

## insights

TYPES NOT MAPPED YET April 04, 2024 | TTR not mapped yet | Christopher T. Murray, Jack N. Jacobson

# Senate Leader

Each party's chief spokesperson and coordinator of legislative strategies and priorities in the Senate.

### The Natural

The Constitution does not establish leader positions in the Senate. The role of leader is separate from the Constitutionally required Senate [president pro tempore](#), who has the [responsibility](#) for presiding over the Senate in the absence of the vice president. The parties did not [formalize](#) leader roles until the dawn of the 20th century. Senate Democrats began [electing](#) leaders in [1889](#), and Republicans followed in 1913.

Today, leaders are elected by a majority of their respective caucuses via secret balloting. The Democrats call their leader the "Chairman of the Conference," while the GOP calls theirs the "Republican Leader." Each caucus also chooses a whip, who is responsible for ensuring their members are present for votes and for voting in line with their party.

### Remember the Titans

There have been many historic majority and minority leaders. President Lyndon Johnson (D-TX) was chosen by his fellow Democrats as Senate minority leader in 1953 after Republicans took full control of Congress, becoming the most junior senator ever elected to the position. Senator Bob Dole (R-KS) served as Republican Leader from 1985 to 1996, with most of those years the minority.

No Senator has served as leader of their respective party longer than Senator Mitch McConnell (R-KY). McConnell became Republican Leader in 2007 and is best known for his skill in advancing judicial nominations for his caucus. Much of McConnell's time as leader came alongside the also-historic tenure of Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), who served two terms as speaker and was her caucus's longtime leader until 2023.

### Invictus

Senate leaders work closely with committee chairs and ranking members, and with the other officers of their leadership team, to conduct official business and manage floor votes. Senate President Pro Tempore [Patty Murray](#) (D-WA), not Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY), will play a significant role in the upcoming impeachment trial of Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas.

In February, McConnell announced that he would be stepping down as leader later this year. Several GOP senators are vying to replace McConnell, including Senators John Thune (R-SD) and John Cornyn (R-TX). Republican Senators will vote on his replacement after the November election.

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