

2 DAYS AGO

Senior Dems will make life 'hell' without **Jeffries vote**, freshman rep says

Rep.-elect Don Leonard said he will not vote for Rep. Hakeem Jeffries without a commitment to address Citizens United and U.S. aid to Israel.



CASEY HE
11/10/2026 11:04AM ET

An incoming member of Congress said senior House Democrats have vowed to make his life "a living hell" and oust him in 2028 if he does not support

Rep. Hakeem Jeffries' speaker bid.

Rep.-elect Don Leonard (D-Ohio) said in a social media post that the senior members told him to vote for Jeffries regardless of whether the Democratic

leader commits to addressing key issues, including a constitutional amendment to overturn the Citizens United decision and ending U.S. support for Israel and the war in Iran.

"It's part of the stuff you see in the movies," said Leonard. "It's a whole other thing when it's in person, by people who actually care about you and are cheering for you but expect you to wear the team jersey and be a good team player."

He added that he received a letter from Jeffries that "still left several of my constituents' questions unanswered."

Leonard, who last week flipped an Ohio district long held by Republicans, said separately in an interview with Joy Reid that he would not vote for Jeffries unless the Democratic leader commits to addressing his demands on Israel and campaign finance.

"So unless Speaker Jeffries is willing to commit to enforcing our nation's laws, like the Leahy Law, against Israeli genocide in Gaza; unless the speaker is willing to get to the heart of this crisis, which is Citizens United, he will not have my vote," the incoming lawmaker said in a clip he also posted on his social media.

Jeffries' office did not immediately respond to a request for comment. At a Monday news conference, the longtime Israel backer said he plans to have many conversations with his caucus in the coming days.

"I'm going to work hard to talk to every single member about what we've been able to do together over the last two years, and what the opportunities are for us to do together in the next two years, to deliver upon the dramatic change that the American people so decisively voted for," he said.

Leonard's remarks come as House Democrats are gearing up for a speaker

nomination vote next week. Jeffries is expected to cruise to victory, as his party's sizable new majority means he can afford at least three dozen defections.

Asked about Leonard's comments on Tuesday, Rep. Pete Aguilar (D-Calif.), who's running unopposed for House majority whip, said he doesn't know which senior Democrats Leonard was referring to. Aguilar also credited Jeffries for playing "an integral part" in House Democrats' sweep last week.

"It's my belief that he will be overwhelmingly selected to lead this caucus. I don't lose any sleep over that," he said. "Members could have ideas and interests, and they could have asks along the way, but the outcome is not in question."

Jeffries' allies have said they want the party united behind his speakership so it can focus on addressing issues key to voters instead of being consumed by factional warfare.

Still, not all Democratic members have committed to supporting Jeffries, with some progressives hoping to use the speaker election to work through internal divisions ahead of the new Congress next year.

Riley Rogerson contributed to this report.

Lead Art: House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries calls on a reporter during a press conference on Capitol Hill on Nov. 9, 2026. | Francis Chung/POLITICO

Continue on to view the day's latest updates