

## ***Hakeem Jeffries: A Bipartisan Coalition is the Way Forward***

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In recent days, Democrats have tried to show our colleagues in the Republican majority a way out of the dysfunction and rancor they have allowed to engulf the House. That path to a better place is still there for the taking.

Over the past several weeks, when it appeared likely that a motion to vacate the office of speaker was forthcoming, House Democrats repeatedly raised the issue of entering into a bipartisan governing coalition with our Republican counterparts, publicly as well as privately.

It was my sincere hope that House Democrats and more traditional Republicans would be able to reach an enlightened arrangement to end the chaos in the House, allowing us to work together to make life better for everyday Americans while protecting national security.

Regrettably, at every turn, House Republicans have categorically rejected making changes to the rules designed to accomplish two objectives: encourage bipartisan governance and undermine the ability of extremists to hold Congress hostage. Indeed, Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) publicly declared more than five hours before the motion to vacate was brought up for a vote that he would not work with House Democrats as a bipartisan coalition partner. That declaration mirrored the posture taken by House Republicans in the weeks leading up to the motion-to-vacate vote. It also ended the possibility of changing the House rules to facilitate a bipartisan governance structure.

Things further deteriorated from there. Less than two hours after the speakership was vacated upon a motion brought by a member of the GOP conference, House Republicans ordered Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and former majority leader Steny H. Hoyer (D-Md.) to “vacate” their hideaway offices in the Capitol. The decision to strip Speaker Emerita Pelosi and Leader Hoyer of office space was petty, partisan and petulant.

House Republicans have lashed out at historic public servants and tried to shift blame for the failed Republican strategy of appeasement. But what if they pursued a different path and confronted the extremism that has spread unchecked on the Republican side of the aisle? When that step has been taken in good faith, we can proceed together to reform the rules of the House in a manner that permits us to govern in a pragmatic fashion.

The details would be subject to negotiation, though the principles are no secret: The House should be restructured to promote governance by consensus and facilitate up-or-down votes on bills that have strong bipartisan support. Under the current procedural landscape, a small handful of extreme members on the Rules Committee or in the House Republican conference can prevent common-sense legislation from ever seeing the light of day. That must change — perhaps in a manner consistent with bipartisan recommendations from the House Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress. In short, the rules of the House should reflect the inescapable reality that Republicans are reliant on Democratic support to do the basic work of governing. A small band of extremists should not be capable of obstructing that cooperation.

The need to change course is urgent. Congress is in the midst of a Republican civil war that undermines our ability to make life more affordable for American taxpayers, to keep communities safe and to strengthen democracy. Traditional Republicans need to break with the MAGA extremism that has poisoned the House of Representatives since the violent insurrection on Jan. 6, 2021, and its aftermath — when the overwhelming majority of House Republicans continued to promote the “big lie” and voted not to certify the presidential election.

House Democrats remain committed to a bipartisan path forward, as we have repeatedly demonstrated throughout this Congress by providing a majority of the votes to prevent a government shutdown this month and avoid a catastrophic default on America’s debt in June.

At this point, we simply need Republican partners willing to break with MAGA extremism, reform the highly partisan House rules that were adopted at the beginning of this Congress and join us in finding common ground for the people.