate side deals in return for votes, and that was why he stepped aside.

Three others said Scalise made a tactical error by including in the meeting Republican conference members with divergent views. Since they were all in the same room, Scalise couldn't address the wants of one group of opponents without angering another.

Of course, any sniping between members of the Louisiana delegation was relatively polite compared to what Ohio's GOP delegation has seen.

A few years after Jordan arrived in Washington, he began feuding with then-Speaker John Boehner, a fellow Ohio Republican, for not being conservative enough. Boehner went on to call Jordan "a legislative terrorist."

Boehner, weary of fighting Jordan and his allies, stepped down from Congress in 2015. The nickname he gave Jordan stuck.

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