

WHILE THEY'RE REPLACING JOHN BOEHNER, THE GOP SHOULD REPLACE DEVIN NUNES, TOO

In a profile in Politico, Justin Amash* makes the case that the Freedom Caucus' rebellion against John Boehner isn't so much about ideology, it is about process.

Republican leaders see Freedom Caucus members as a bunch of bomb-throwing ideologues with little interest in finding solutions that can pass a divided government.

But that's a false reading of the group, Amash told his constituents. Their mission isn't to drag Republican leadership to the right, though many of them would certainly favor more conservative outcomes. It's simply to force them to follow the institution's procedures, Amash argued.

That means allowing legislation and amendments to flow through committees in a deliberative way, and giving individual members a chance to offer amendments and to have their ideas voted on on the House floor. Instead of waiting until right before the latest legislative crisis erupts, then twisting members' arms for votes, they argue, leadership must empower the rank and file on the front end and let the process work its will.

"In some cases, conservative outcomes will succeed. In other cases, liberal outcomes will succeed. And that's OK," said Amash, who was reelected overwhelmingly last year after the U.S.

Chamber of Commerce backed his Republican primary rival. “We can have a House where different coalitions get together on different bills and pass legislation. And then we present that to the Senate and we present it to the White House.

The truth lies somewhere in-between. After all, 8 of the 21 questions the FC posed to potential Speaker candidates are ideological in nature, hitting on the following issues:

- Obamacare
- Budget and appropriation resolution reform
- Ex-Im bank
- Highway Trust Fund
- Impeaching the IRS Commissioner
- First Amendment Defense Act

Admittedly, even some of those – the financial ones – are procedural, but there are some key ideological litmus tests there.

Of the remaining 21 questions, 3 pertain to use of NRCC resources, 4 pertain to conference make-up, and 6 have to do with process. In other words, this block of members wants to end the systematic exclusion of their members from leadership and other positions and the systematic suppression of legislation that might win a majority vote without leadership sanction.

And while I certainly recognize that some of these process reforms – again, especially the financial ones – would likely lead to more hostage taking, I also think such reforms would also make (as one example) stupid wars and surveillance less likely, because a transpartisan majority of the House opposes many such things while GOP leadership does not (Nancy Pelosi generally opposes stupid surveillance and wars but also usually, though not always, does

the bidding of the President).

The Yoder-Polis Act, an ECPA reform bill supported by 300 co-sponsors, is an example of worthy legislation that has long been held up because of leadership opposition.

While making the case for reform, though, I'd like to make the suggestion for another: to boot Devin Nunes, the current Chair of the House Intelligence Committee. According to the House Republican rules, the only positions picked by the Speaker are Select Committee Chairs, which would include Nunes and Benghazi Committee Chair Trey Gowdy (the latter of whom seems to be taken care of with Republican after Republican now admitting the committee is just a hack job, though if the FC wants to call for Richard Hanna to take over as Chair to shut down this government waste, I'd be cool with that too).

But with Boehner on his way out, it seems fair to suggest that Nunes should go too. While Nunes was actually better on Benghazi than his predecessor (raising questions about the CIA's involvement in gun-running), he has otherwise been a typical rubber stamp for the intelligence community, rushing to pass info-sharing with Department of Energy even while commenting on their shitty security practices, and pitching partisan briefings to give the IC one more opportunity to explain why the phone dragnet was more useful than all the independent reviews say it was.

The Intelligence Community has lost credibility since 9/11, and having a series of rubber stamp oversight Chairs (excepting Silvestre Reyes, who was actually reasonably good) has only exacerbated that credibility problem. So why not call for the appointment of someone like former state judge Ted Poe, who has experience with intelligence related issues on both the Judiciary and Foreign Relations Committees, but who has also been a staunch defender of the Constitution.

Hostage taking aside, I'm sympathetic to the

argument that the House should adopt more inclusive rules, in part because it would undercut the problems of a two party duopoly serving DC conventional wisdom.

But no place in Congress needs to be reformed more than our intelligence oversight. And while picking a more independent Chair won't revamp the legal structure of intelligence oversight, it might initiate a process of bringing more rigorous oversight to our nation's intelligence agencies.

Of course, who am I kidding?!?! It's not even clear that the GOP will succeed in finding a palatable Speaker candidate before Boehner retires. Throwing HPSCI Chair into the mix would likely be too much to ask. Nevertheless, as we discuss change and process, HPSCI is definitely one area where we could improve process to benefit the country.

*Amash is my congressperson, but I have not spoken to him or anyone else associated with him for this post and don't even know if he'd support this suggestion.