

insights

TYPES NOT MAPPED YET August 09, 2023 | TTR not mapped yet | Christopher T. Murray

Clerk of the House

An officer of the House of Representatives responsible for recordkeeping, correspondence, tracking floor proceedings, and managing the offices and staff of deceased or retiring members.

Who's the Boss?

The clerk of the House of Representatives was initially a joint position with the Librarian of Congress. The first, [John Beckley](#) of Virginia, is credited with being one of the earliest political campaign managers in American history: he ran then-candidate Thomas Jefferson's efforts in Pennsylvania. There have been thirty-six House clerks.

Modern clerks no longer advocate for or serve on the staff of any specific member or committee and are instead considered to be unbiased officers of the chamber. A similar position in the Senate, known as the [secretary](#), was established a week after the appointment of the first House clerk and holds similar legislative, financial, and administrative functions.

Growing Pains

The responsibilities of the clerk have evolved over time. But many of the core duties established in [House Rule II](#) remain the same: calling the roll of members-elect at the start of each Congress; presiding over the election of the speaker; preparing and distributing reports ahead of, during, and [after](#) each congressional session; and certifying the passage of bills and resolutions before delivering them to the Senate or the president. The clerk is also tasked with managing reporting for and providing guidance on the [Lobbying Disclosure Act](#).

The clerk is elected every two years when the House is organizing for a new Congress. Both the majority and minority parties nominate candidates for each Congress, but generally, the speaker selects the clerk, and the full House votes to elect the speaker's nominee. Many clerks have served through multiple Congresses, with party affiliation not necessarily determining the outcome.

The A-Team

[Cheryl Johnson](#) served as clerk in both Democratic and Republican-led Congresses. Johnson gained national [prominence](#) during Speaker McCarthy's tumultuous 16-round vote to gain the speakership. During that time, she was statutorily mandated to oversee the body until a speaker was elected. She also presided over House proceedings during the two impeachment votes for former President Trump, adding a spotlight to a typically under-the-radar congressional role.

The clerk is not an easily attainable job and requires an in-depth understanding of both the Constitution and House rules. Previous clerks have served in a number of important government roles prior to their appointments. The last four clerks have served as chief counsel to the House Education & the Workforce Committee (Johnson), floor assistant to Speaker Hastert (Haas), deputy assistant for legislative affairs under President Clinton (Miller), and House chief administrative officer (Trandahl).

Johnson announced in June that she would be stepping down at the end of that month. Speaker McCarthy chose Kevin McCumber, Johnson's former deputy, as interim clerk.



authorsTest

christopher

Christopher T. Murray