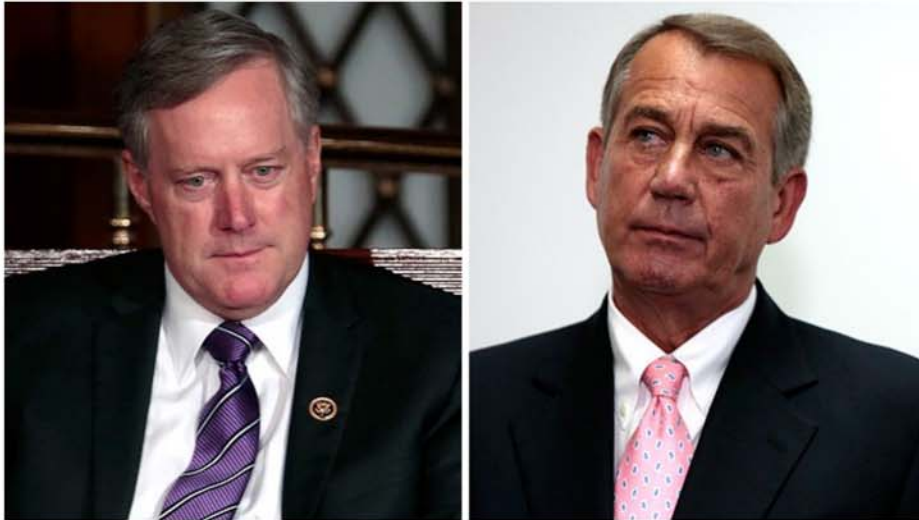




## Republican seeks to oust Boehner



Greg Nash

By Scott Wong and Cristina Marcos - 07/28/15 06:24 PM EDT

Conservative Rep. Mark Meadows on Tuesday introduced a **resolution** to oust John Boehner as Speaker, ushering in the most direct challenge yet to the Ohio Republican's hold on the gavel.

GOP leadership aides quickly downplayed the move, noting that the North Carolina Republican's motion is headed to the Rules Committee, where Chairman Pete Sessions (R-Texas), a Boehner ally, could simply ignore it.

But the motion to "vacate the chair" represents a dramatic escalation of the feud between House conservatives and Boehner that flared up again this summer after moves by leadership to punish dissenters.

Meadows, one of nine co-founders of the conservative House Freedom Caucus, was stripped of his Oversight subcommittee gavel last month for voting against a procedural measure to bring up a trade package. Oversight Committee Chairman Jason Chaffetz (R-Utah) reinstated Meadows a few days later after an outcry from conservatives.

Meadows said he introduced the resolution to spark a "discussion" about how leaders are running the House and did not intend to force a vote on removing Boehner.

"It's really more about trying to have a conversation on making this place work, where everybody's voice matters, where there's not a punitive culture," Meadows said.

His resolution argues that Boehner has been "bypassing the majority" through centralized decisionmaking and that he has "caused the power of Congress to atrophy." The motion says Boehner punishes members who "vote according to their conscience," limits amendments on the House floor and doesn't allow enough time for lawmakers to review legislation before votes.

Meadows declined to offer a specific candidate to replace Boehner. But he threw out names including House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.), Conference Chairwoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-Wash.), Homeland Security Committee Chairman Michael McCaul (R-Texas), Science Committee Chairman Lamar Smith (R-Texas), Rep. Kevin Brady (R-Texas) and Rep. Daniel Webster (R-Fla.).

Webster launched a long-shot bid for Speaker against Boehner in January, attracting just 12 votes.

Meadows insisted that he wasn't trying to bring attention to himself.

"I don't like being in the limelight. It is fearful whenever you do something like this," he told a crowd of reporters outside the House chamber.

Meadows's motion appeared to catch his colleagues by surprise.

Sessions, swarmed by reporters in the Speaker's lobby late Tuesday, said he hadn't read the resolution yet and didn't know whether he would take it up in his committee.

"I've just been given the information about it. I'm going to sit down and think about it, ponder what I'm going to do," Sessions said.

He said he first learned of the resolution when a reporter asked him about it.

But Meadows's move is unlikely to gain traction on the Rules Committee, where the members are handpicked by the Speaker and loyalty to leadership is expected.

Meadows spokeswoman Alyssa Farah said that the next step for moving forward with the resolution would likely be a discharge petition. Such a petition would require the signatures of 218 members, an unlikely outcome given that most Republicans supported Boehner as Speaker.

If he wanted to force a vote on the floor, Meadows — or any other Boehner foe — could offer a privileged resolution calling on the Speaker to vacate the chair. But congressional experts believe such an effort could quickly be quashed by a Boehner ally who makes a motion to table or kill the resolution with a simple majority.

Democrats **surveyed by The Hill earlier this year** indicated that they were unlikely to help conservatives if they sought to oust Boehner.

In addition to bucking leaders on the trade vote, Meadows was among 25 conservative rebels who in January voted against Boehner for a third term as Speaker.

Meadows cast his January vote for Webster, a former Speaker of the Florida House.

Two years earlier, a dozen conservatives led a surprise coup attempt against Boehner on the House floor, but that effort failed as well.

Word of Meadows's attack on Boehner spread quickly through the Capitol. Reporters and lawmakers alike scrambled for more information.

Rep. David Schweikert (R-Ariz.), a fellow Freedom Caucus co-founder and close friend of Meadows, said his staff sent him a text message with the news. He was shocked because he hadn't even heard rumors of Meadows's plan.

"My first reaction is I'm getting spoofed," Schweikert told The Hill.

Boehner spokeswoman Emily Schillinger said the Speaker would have no comment on the matter Tuesday, though he is sure to face questions about Meadows's move during a Wednesday morning news conference.

At least one conservative group said it is firmly behind Meadows.

"Every time defenders of freedom need a leader, John Boehner has failed us. It's time to remove Boehner from the speakership before it's too late to pass bold reforms," FreedomWorks CEO Adam Brandon said in a statement.

"It's time to end the Boehner Blunder."

- *Updated at 8:05 p.m.*

**TAGS: John Boehner, Mark Meadows**

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