

## insights

# Conference Chair

The House Democratic and Republican leaders who oversee their caucus' messaging, meetings, and organization.

### In the Heights

The Republican and Democratic conference chairs are among the highest-ranking officials in the House of Representatives, just behind the speaker, leaders, and whips. House Republicans and Democrats formalized the role of [conference chair](#) in the 1860s. Though the conference chair often works behind the scenes and must deal with intra-party tensions on policy and messaging, the role can be a springboard to higher leadership positions. Former Speaker Boehner (R-OH) served as Republican conference chair before becoming speaker, and Representative Clyburn (D-SC) was the Democratic conference chair before becoming Democratic whip.

In the Senate, the [structure](#) looks slightly different: Senator Schumer (D-NY) serves as both the Democratic leader and the conference chair, while Senator Barrasso (R-WY) chairs the Senate Republican Conference.

### The Suicide Squad

One of the most public congressional leadership spats in recent memory occurred last month with the ouster of House Republican Conference Chair Cheney (R-WY). After becoming the most high-profile House Republican to [vote](#) for the impeachment of former President Trump in February 2021, she [survived](#) the first attempt to eject her from her third-ranking role in House Republican leadership: only 65 Republicans voted to remove her, while 145 voted for her to stay.

By May, however, the majority of the House Republican Conference had [turned](#) against her despite her conservative bona fides, angered by her continued outspokenness against the former president. On May 12, Cheney was removed from her role by an unrecorded [voice vote](#) and replaced by Trump loyalist Representative Stefanik (R-NY).

### Respect

Stefanik will now serve as Republican conference chair through 2022 but has said she will not seek reelection. She has instead announced her [intention](#) to seek the top Republican spot on the House Education and Labor Committee in the next Congress; House Republican rules prohibit current Ranking Member Foxx (R-NC) from seeking another term atop that committee. Whether the next Republican conference chair election will be another clash between anti- and pro-Trump Republicans remains to be seen.

On the Democratic side, current Conference Chair Jeffries (D-NY) is widely regarded to be a leading successor to Speaker Pelosi (D-CA). Pelosi has [hinted](#) that this current term would be her last as speaker - and potentially her last term in the House altogether. Regardless of what happens in 2022, House Democrats will soon see substantial changes in caucus leadership: the top three Democrats in the House are all octogenarians, and their eventual retirement will lead to a new generation of House Democrats competing for leadership positions.

### authorsTest