

Politics

'Turning outrage into power'

Far right appears to be changing GOP strategy

WASHINGTON, Dec 6, (AP): House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy appears to have settled on a strategy to deal with a handful of Republican lawmakers who have stirred outrage with violent, racist and sometimes Islamophobic comments.

If you can't police them, promote them. The path to power for Republicans in Congress is now rooted in the capacity to generate outrage. The alarming language, and the fundraising haul it increasingly produces, is another example of how Donald Trump, the former president, has left his mark on politics, changing the way Republicans rise to influence and authority.

Success in Congress, once measured by bills passed and constituents reached, is now gauged in many ways by the ability to attract attention, even if it is negative as the GOP looks to reclaim a House majority next year by firing up Trump's most ardent supporters.

That has helped elevate a group of far-right lawmakers - including Reps. Lauren Boebert of Colorado, Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia and Paul Gosar of Arizona - whose inflammatory comments once would have made them pariahs.



Trump

Punishment

Rather than face punishment for personal attacks that violate longstanding norms of Congress, they've been celebrated by conservatives, who have showered Boebert and Greene with campaign cash.

"We are not the fringe. We are the base of the party," Greene, who has previously endorsed calls to assassinate prominent Democrats, said last week on a podcast hosted by former Trump adviser Steve Bannon.

The hands-off approach by Republican leadership gives them license to spread hate speech, conspiracy theories and misinformation that can have real world consequences, while testing the resolve of Democrats, who already removed Gosar and Greene from their committees.

It's also a different tack from the one McCarthy took in 2019 when he stripped then-Rep. Steve King of Iowa of his committee assignments for lamenting that white supremacy and white nationalism had become offensive terms.

Boebert offers the latest example. In two videos that surfaced recently she likened Rep. Ilhan Omar, a Minnesota Democrat who is one of three Muslims in Congress, to a terrorist concealing a bomb in a backpack. Boebert has also repeatedly referred to Omar as belonging to a "jihad squad," as well as "black-hearted" and "evil."

Her comments drew widespread condemnation and led to calls for Boebert to become the third GOP lawmaker this year to be removed from congressional committees. But instead of publicly apologizing to Omar, a defiant Boebert insisted that Omar should be the one to issue a public apology "to the American people" for her "anti-American" rhetoric, as well as past "anti-Semitic" comments, which Democrats condemned at the time.

Threats

In the uproar that followed, Omar received death threats, including a voicemail left by a man who called her a "traitor" and suggested she would be soon be taken "off the face of the (expletive) earth." "We cannot pretend this hate speech from leading politicians doesn't have real consequences," Omar said Tuesday while calling on the Republican Party to "actually do something to confront anti-Muslim hatred in its ranks."

Boebert, meanwhile, burnished her image through an appearance on Fox News where she blamed Democrats who "want to cancel me" for the controversy. She has raked in \$2.7 million so far this year, making her one of the top Republican fundraisers, according to campaign finance disclosures.

McCarthy, who is in line to become speaker if Republicans retake the majority in the 2022 mid-term elections, downplayed the controversy Friday. He credited Boebert for attempting to privately apologize in a phone call with Omar, while breezing past Boebert's refusal to do so publicly.

"In America, that's what we do," he said. "And then we move on."

But McCarthy has also indicated that there will be little consequence for personal attacks. Just last month he said those punished by Democrats could be in line for a promotion if he becomes speaker, floating the possibility that Gosar and Greene "may have better committee assignments" than before.

Obituary

Diagnosed with stage 4 lung cancer

Sen leader, presidential candidate Dole dies

TOPEKA, Dec 6, (AP): Bob Dole, who overcame disabling war wounds to become a sharp-tongued Senate leader from Kansas, a Republican presidential candidate and then a symbol and celebrant of his dwindling generation of World War II veterans, died Sunday. He was 98.

His wife, Elizabeth Dole, said in an announcement posted on social media that he died in his sleep.

Dole announced in February 2021 that he'd been diagnosed with stage 4 lung cancer. During his 36-year career on Capitol Hill, Dole became one of the most influential legislators and party leaders in the Senate, combining a talent for compromise with a caustic wit, which he often turned on himself but didn't hesitate to turn on others, too.

He shaped tax policy, foreign policy, farm and nutrition programs and rights for the disabled, enshrining protections against discrimination in employment, education and public services in the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Today's accessible government offices and national parks, sidewalk ramps and the sign-language interpreters at official local events are just some of the more visible hallmarks of his legacy and that of the fellow lawmakers he rounded up for that sweeping civil rights legislation 30 years ago.

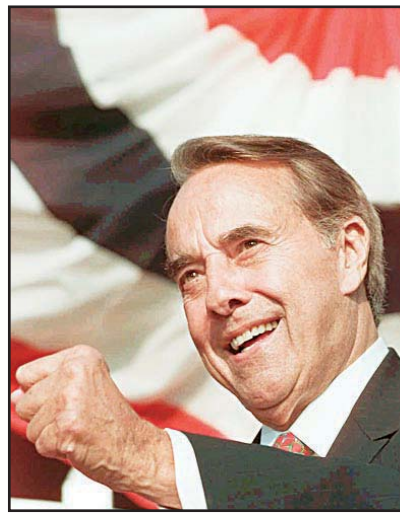
Dole devoted his later years to the cause of wounded veterans, their fallen comrades at Arlington National Cemetery and remembrance of the fading generation of World War II vets.

Thousands of old soldiers massed on the National Mall in 2004 for what Dole, speaking at the dedication of the World War II Memorial there, called "our final reunion." He'd been a driving force in its creation.

"Our ranks have dwindled," he said then. "Yet if we gather in the twilight it is brightened by the knowledge that we have kept faith with our comrades."

Long gone from Kansas, Dole made his life in the capital, at the center of power and then in its shadow upon his retirement, living all the while at the storied Watergate complex. When he left politics and joined a law firm staffed by prominent Democrats, he joked that he brought his dog to work so he would have another Republican to talk to.

He tried three times to become president. The last was in 1996, when he won the Republican nomination only to see President Bill Clinton reelected. He sought his party's presidential nomination in 1980 and 1988 and was the 1976 GOP vice presidential candidate on the losing ticket with President



Republican presidential candidate Bob Dole pumps his fist as supporters cheer after he took the stage at a Dole-Kemp '96 rally in Hamilton, N.J., Oct. 13, 1996. (AP)

Gerald Ford.

Through all of that he carried the mark of war. Charging a German position in northern Italy in 1945, Dole was hit by a shell fragment that crushed two vertebrae and paralyzed his arms and legs. The young Army platoon leader spent three years recovering in a hospital and never regained use of his right hand.

To avoid embarrassing those trying to shake his right hand, Dole always clutched a pen in it and reached out with his left.

Dole could be merciless with his rivals, whether Democrat or Republican. When George H.W. Bush defeated him in the 1988 New Hampshire Republican primary, Dole snapped: "Stop lying about my record." If that pales next to the scorching insults in today's political arena, it was shocking at the time.

But when Bush died in December 2018, old rivalries were forgotten as Dole appeared before Bush's casket in the Capitol Rotunda. As an aide lifted him from his wheelchair, Dole slowly steadied himself and saluted his one-time nemesis with his left hand, his chin quivering.

In a vice presidential debate two decades earlier with Walter Mondale, Dole had famously and audaciously branded all of America's wars that century "Democrat wars." Mondale shot back that Dole had just "richly earned his reputation as a hatchet man."

Dole at first denied saying what he had just said on that very public stage, then backed down, and eventually acknowledged he'd gone too far. "I was supposed to go for the jugular," he said, "and I did - my own."

For all of his bare-knuckle ways, he was a deep believer in the Senate as an institution and commanded respect and even affection from many Democrats. Just days after Dole announced his dire cancer diagnosis, Presi-

dent Joe Biden visited him at his home to wish him well. The White House said the two were close friends from their days in the Senate.

Biden recalled in a statement Sunday that one of his first meetings outside the White House after being sworn-in as president was with the Doles at their Washington home.

"Like all true friendships, regardless of how much time has passed, we picked up right where we left off, as though it were only yesterday that we were sharing a laugh in the Senate dining room or debating the great issues of the day, often against each other, on the Senate floor," Biden said. "I saw in his eyes the same light, bravery, and determination I've seen so many times before."

Biden ordered that U.S. flags be flown at half-staff at the White House and all public buildings and grounds until sunset Thursday.

Dole won a seat in Congress in 1960, representing a western Kansas House district. He moved up to the Senate eight years later when Republican incumbent Frank Carlson retired.

There, he antagonized his Senate colleagues with fiercely partisan and sarcastic rhetoric, delivered at the behest of President Richard Nixon. The Kansas was rewarded for his loyalty with the chairmanship of the Republican National Committee in 1971, before Nixon's presidency collapsed in the Watergate scandal.

He served as a committee chairman, majority leader and minority leader in the Senate during the 1980s and '90s. Altogether, he was the Republicans' leader in the Senate for nearly 11½ years, a record until Kentucky Sen. Mitch McConnell broke it in 2018. It was during this period that he earned a reputation as a shrewd, pragmatic legislator, tireless in fashioning compromises.

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