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Retirements, Resignations, & Remorse: House Republicans Choosing to Leave Congress Prior To The 2026 Midterm Elections

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Abstract

The pressure on members of the U.S. Congress is escalating daily. Gas prices are high, the cost of food in the U.S. has risen, America is at war with Iran, air travel is compromised due to a partial government shutdown, with no immediate collective relief in sight. The Republican Party controls both chambers of Congress and the executive branch. President Trump whose campaign promise in 2024 was to reduce the cost food and “no new wars” (NPR, 2026) Contrary to the promises of more prosperity for citizens, Americans are struggling to make ends meet under the current administration. America is reportedly spending roughly \$11.3 billion dollars a day on the war with Iran (Cancian and Park, 2026) while average Americans are fighting for survival. With a presidential approval rating of 36%, Republican lawmakers are running for the exit doors and choosing not to seek reelection in the 2026 midterm elections (Kochi, 2026).

This research examines the thirty-six (and counting) House Republicans “who have called it quits” in Congress (Kochi, 2026). The research investigates the personal statements of the departing members to determine their reasons for leaving. The research employs both qualitative and quantitative research methods. A content analysis will identify the themes of the personal statements. The statements will be coded for either personal, political or institutional reasons and statistically analyzed. The expectation for this research is that while more members are leaving because of institutional chaos and political pressure, such as legislative gridlock and high expectations of party loyalty, they will publicly state the often-quoted personal reason, which is to spend more time with family.

Keywords: 2026 midterm U.S. elections; Republicans Leaving Congress