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— News From The States —

EVENING WRAP



By [Kate Queram](#)

I was elbow-deep in copy about Kevin McCarthy when the [National Wireless Emergency Alert System](#) turned my phone into a shrieking banshee, and let me tell you, that is not the situation in which you want to be startled by an ear-splitting alarm. I may never be OK. But at least I still have a job, and that is more than we can say for Kevin McCarthy.



The Big Takeaway

The U.S. House of Representatives on Tuesday voted to remove Kevin McCarthy as speaker in a bizarrely bipartisan proceeding in which [eight far-right Republicans](#) joined with [every single Democrat](#) to ensure the ouster. [The unprecedented move](#) leaves the already hapless House with no leader, no obvious successor, and, as of Wednesday afternoon, no clear path forward, [our D.C. bureau reported](#).



“Good luck with that.”

(Photo by Ariana Figueroa/States Newsroom)

The merry band of Republican mischief makers was led by U.S. Rep. Matt Gaetz, who had threatened for weeks to remove McCarthy if he worked with Democrats to fund the government in accordance with [a spending plan](#) he’d negotiated previously with President Joe Biden. Gaetz, a [Florida man](#) if ever there was one, attempted to frame his coup as a principled stance on border security, foreign aid and the overall culture of D.C., but his posturing was undercut by his own caucus, which had so thoroughly tired of him that it banished him to the Democratic side of the chamber for the duration of his pointless remarks.

“I’ll make this argument at any desk in this building, from the well, from the chair,” he said, undaunted amid a sea of Democrats. “I’ll make it on every street corner in this country — that Washington must change.”



He will make it in a box, he will make it with a fox, he will make it with some lox, he will make it in his socks!
(Photo by Alex Wong/Getty Images)

Gaetz is an easy foil, but this is mostly McCarthy's mess. The California Republican [clinched the speaker's gavel](#) nine months ago after fifteen increasingly painful rounds of voting that broke his way only after he sold his legislative soul to a small faction of MAGA Republicans. His [backroom dealing](#) included concessions on [debt limit negotiations and spending plans](#) and, crucially, a policy change that empowered any one House member to call for a no-confidence vote on the speaker. It was a paradoxical agreement that put him in power only by stripping it from him and handing it over to a group of fringe lawmakers, who tormented him for exactly nine months before finally pushing him out. This was always going to happen. It was just a matter of when.

Ahead of the vote, McCarthy supporters — all the other Republicans, basically — beseeched Democrats to save him, which they, being Democrats, actually considered before coming to their senses. McCarthy had lied to far-right Republicans to seize power, but he'd also lied to Democrats — most recently in May, when he negotiated a spending plan with Biden and then reneged on their agreement at the first whiff of right-wing drama in the House, which he then

tried to blame on (you guessed it) the Democrats. He is a lying liar who lies, and he can just sit there with his lies and think about all of his lying, said Rep. Pramila Jayapal, a Washington state Democrat who chairs the Congressional Progressive Caucus.

“Nobody trusts Kevin McCarthy, and why should we? He has broken his commitments over and over again,” she said. “Let [Republicans] wallow in their pigsty of incompetence and inability to govern. They are destroying our institutions.”



I know you are but what am I
(Photo by Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images)

McCarthy, the first speaker ever removed from power, once again attempted to avoid being blamed for the demise of the thing he lit on fire, which he *just cannot even believe* burned his eyebrows right off his face! [At a press conference Tuesday](#), McCarthy insisted he was leaving with “sense of pride” and “accomplishment,” even as he urged his eventual successor to “change the rules” so that a single lawmaker can’t oust the speaker. This, he mused as if considering it for the very first time, is actually kind of a terrible policy. Man, who approved this thing?

“If you can always count on the other party to vote in a bloc against it, then you’re allowing four to

five people to control whatever,” McCarthy said. “So it doesn’t matter even if you have 96 percent [of Republicans]. So that is not a government that works. That is chaotic. I don’t think that rule is good for the institution, but apparently I’m the only one.”

Yes, wow, if only everyone else had listened to McCarthy about this back in January, when McCarthy was agreeing to live his speaker life under this terrible rule that has now ended his speaker life. Things would be so different now! (We could be watching an entirely different press conference! We could be so much less familiar with the inner workings of Gaetz’s mind!) This was only one of McCarthy’s observations about the House as an institution, which is of new importance to him now that he is not in charge of it (the hallmark of a good leader!). And thank god, because actually, the House is kind of broken, McCarthy said — and that’s *not* because he empowered a cabal of fringe radicals, but because of the *Democrats*, who “played so many politics.” As for his time leading the circus? McCarthy “wouldn’t change a thing.”

If there is any good to come from this, it is that a weary nation can think so much less about McCarthy — but not for a while, because the echoes of his terrible, terrible leadership are still reverberating throughout the acoustically sound halls of the U.S. Capitol. As you may remember from [the beginning of this idiotic era](#), nothing can happen in the House until there is a speaker, but because a speaker has never been ousted, nobody really knows what that means.



House Republicans, and also some hands.

(Illustration by ink drop/Adobe Stock)

For now, the chamber is in the hands of Rep. Patrick McHenry (R-N.C.), who was plucked from obscurity/McCarthy's [secret list of successors](#) and named speaker pro tempore. It's a fairly useless role with mostly bureaucratic powers, like calling the House to order (to nominate a speaker or to do nothing, which are basically the same thing), make announcements ("It has been 0 days since Matt Gaetz ruined our entire day"), answer parliamentary questions ("Yes, this is one of the five things I can do") and designate a different speaker pro tempore (lol). He is, basically, the congressional equivalent of a parade grand marshal, but without the fun hat or baton, because only misery (and [nice clothing](#)) is allowed in Congress.

McHenry is all we've got until the House elects a new speaker, which can't happen until the Republican majority settles on a candidate. As of now, the likely shortlist includes House Majority Leader Steve Scalise (R-La.), who is currently battling blood cancer; Rep. Tom Emmer (R-Minn.), the majority whip; Rep. Elise Stefanik (R-N.Y.), the GOP conference chair, and, for some reason, Rep. Jim Jordan (R-Ohio). (And not Matt Gaetz.) (And not McCarthy, who said he would not run again, had a nice time though, no regrets, mic drop.)

House Republicans on Tuesday canceled votes for the rest of this week and said they'd hold a speaker election next Wednesday, but without a clear consensus, that could be delayed or drag on for days and days and days, until you can't feel your face or remember who, exactly, thought Congress was a good idea. This is where I remind you that anyone (even you. Even me!) can serve as speaker, courtesy of [the vagaries of the U.S. Constitution](#) (written by the same guys who thought Congress was a good idea, so I mean of course). By Tuesday night, Rep. Troy Nehls (R-Texas) had already sought to exploit that loophole by announcing his plan to nominate Donald Trump.

His plan garnered immediate praise from Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-Ga.), who said Trump was the only candidate she was "currently supporting."

"We can make him Speaker and then elect him President!" [she wrote](#).

Or, hear me out, we could not do that: [DNC hearing officer: Controversial Alabama Democratic Party bylaws 'must be invalidated'](#) ... [Kari Lake, who falsely claims she's the 'lawful governor' of AZ, files to run for U.S. Senate](#) ... [Georgia Election Board shelves bid to allow more hand-marked ballots, affirms touchscreen use](#) ... [Grassley bill would end taxing of Pell Grant funds on living expenses](#) ... [Poll: Biden outpaces Trump, others in Maryland; public split on handling of pandemic](#) ... [Ohio House bill to close primaries gets first hearing](#) ... [Gov. Laura Kelly parachutes into Pittsburg to advocate for expansion of Medicaid expansion](#) ... [Eugene voters on track to](#)

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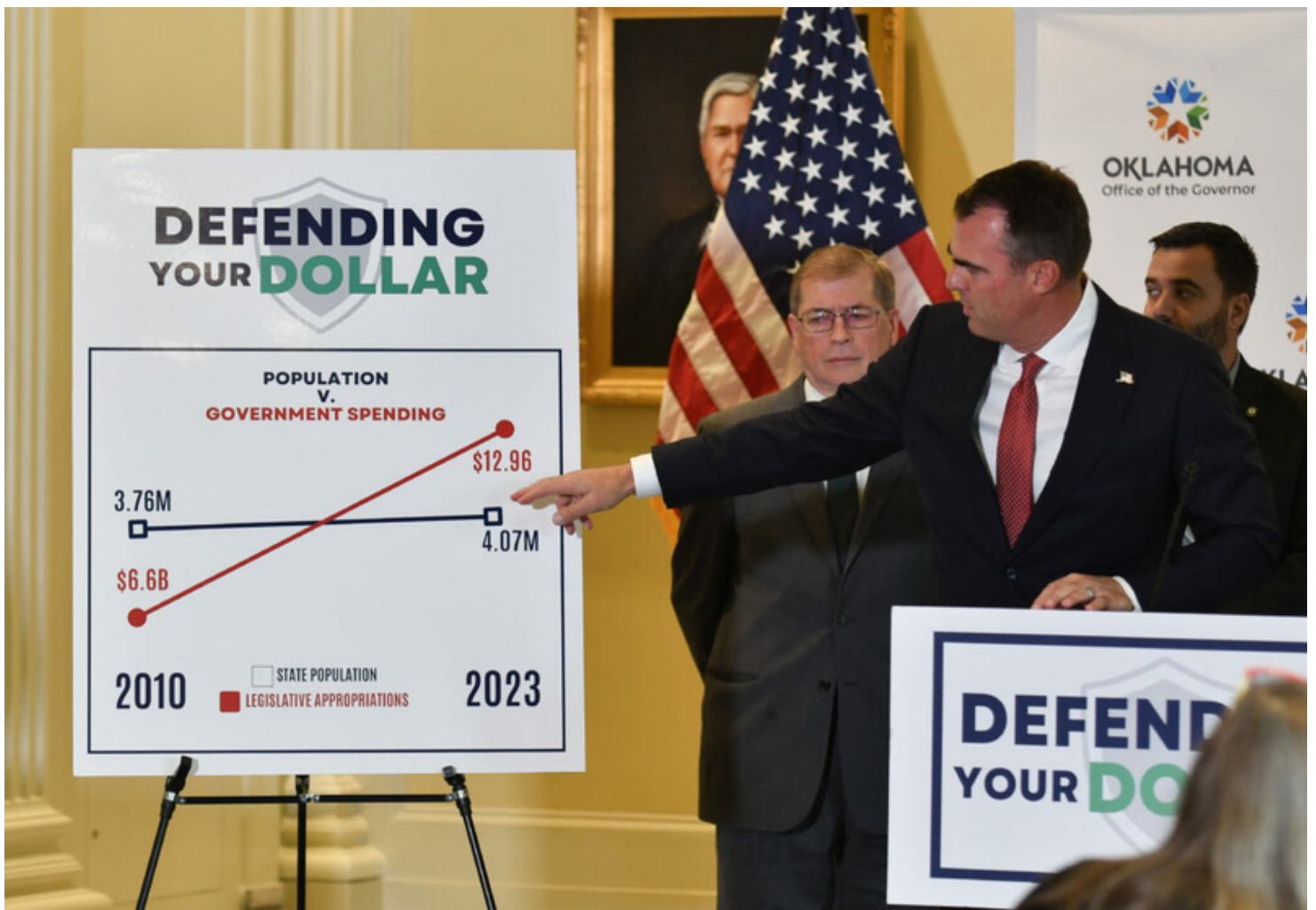
Caught Our Eye

After spending hours recapping congressional hijinx, I no longer trust my brain, so I had to read [this Oklahoma Voice story](#) three times to make sure I understood what was happening, which I am pretty sure is this: The Republican-majority state Senate on Tuesday abruptly adjourned a special session without addressing Republican Gov. Kevin Stitt's demands for tax cuts, saying they remained concerned that the lost revenue could negatively impact state finances and government services.

If you're reading this, it means at least two editors agreed with this assessment, in which case I do not really even know what to say. Republicans? Protesting a tax cut? Because of its financial impact? It does not compute.

Senate President Pro Tem Greg Treat said his caucus opted to adjourn the session after Stitt refused to appear in person to answer questions about the sustainability of his plan. It's disappointing, Treat said, because he's into tax cuts (because: Republican), but you can't just [cut \\$4 billion from annual revenues](#) without explaining how you're going to make up the difference. (Because...Republican? IT DOES NOT COMPUTE.)

"To cut revenue is doable if you have a plan," Treat said. "I haven't seen a plan yet."



He already GAVE a presentation. It had a chart and everything!

(Photo by Kyle Phillips/for Oklahoma Voice)

This was a bummer for Stitt, who held a news conference (with other, different Republicans) to urge lawmakers to send some of the state’s surplus revenue back to taxpayers. He’d already *explained* this plan, he said. It’s to *cut taxes* — eventually to zero, but for now, by .25%.

“This is being streamed all over the state right now,” Stitt said. “I couldn’t be more transparent with what I’m asking for and it is to slow the growth of government and put money back into peoples’ pockets.”

This might have gone better if he hadn’t held the news conference at the state Capitol, three floors below the Senate committee that was waiting for him to arrive, or if he’d maybe consulted with lawmakers before [yoinking them back into session](#) to work on a plan they weren’t familiar with. Based on that, Senate leaders felt no need to give him a heads up that they were heading home early. Karma, baby. (Or just government.)



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One Last Thing

NASA needs a special moon freezer to store and transport moon stuff from the moon during the manned Artemis missions, according to [a request](#) posted on a federal contracting website. The freezer would mostly be used for “scientific and geological samples” (a science-y way of saying “moon rocks”), but could also store and transport “human biological/physiological samples collected during the missions” (a science-y way of saying “stuff taken from astronauts to see how the mission affected their bodies”). It needs to weigh less than 121 pounds and be capable of storing samples at -121 degrees Fahrenheit for a minimum of 30 days, and it has to be ready by the end of 2027, in time to launch with the third Artemis mission.

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