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— News From The States —

EVENING WRAP



By [Kate Queram](#)

Here's one last dose of politics to send you into the weekend!



The Big Takeaway

U.S. Rep. Jim Jordan (R-Ohio) bowed out of the House speaker's race Friday after garnering fewer votes on a third ballot than on either of the first two, [our D.C. bureau reported](#). Jordan conceded in a closed-door meeting after losing an up-or-down vote from his fellow Republicans, 25 of whom had joined Democrats to vote against him on the floor.

"I told the [Republican] conference it was an honor to be their speaker designee," Jordan told reporters.



AN HONOR.

(Photo by Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images)

Republicans said they would select a new candidate Monday evening, with a vote slated for Tuesday. Among the likely choices are Rep. Austin Scott of Georgia, Rep. Jack Bergman of Michigan and Rep. Kevin Hern of Oklahoma, who said he'd voted for Jordan in the conference meeting but also felt that the chamber needed a "different type of leader" with a "proven track record of success."

"Which is why I'm running for Speaker of the House," he said in a statement.

The shakeup capped the third straight week of drama in the House, where ongoing Republican dysfunction has transformed Congress into a chaotic sideshow, which was at first mildly amusing but grows more serious — and pathetic — with each passing day. Until it elects a speaker, the House can convene only to (attempt/fail to) elect a speaker, making it impossible for lawmakers to approve — or even consider — [a \\$106 billion supplemental aid package](#) for border security and aid for wars in Ukraine and Israel.



Maybe they'll vote on it someday!
(Official White House Photo by Cameron Smith)

Citing the need to move forward, lawmakers from both parties on Thursday began to work on a compromise plan that would allow the chamber to consider legislation while Republicans continue to flail around in the leaderless muck. But that proposal [appeared to be dead](#) after Jordan pledged to support it, only to renege hours later when a handful of his far-right colleagues objected to the collaboration with Democrats.

Most House members appear frustrated with the situation, in part because they have no idea how to fix it. Democrats lamented the effect of the logjam on the country (Democrats: We'll wring our hands for anyone!), while Republicans who have voted against Jordan said there was nothing he could offer that would change their minds. Things are so dire that even far-right lawmakers — most of them elected with the goal of thwarting governmental operations — have offered to accept some sort of punishment if it means the chamber can move past the mess they created by [ousting former Speaker Kevin McCarthy](#). (That offer might be void after Jordan's demise, which Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-Fla.) described as being “knifed in a secret anonymous ballot in the bowels of the Capitol.”)

For all of the *developments*, Friday ended where it began: Nowhere. It remains to be seen if any of the proposed candidates can unite the warring GOP factions long enough to achieve a majority of votes. Absent that unanimity, Republicans will have to work with Democrats to select a compromise candidate, which may be a nonstarter with lawmakers who view that idea as ceding their legislative majority. In short, it has been, and seems likely to remain, a mess.



“And so you see, it is the anti-gerrymandering groups who want to gerrymander.”

(Photo by Graham Stokes/for the Ohio Capital Journal)

Republicans in Ohio sought to sway the state Supreme Court to reject a challenge to their gerrymandered legislative maps, arguing that the state constitution requires only that they *attempt* to draw maps that do not favor one political party over the other, [the Ohio Capital Journal reported](#). And if it’s not *mandatory*, it can’t be *violated*, according to state Rep. Jeff LaRe and state Sen. Rob McColley, both Republicans.

“Without a violation of any of those sections, the Court lacks jurisdiction to hear the objections in the first place,” they wrote [in a brief](#) filed Monday.

Their argument focuses on an extremely specific interpretation of [Section 6](#), a provision in the

Ohio constitution that directs the state’s redistricting commission to “attempt” to draw general assembly maps in which no district boundary is drafted “primarily to favor or disfavor” a political party. Districts should also be compact and be based in part on election results over the last 10 years, according to the language.

Republicans have repeatedly seized on the “attempt,” claiming it renders the entire provision an “aspirational” measure designed to “incentivize” political parties to “negotiate and compromise.” LaRe and McColley underscored that argument in their brief, which also claimed that the anti-gerrymandering groups [challenging the maps](#) are the ones seeking to gerrymander — by invalidating the current plans and replacing them with Democrat-friendly districts.

“In short, objectors continue to demand the very thing they accuse the commission of, that is ‘gerrymandering,’” attorneys for LaRe and McColley stated in the court brief.



Nebraska Gov. Jim Pillen said what he said and that’s all he has to say.

(Photo by Zach Wendling/Nebraska Examiner)

Nebraska Gov. Jim Pillen on Friday responded to criticism for his own xenophobic remark by refusing to apologize for it, telling reporters that he’s “100% focused on being the governor of

all Nebraskans” and does not have time to get involved in a “political sideshow.” He did not address calls for an apology and declined to speak more specifically, [the Nebraska Examiner reported](#).

“I’m not going to talk about any reporter. I’m not going to talk about any sideshows,” Pillen said. “I’m focused on my job.”

The national backlash began after Pillen, a Republican, dismissed an article about pollution at his family farm because it was written by a journalist “from communist China.” The remark, part of [a radio interview](#) in September, came in response to a question about whether the Republican governor wanted to comment [on the story](#), which detailed elevated nitrate levels at 16 hog farms owned by the Pillen family.

“Number one, I didn’t read it. And I won’t,” Pillen said. “Number two, all you got to do is look at the author. The author is from communist China. What more do you need to know?”



Yeah, no, that’s pretty telling.

(Photos by Zach Wendling/Nebraska Examiner and courtesy of Joseph Saaid/for Flatwater Free Press)

Yanqi Xu, the reporter in question, received nationwide support after the incident, which she described as emotional in an interview with NBC News. Speaking up about things like this is important, she said — even as a journalist who would rather not be a part of the story.

“Especially as a woman of color, if the other person who made such a comment about you is the most powerful person in the state, how do you respond?” Xu told NBC. “But I think for me, I

found myself coming back to this point of: If I don't do it, who would?"

Pillen had also declined to comment on Xu's story before it was published in the Flatwater Free Press despite being given ample opportunity to do so, according to Matt Wynn, executive director of the organization that launched and funds the publication. Pillen was similarly circumspect Friday when asked whether he'd support policies to curb nitrate levels and improve water safety in Nebraska. He's working on it, he said. Gotta educate the people, etc.

"Water is a gift, just like God's grace is a gift," Pillen said.

He declined to comment further on the controversy he created.

"My comments were my comments," Pillen said. "That's what I have to say about it."

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One Last Thing

Apparently you can [buy the cheese grater](#) used tableside at the Olive Garden, directly from the waiter who is currently grating cheese at your table. It's like a [secret menu](#), but better, because cheese.

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