

Pelosi elected speaker despite defections, as Democrats reclaim House majority



Nancy Pelosi voted speaker of the House for the second time, Kevin McCarthy elected minority leader

Democrat lawmaker fends off the far-left wing of the party to lead the House.

Nancy Pelosi on Thursday recaptured the speaker's gavel as her party returned to power in the House of Representatives, overcoming more than a dozen defections from rebellious Democrats.

The political powerhouse from California was elected with 220 votes, to 192 for Republican Rep. Kevin McCarthy. In her new role, she will immediately confront the ongoing standoff over the partial government shutdown, even as she tries to set her party's agenda in the 116th Congress and her deputies wield new power to investigate the Trump administration on multiple fronts.

Pelosi, who previously served as speaker for two terms, has eyed a return to the position ever since Republicans took the House in 2010.

In her floor speech marking her return to power, Pelosi vowed to pursue lower health care costs, address climate change and tackle other Democratic priorities as speaker, saying “the American people spoke, and demanded a new dawn” in November’s elections. She also made reference to the historic number of women serving in the House.

“I am particularly proud to be the woman speaker of the House of this Congress, which marks 100 years of women having the right to vote,” Pelosi said.

Her return, though, wasn’t guaranteed after Democrats flipped control of the chamber in November: some Democrats campaigned on opposing Pelosi’s return to the speakership, calling for new leadership. But in recent weeks, Pelosi, who first entered Congress in 1987, won over enough critics to secure the job again in part by agreeing to term limits for the speaker’s office.

Still, 15 Democrats refused to vote for Pelosi. Others getting votes from Democrats included former Vice President Joe Biden, Georgia Rep. John Lewis, former Georgia gubernatorial candidate Stacey Abrams and Rep. Joe Kennedy III of Massachusetts.

Several Republicans, too, voted for someone other than California Republican Rep. Kevin McCarthy, who becomes House minority leader, with Ohio Rep. Jim Jordan and Kentucky Rep. Thomas Massie both getting votes.

Pelosi’s ascent also marks the return of divided government in Washington — the first time in Donald Trump’s presidency that Republicans do not control both chambers of Congress, though Republicans still control the Senate. That shift in power comes as the White House and Congress have yet to come to a resolution to end the partial government shutdown tied to Trump’s desire for border wall funding.

The House starts with 434 members. The House has not received a certification for North Carolina’s 9th congressional district, where there are allegations of voter fraud in the race between Republican Mark Harris and Democrat Dan McCready.



As the first orders of business on Thursday, the House will consider two bills to re-open the government. But Republicans in the Senate and the president are not expected to support that effort, as it doesn't include new funding for Trump's proposed border wall.

While their most pressing issue will be trying to find a way out of the partial government shutdown that's been in effect for nearly two weeks, scrutiny of the Trump administration will be next up on the list of priorities.

Those Democrats armed with subpoena power include Rep. Jerry Nadler, the incoming chairman of the House Judiciary Committee; Rep. Elijah Cummings, D-Md., incoming chairman of the House Oversight Committee; and Rep. Adam Schiff, D-Calif., incoming chairman of the House Intelligence Committee.



House committee leaders Jerry Nadler, Elijah Cummings and Adam Schiff, from left to right.

In a press release Wednesday, Cummings said his committee plans to “investigate waste, fraud, and abuse in the Trump Administration,” as well as “other issues that affect the American people every day.”

The looming congressional probes amount to another front in Trump’s ever-expanding battle with institutions ranging from the mainstream media to Robert Mueller’s investigation — all coming as Democrats flirting with a 2020 bid also train their political sights on the administration. Areas of interest probed by these committees could cover everything from Trump’s ousting of Attorney General Jeff Sessions to Trump’s past tax returns as a businessman to Trump’s relationship with adult film star Stormy Daniels.

On Thursday, one Democratic congressman said he plans to take advantage of the new majority by introducing articles of impeachment against Trump. Rep. Brad Sherman is reintroducing the impeachment articles that he first filed in 2017 with Democratic co-sponsor Rep. Al Green of Texas, a spokesman said.

DEMOCRAT INTRODUCING IMPEACHMENT MEASURE AGAINST TRUMP ON FIRST DAY OF NEW CONGRESS

Still, Democratic party leaders have not committed to pursuing impeachment.

“We have to wait and see what happens with the Mueller report,” Pelosi said in an

interview with NBC News' "Today" on Thursday, referring to Special Counsel Mueller's probe. "We shouldn't be impeaching for a political reason, and we shouldn't avoid impeachment for a political reason. We have to see."

Fox News' Chad Pergram contributed to this report.

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