

Ryan's departure sparks unrest, GOP fears losing House

By LISA MASCARO and BILL BARROW Associated Press



Speaker of the House Paul Ryan, R-Wis., who announced yesterday he will not run for re-election, holds his weekly news conference at the Capitol in Washington, Thursday. Ryan was asked to reflect on his time as a steady if reluctant wingman for President Donald Trump's policies.

WASHINGTON — When House Speaker Paul Ryan announced his retirement decision, he did so on his own terms. The political fallout may not be so easy to control. Ryan's relinquishing of one of the most powerful positions in Washington left Republicans reeling Thursday over not just who will replace him but whether Ryan's lame-duck status will jeopardize the GOP's pitch to voters and donors, and worsen their chance of keeping the majority.

Control of the House was already at risk in a tough midterm election. Voters are fired up amid rising opposition to President Donald Trump and sagging GOP accomplishments. Now some wonder aloud if the GOP grip on the House majority is already lost.

"It's like Eisenhower resigning right before D-Day," said Tom Davis, a former Republican congressman from Virginia who once headed the House GOP's campaign committee.

"Paul Ryan was the franchise," Davis said. "With Paul, this was a Republican Party they could still give to. He's a great brand for the party. He's gone."

On some level the impact is symbolic. Ryan was once viewed as the future of the party, and he currently is a rudder for a party regularly tossed about by Trump's shifting impulses. For Republicans fighting for their political survival, it's hard not to take Ryan's decision as vote of no confidence.

One Republican in the long list of those already retiring, Rep. Ryan Costello of Pennsylvania, said the speaker didn't try to walk him off his decision, and in fact seemed to identify with his preference for returning home to family. Some four dozen House Republicans — including powerful committee chairmen — are calling it quits.

Add Ryan's retirement to the mix, and donors, lawmakers and strategists are raising red flags about a prolonged period of uncertainty unlike anything ever seen in modern House history.

"It's not confidence building," said Ron Nehring, a former party chairman in California, who says Republicans need to boost their legislative accomplishments, especially after having failed to keep their promise to voters to repeal Obamacare, if they hope to motivate Republicans to the polls. "Democrats are going to walk a mile on broken glass to vote against the president."

On Thursday, Ryan dismissed suggestions from some corners, including lawmakers, that maybe it would be best if he stepped aside rather than stick around until January, when the new Congress is seated, as he intends to do.

"My plan is to stay here and run through the tape," Ryan told reporters, noting he had "shattered" fundraising efforts by previous speakers, more than doubling his \$20 million goal.

"I talked to a lot of members — a lot of members — who think it's in all of our best interest for this leadership team to stay in place," Ryan said. "It makes no sense to take the biggest fundraiser off the field."

Money will be channeled to counter a blue wave of Democrats, who need to pick up 23 seats to flip the majority. The midterm is expected to be tougher, and costlier, than ever, especially amid the expanding battleground of open seats, which usually lack the built-in campaign apparatus of incumbency.

Few Republicans talk any more of retaining control of the House as a certainty. Those doubts are clear in the way they talk about the fight to replace Ryan.

Rep. Mo Brooks, R-Ala., a member of the conservative Freedom Caucus, said he won't worry much about whom he will support for the leadership post until House Republicans figure out if they'll be choosing their new speaker in fall — or simply the minority leader.

"At that point we'll know if we're going to elect a Republican or Democratic speaker," he said.

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The White House said he would consult further with allies. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis warned such an attack carried the risk of spinning

out of control, suggesting caution ahead of a decision on how to respond to an attack against civilians last weekend that U.S. officials are increasingly certain involved the use of banned chemical weapons.

British officials said up to 75 people were killed. The White House press secretary, Sarah Huckabee Sanders, said in a statement

after Trump met with Mattis and other members of his National Security Council: "No final decision has been made. We are continuing to assess intelligence and are engaged in conversations with our partners and allies."

Sanders said Trump would speak later with French President Emmanuel Macron and British Prime Minister Theresa May.

In new book, Comey blasts untruthful, 'ego-driven' Trump

By CHAD DAY and JONATHAN LEMIRE Associated Press



Former FBI director James Comey testifies before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence in June 2017 on Capitol Hill in Washington.

WASHINGTON — Former FBI Director James Comey blasts President Donald Trump as unethical and "untethered to truth" in a sharply critical new book that describes Trump as fixated in the early days of his administration on having the FBI debunk salacious rumors he insisted were untrue but could distress his wife.

In the forthcoming book, Comey compares Trump to a mafia don and calls his leadership of the country "ego driven and about personal loyalty."

He also reveals new details about his interactions with Trump and his own decision-making in handling the Hillary Clinton email investigation before the 2016 election. He casts Trump as a mobster-like figure who sought to blur the line between law enforcement and politics and tried to pressure him personally regarding his investigation into Russian election interference.

The book adheres closely to Comey's public testimony and written statements about his contacts with Trump and his growing concern about Trump's integrity. It also

includes strikingly personal jabs at Trump that appear sure to irritate the president.

The 6-foot-8 Comey describes Trump as shorter than he expected with a "too long" tie and "bright white half-moons" under his eyes that he suggests came from tanning goggles. The book, "A Higher Loyalty," is to be released next week.

"Donald Trump's presidency threatens much of what is good in this nation," Comey writes, calling the administration a "forest fire" that can't be contained by ethical leaders within the government.

On a more-personal level, Comey describes Trump repeatedly asking him to consider investigating an allegation involving Trump and Russian prostitutes urinating on a bed in a Moscow hotel, in order to prove it was a lie.

Trump has strongly denied the allegation, and Comey says that it appeared the president wanted it investigated to reassure his wife, Melania Trump.

Trump fired Comey in May 2017, setting off a scramble at the Justice Department that led to the appointment of Robert Mueller as special counsel overseeing the Russia investigation. Mueller's probe has expanded to include whether Trump obstructed justice by firing Comey, which the president denies.

Trump has assailed Comey as a "showboat" and a "liar."

Comey's account lands at a particularly sensitive moment for Trump and the White House.

Officials there describe the president as enraged over a recent FBI raid of his personal lawyer's home and office, raising the prospect that he could fire Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, who appointed Mueller, or try to shut down the probe on his own.

The Republican National Committee is poised to lead the pushback effort against Comey by launching a website and supplying surrogates with talking points that question his credibility.

Trump puts off Syria strike decision

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FRIDAY AFTERNOON & EVENING

Table with columns for time slots (12 PM to 11:30 PM) and rows for various TV channels (FOX, CBS, NBC, ABC, PBS, etc.) listing programs and their descriptions.

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FRIDAY LATE NIGHT & SATURDAY MORNING

Table with columns for time slots (12 AM to 11:30 AM) and rows for various TV channels (FOX, CBS, NBC, ABC, PBS, etc.) listing programs and their descriptions.