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August 13, 2019

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SUMMARY

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August 13, 2019

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Words Taken Down: Calling Members to Order for Disorderly Language in the House

Rule XVII, clause 4, of the standing rules of the House of Representatives describes a parliamentary mechanism whereby a Member may call another Member to order for the use of disorderly language. Disorderly, or unparliamentary, remarks are a violation of House rules of decorum. This mechanism, which is referred to as "words taken down," may be invoked during debate on the House floor, in the Committee of the Whole, or in the standing and select committees of the House.

To call a Member to order for allegedly disorderly remarks, a Member would state the following: "I demand that the gentleman's/gentlewoman's words be taken down." This call to order is to occur immediately after the words are spoken. If the demand comes after additional debate or business, the presiding officer may rule that it is untimely. (The presiding officer's decision on timeliness, however, may be appealed.)

The phrase *taken down* refers to the writing down of the words objected to so they may be read out loud by the House Clerk. Following the reading, the presiding officer will rule on whether the remarks are in order.

In the moments between the formal demand that words be taken down and the Clerk's reading of the words, the Member who made the allegedly disorderly remarks may seek unanimous consent to have them stricken from the *Congressional Record*. If the unanimous consent request is granted, the House may resume its business without the reading of the words or a ruling thereon. Alternatively, the Member who demanded that the words be taken down can withdraw the request. If neither occurs, then the Clerk will read the words and the Speaker or committee chair will rule on whether the words are in order, which is subject to an appeal. (If the demand for words taken down occurs in the Committee of the Whole, the committee will rise and report the words back to the House, so the Speaker can rule on the words.)

When determining whether the words are unparliamentary, the Speaker will consider the words themselves, as well as the context in which they were used, and base the ruling on House rules and precedents. Rule XVII, clause 1(b), of the standing rules of the House prohibits Members from engaging in "personalities" in debate, but the text of the rule does not state explicitly what language is unparliamentary. Rather, House precedents include examples of words and phrases that were previously determined to be in order and those that were ruled out of order. On the House floor, the Parliamentarian advises the Speaker based on these precedents. The Office of the Parliamentarian is not responsible for providing procedural assistance during committee meetings, although the chair could attempt to consult with the Parliamentarian in advance of or during such meetings.

If the Member's words are ruled out of order, the words may be stricken from the *Congressional Record* by unanimous consent on the initiative of the presiding officer. The words may also be stricken by a motion, which means the House will vote on whether to strike the remarks. In addition, Members whose words are determined to be unparliamentary may not be recognized to speak for the rest of the day (even on yielded time) unless the Member is allowed to proceed in order by unanimous consent or a motion. They may, however, vote and demand the yeas and the nays.

The demand for words to be taken down was invoked 170 times on the House floor or Committee of the Whole between January 1, 1971, and July 24, 2019. In practice, when this demand occurs, the Member being called to order is usually permitted to revise the words or to strike them from the *Congressional Record* before the Clerk reads the words back to the House. Therefore, the Speaker does not rule on whether the remarks violate the rules of decorum. When there is a ruling, the Speaker often states that the basis for the ruling is whether the words include a personal criticism of an identifiable person (usually a Member or the President).

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Introduction

The rules of the House of Representatives have included provisions related to preserving order and decorum in the chamber since the 1st Congress (1789-1790).[1] Under current House rules, Members may violate decorum if they engage in certain behaviors, such as using disorderly language.[2] Members may be called to order by colleagues for the use of allegedly disorderly, or unparliamentary, language, which may include a formal demand that their words be taken down. This demand initiates a series of procedures to determine whether the words are, in fact, unparliamentary and to decide whether a Member who uses such language should be allowed to proceed in debate.

This report covers these procedures, which are provided for in the standing rules of the House as a mechanism to maintain decorum in debate.[3] The sections below present details about how and when a Member might invoke the demand that words be taken down, the procedural steps that may follow the demand, and an overview of the rule's history in the House. The report concludes with information about the practice of invoking this rule in the House in recent decades.

The "Words Taken Down" Rule

The standing rules of the House establish a parliamentary mechanism—referred to as "words taken down"—whereby a Member may call another Member to order for the use of disorderly language. Members may invoke this mechanism during debate on the House floor or in the Committee of the Whole.[4] It may also be invoked in the standing and select committees of the House.[5]

A Member initiates the call to order by demanding that a colleague's "words be taken down." The phrase *taken down*, as described in the rule, refers to the writing down of the words objected to so they may be read back to the House by the Clerk. In current practice, all debate in the House and in standing and select committees is transcribed by the official reporters of debate. Therefore, when a Member demands that the words of a colleague be taken down, the Clerk will consult with the transcriber to identify the words objected to, which the Clerk will then read out loud.

Following the reading of the allegedly unparliamentary remarks, the Speaker of the House (or, if the words are spoken in a committee, the chair of the committee) will determine whether the words are in order.[6]

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[1] See *House Journal*, 1st Cong., 1st Sess. (April 7, 1789), p. 9.

[2] The House rules of decorum govern a variety of behaviors. For example, Members are prohibited from wearing communicative badges while under recognition and from smoking on the House floor. For more information on decorum, see *House Practice: A Guide to the Rules, Precedents, and Procedures of the House*, ch. 16, §21.

[3] House Rule XVII, clause 4. U.S. Congress, House, *Rules of the House of Representatives, One Hundred Sixteenth Congress*, prepared by Karen L. Haas, Clerk of the House of Representatives, 116th Cong., 1st Sess., 2019.

[4] The House meets in the Committee of the Whole when it is considering a measure that will be subject to multiple amendments. See CRS Report RS20147, *Committee of the Whole: An Introduction*, by Judy Schneider.

[5] Rule XI, clause 1(a)(1)(A), enables standing and select committees to enforce House rules of decorum in committee. See *Constitution, Jefferson's Manual, and Rules of the House of Representatives* (hereinafter *House Manual*), §787.

[6] Only the Speaker (usually the Speaker pro tempore) or the chair of a standing or select committee can rule on whether the words are disorderly (subject to an appeal). Therefore, if the demand for words taken down occurs in the Committee of the Whole, the Clerk reports the words, and the Committee of the Whole rises automatically and reports the words to the House. After the Speaker rules on the language and disposes of any additional or related motions, the

The standing rules of the House do not state explicitly what language is considered to be disorderly, although clause 1(b) of Rule XVII prohibits Members from engaging in "personalities" in debate. House precedents catalog words and phrases previously deemed to be in order and those that were ruled out of order, or unparliamentary.[7] When ruling on the words objected to, the presiding officer considers the words themselves, as well as the context in which they were used, and bases the ruling on these precedents. On the floor, the Parliamentarian advises the Speaker based on recorded precedents. The Office of the Parliamentarian is not responsible for providing procedural assistance during committee meetings, although the chair could attempt to consult with the Parliamentarian in advance of or during such meetings.[8]

Rule XVII, clause 4, details the procedure for demanding that words be taken down:[9]

> (a) If a Member, Delegate, or Resident Commissioner, in speaking or otherwise, transgresses the Rules of the House, the Speaker shall, or a Member, Delegate, or Resident Commissioner may, call to order the offending Member, Delegate, or Resident Commissioner, who shall immediately sit down unless permitted on motion of another Member, Delegate, or the Resident Commissioner to explain. If a Member, Delegate, or Resident Commissioner is called to order, the Member, Delegate, or Resident Commissioner making the call to order shall indicate the words excepted to, which shall be taken down in writing at the Clerk's desk and read aloud to the House.
>
> (b) The Speaker shall decide the validity of a call to order. The House, if appealed to, shall decide the question without debate. If the decision is in favor of the Member, Delegate, or Resident Commissioner called to order, the Member, Delegate, or Resident Commissioner shall be at liberty to proceed, but not otherwise. If the case requires it, an offending Member, Delegate, or Resident Commissioner shall be liable to censure or such other punishment as the House may consider proper. A Member, Delegate, or Resident Commissioner may not be held to answer a call to order, and may not be subject to the censure of the House therefor, if further debate or other business has intervened.

Demanding That a Member's Words Be Taken Down

According to clause 4(b) of Rule XVII, the demand for words to be taken down must be timely: It must generally occur before intervening business or debate.[10] Therefore, immediately after the allegedly offensive words are spoken, the Member would state

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Committee of the Whole resumes its sitting automatically. See *House Practice*, ch. 16, §27.

[7] In general, House precedents allow Members to criticize the political positions of other Members or Senators, but language that includes "personalities," or personal criticism, is considered disorderly. Similarly, Members may use language that is critical of the President (or Vice President, President-elect, or major party nominees for President) but not language that is personally offensive. Profanity and vulgar language have also been ruled out of order. For more information, see *House Practice*, ch. 16, §§22-43, and *House Manual*, §370.

[8] For more information about the role of the Office of the Parliamentarian, see CRS Report RS20544, *The Office of the Parliamentarian in the House and Senate*, by Valerie Heitshusen.

[9] Under clause 4 of Rule XVII, Members may also make a point of order that a colleague's language violates the rules of the House without making a formal demand that the words be taken down. See *House Practice*, ch. 16, §26.

[10] According to *Jefferson's Manual of Parliamentary Practice*, the demand should be timely "to prevent mistakes which must happen if words are not taken down immediately." See *House Manual*, §368. The presiding officer will determine whether the request for words to be taken down is timely and will not recognize Members for this demand if it is determined to be too late. This decision is subject to an appeal, and the appeal is subject to a motion to table. Under the precedents, personal criticism of the Speaker, however, may be challenged even after debate has intervened.

> Mr./Madam Speaker (or Chair), I demand that the gentleman's/gentlewoman's words be taken down.

Debate is not in order at this point, but the Member demanding that the words be taken down may briefly state the reason for objecting to the language (e.g., the words include an improper personal reference to the President).

A Member will be allowed to explain the remarks only if prompted by the presiding officer or if another Member makes a motion to allow an explanation and the motion is agreed to by the House. Usually, the presiding officer orders the Member who spoke the allegedly disorderly words to suspend and asks the Clerk to report the words. (On the House floor, the Member whose words were objected to may be asked by the Speaker to sit down.)

> The gentleman/gentlewoman from [state] will suspend. The Clerk will report the words.

It may take several minutes for the Clerk to review the transcript and read the words out loud. During this pause in proceedings, the Member who spoke the allegedly offensive words may ask unanimous consent to withdraw the words:

> Mr./Madam Speaker (or Chair), I ask unanimous consent to withdraw my words.

Alternatively, the Member who demanded that the words be taken down may withdraw the request, which does not require unanimous consent:

> Mr./Madam Speaker (or Chair), I withdraw my demand that the gentleman's/gentlewoman's words be taken down.

If neither occurs, then the Clerk will read the words to the House, and the presiding officer will make a ruling on the remarks:

> In the opinion of the Chair, the words in question [were/were not] in order.[11]

The presiding officer's ruling is subject to appeal, and that appeal is subject to a motion to table.[12] If the presiding officer rules that the words are not unparliamentary (and if this ruling is sustained following any appeal), then the House continues with the business pending prior to the demand that words be taken down.

If the presiding officer rules that the words are out of order (and if this ruling is sustained following any appeal), the words are usually stricken from the *Congressional Record* by unanimous consent.[13] The presiding officer might initiate this by stating

> Without objection, the words are stricken from the *Record*.

Alternatively, a Member (although not the Member whose words were taken down) may make a motion to remove the disorderly language from the *Record*, on which the House will vote:[14]

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[11] The presiding officer may also cite House precedents for the decision or provide an explanation for the ruling.

[12] The motion to table permanently and adversely disposes of a question. In this case, tabling an appeal sustains the ruling of the presiding officer. In practice, appeals are rarely successful on the House floor. Appeals are unlikely to succeed in committees as well, because the chair commands majority support. For more information on appeals, see CRS Report 98-307, *Points of Order, Rulings, and Appeals in the House of Representatives*, by Valerie Heitshusen.

[13] In some cases, the unparliamentary remarks remain in the *Congressional Record* even when they are stricken by unanimous consent or motion. If the Clerk reports the words, then the words appear as they are read by the Clerk. They may also remain in the *Congressional Record* among the remarks of the Member.

[14] The motion to strike the words from the *Record* is in order only after the presiding officer rules on the remarks (see *House Manual*, §961). This motion is debatable under the hour rule, and Members should confine their remarks to the question of striking the words (VIII Cannon 2539).

> I move that the words of the gentleman/gentlewoman from [state] be stricken from the *Record*.

In the event that a Member's words are ruled out of order, that Member may not be recognized to speak for the rest of the day (even on yielded time) or insert undelivered remarks into the *Record* unless the Member is allowed to proceed in order by the House.[15] The Member may be permitted to proceed in order by unanimous consent, which is often initiated by the presiding officer:

> Without objection, the gentleman/gentlewoman from [state] will proceed in order.

A Member may also make a motion to allow the Member whose words were ruled out of order to proceed in order, and the House will vote on the motion.[16]

> I move that the gentleman/gentlewoman from [state] be allowed to proceed in order.

If a Member is not allowed to proceed in order, the Member may vote and demand the yeas and the nays.[17]

History of the "Words Taken Down" Rule

The concept of taking disorderly words down in writing is provided for in the principles of general parliamentary law.[18] Although the rules of the House have, since its inception, included provisions related to preserving order and decorum in the chamber, the formal call for a Member's words to be taken down was not adopted as part of the standing rules of the House in the 1st Congress (1789-1790). The rules of the House initially provided for the Speaker to call a Member to order for disorderly remarks or for a Member to make a point of order against a Member's language, on which the Speaker would rule. (These parliamentary mechanisms are still available today under clause 4 of Rule XVII.)

The practice of taking down words began in 1808 when a Member called a colleague to order for disorderly language and the Speaker asked that Member to put the words objected to down in writing.[19] This practice was formally adopted as part of the standing rules of the House in 1837.[20] The original rule, which introduced the need for the demand to be timely, stated

> If a member be called to order for words spoken in debate, the person calling him to order shall repeat the words excepted to, and they shall be taken down in writing at the Clerk's table; and no member shall be held to answer, or be subject to the censure of the House, for words spoken in debate, if any other member has spoken, or other business has intervened, after the words spoken, and before exception to them shall have been taken.

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[15] *House Practice*, ch. 16, §32.

[16] The motion to allow a Member to proceed in order is privileged for consideration in the House and is debatable under the hour rule. The motion is also subject to a motion to table. See *House Practice*, ch. 16, §32.

[17] *Deschler's Precedents*, ch. 29, §§49.23, 52.

[18] See the *House Manual*, §368, which presents text from *Jefferson's Manual of Parliamentary Practice*. In compiling this reference, Thomas Jefferson relied on a variety of sources of English parliamentary practice (see *House Manual*, §284). Two such resources include the volumes of John Hatsell's *Precedents of Proceedings in the House of Commons* and Anchitell Grey's *Debates of the House of Commons*, both of which are referenced in the discussion of taking words down in writing found in *Jefferson's Manual*.

[19] V Hinds 5177; *Annals of the Congress of the United States* (December 30, 1808), p. 964.

[20] V Hinds 5177; *Congressional Globe*, 25th Cong., 1st sess., vol. 5 (September 14, 1837), p. 31.

An amendment to the rule in 1880 modified the procedure by which a Member demanded that words be taken down.[21] The amended rule removed the provision that the Member calling another to order should repeat the objectionable words. This version, which is similar to the corresponding sentences of the rule in effect today, provided for the words to be taken down in writing and repeated by the Clerk. The 1880 version of the rule states

> If a member is called to order for words spoken in debate, the member calling him to order shall indicate the words excepted to, and they shall be taken down in writing at the Clerk's desk and read aloud to the House; but he shall not be held to answer, nor be subject to the censure of the House therefor, if further debate or other business has intervened.

The rule took its current form when the House comprehensively recodified its rules in the 106th Congress, although the changes were largely technical.[22] During the recodification, the previously separate clauses in the House rules for addressing unparliamentary language—one providing for a Member to make a point of order against a colleague's remarks and the other providing for a demand that a Member's words be taken down—were combined. The text of the rule was also amended to clarify that the rule applies to a "Member, Delegate, or Resident Commissioner" (both for calling someone to order and for being called to order).

Recent Practice

CRS conducted full-text searches of the *Congressional Record* to identify instances in which a Member demanded that another Member's words be taken down on the House floor (or in the Committee of the Whole)[23] since January 1, 1971.[24]

Throughout this nearly 50-year period, the formal demand that words be taken down was invoked 170 times. These calls to order took place in the Committee of the Whole, as well as in the House proper, including during periods of time arranged for Members to speak on topics of their choice rather than on legislation, such as one-minute speeches and special order speeches.[25]

In contemporary practice, it is uncommon that the full procedure presented above—in which the Speaker rules whether or not the words are in order—occurs in the House. Of the 170 demands that words be taken down, 107, or more than half, were settled before the Speaker made a ruling, usually before the Clerk reported the words. In 75 of these instances, the Member whose words were taken down asked to withdraw or revise the words, and in another 32 cases, the Member who demanded that the words be taken down withdrew the request.[26] There were an additional 13

[21] V Hinds 5177; *Congressional Record*, 46th Cong., 2nd sess., vol. 10 (January 6, 1880), p. 206.

[22] Among other changes, this recodification resulted in a reduction in the number of House rules from 52 to 28.

[23] Although Members may demand that words be taken down in standing and select committees, this analysis of practice is restricted to debate on the House floor and the Committee of the Whole. Transcripts of committee proceedings are not always available, making it difficult to conduct a systematic search for the procedure.

[24] This date was selected because it is the year following the adoption of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970 (P.L. 91-510), which is often considered to signal the start of the modern Congress. The *Congressional Record* was searched for all instances in which the phrase *taken down* appeared. The transcripts were then reviewed to identify instances in which a Member formally demanded that a colleague's words be taken down. In some cases, a Member asked that a colleague's words be taken down, but the Speaker did not recognize the Member for that purpose and did not initiate the procedure for taking words down (such as asking the Clerk to report the words). These instances were not included in this analysis.

[25] For more information on opportunities for non-legislative debate in the House, see *House Practice*, ch. 16, §50.

[26] In 1980, the words of the Speaker were taken down, and another Member made the unanimous consent request to withdraw the objectionable word from the *Record*. See *Congressional Record*, vol. 126 (July 2, 1980), p. 18361.

occasions on which the Speaker ruled that a Member's call for words to be taken down was untimely.

Throughout this time period the Speaker ruled on the words taken down 50 times. Twenty-seven, or more than half, of these rulings took place in the 1990s, with only nine rulings by the Speaker since 2000.

In 25 of the 50 rulings following a demand that words be taken down, the Speaker ruled that the words were not disorderly. These occurrences are identified in **Table 1** in reverse chronological order. When the Speaker provided a reason for the ruling, it was often that the Member's remarks did not constitute an improper personal reference toward another Member. For example, after words were taken down during debate on February 5, 1992, the Speaker, when ruling on the words, stated: "The Chair will rule that since the gentleman from Louisiana is generically speaking and not specifically alleging improper conduct by any individual Member, the words are in order."[27]

The Speaker ruled that the words were out of order 25 times during this time period. These 25 occurrences are presented in **Table 2** in reverse chronological order. As the fourth column of the table indicates, in nearly every instance in which a rationale was given for the ruling, the Speaker stated that the Member was engaging in personalities toward an identifiable individual, often another Member.[28]

Following the determination that the remarks were out of order, the words were usually stricken from the *Record* by unanimous consent at the initiative of the Speaker. This happened in all but five instances presented in **Table 2**. The words were ultimately stricken, either by unanimous consent or motion, in 20 of the 25 cases. It is also common for the Member whose words were ruled out of order to be allowed to proceed in order, usually by unanimous consent initiated by the Speaker. Indeed, the Speaker initiated such a request in 16 of the cases presented in **Table 2**. Members whose words were ruled out of order were given permission to proceed in 19 of the 25 instances, either by unanimous consent or motion.

[27] *Congressional Record*, vol. 138, (February 5, 1992), p. 1603.

[28] In one case, the Speaker ruled that it was the Member's "demeanor" that was out of order (see *Congressional Record*, vol. 140 [July 29, 1994], p. 18609). In two other instances, the Speaker's ruling was based on previous House rules that prohibited any reference to the Senate or its proceedings (see *Congressional Record*, vol. 138 [July 9, 1992], p. 18342; and vol. 137 [October 8, 1991], p. 25757). Prior to the 101st Congress, any reference to the Senate was out of order in the House. The House rules were amended in the 101st and 109th Congresses to allow certain references to the Senate (see *House Manual*, §371).

Table 1. Language Ruled to Be Parliamentary Following the Demand for Words Taken Down

Date	Circumstances	Words or Actions Alleged to Be Disorderly	Ruling/Outcome	Citation
07/16/2008	House (consideration of a motion to recommit)	"Communities all around this country are hurting with $4 gas and all we get from the other side are charades as we've seen here tonight. The whole world watches as we try to do what's right. The whole world heard them say earlier that this was a vital and important piece of legislation that would fund the intelligence community. This is a betrayal of the work that is being done by men and women in the intelligence community that are putting their lives on the line to keep us safe. This is an outrage put forth by the politics, rather than wanting to get things done in this House. I will tell you Mr. Speaker, why would they want to derail."	The Speaker ruled that the words "were not directed in such a way as to constitute a personality or otherwise transgress the bounds of decorum in debate."	*Congressional Record*, vol. 154 (July 16, 2008), p. 15273.
10/18/2007	House (consideration of a veto message)	"I would just like to point out that under the Republican plan, by 2017 we probably will have killed 20,000 soldiers in Iraq spending $200 billion."	The Speaker ruled that the words did not descend to personality, nor were they inflammatory.	*Congressional Record*, vol. 153 (October 18, 2007), p. 27578.
05/06/2004	House (one-minute speech)	"Now we are all outraged and saddened by the photos of mistreatment of the Iraqi prisoners we have seen on our television screens. The abusers will be punished. The commanding officers will likely have their careers in ruins, but I just want to caution the leaders on the other side, indeed candidates who are running for the highest office in this land, that this response is reminiscent of the response that a candidate named Kerry 30 years ago had before the Senate committee where he condemned all of our troops in Vietnam. This is not the case of our brave men and women over in Iraq today."	The Speaker ruled that general references to past statements or positions of candidates for President were not prohibited under the rules, and thus, the remarks were not out of order.	*Congressional Record*, vol. 150 (May 6, 2004), p. 8554.
04/09/2003	Committee of the Whole	"My sons are 25 and 30, they are blonde haired and blue eyed. One amendment today said we could not sell guns to anybody under drug treatment. So does that mean that if you go into a black community, you cannot sell a gun to any black person or does that mean because my … "	The Speaker ruled that the words were not disorderly. A Member appealed the Speaker's ruling and another Member moved to table that appeal. The appeal was tabled by a recorded vote.	*Congressional Record*, vol. 149 (April 9, 2003), p. 9005.

Date	Circumstances	Words or Actions Alleged to Be Disorderly	Ruling/Outcome	Citation
04/09/1997	House (consideration of a special rule)	"If you give $10,000, you can have a meeting. You know what you get, ladies and gentlemen? You get seats in the gallery. You the public get seats in the gallery. You know what big donors get? They get access to leadership power and decisions. That is under the existing system, and that is why we are saying it has to be reformed. Two years ago we watched as top lobbyists sat in the majority whip's office and drafted legislation to the Clean Water Act."	The Speaker ruled that there was no direct reference to a Member performing a quid pro quo, so the words were not out of order. After the ruling, the Speaker reminded Members that it is not in order to address the people in the galleries and it is a violation of House rules to question another Member's "personal motives."	*Congressional Record*, vol. 143 (April 9, 1997), p. 4926.
12/19/1995	House (consideration of a special rule)	"Yesterday he puts a bunch of children behind him kind of as props and attacks everybody who is expecting him to keep his word. It is very simple. Mr. President, keep your word to the American people. When you talk to those children, talk to them about scout's honor, talk to them about the importance of keeping your word. That is what it all comes down to."	The Speaker ruled that these words were "not an improper personal reference to the President." After a series of parliamentary inquiries, the Speaker advised that Members should remember to direct their remarks to the chair, not to the President.	*Congressional Record*, vol. 141 (December 19, 1995), p. 37601.
11/17/1995	House (consideration of a bill)	"I think there are 5 compelling reasons to reject this bill tonight. The first is that it is at least inconsistent, at worst hypocritical, to make our foreign policy based upon the party affiliation of our commander in chief. In other words, I do think this bill is politically suspect in its motivation. But secondly, for nearly a year now our President under Secretary."	The Speaker ruled that the words were not unparliamentary because they did not include personal references to specific Members or the President.	*Congressional Record*, vol. 141 (November 17, 1995), p. 33831.
11/14/1995	House (special order speech)	"For example, when one of the leaders of the Democratic party says, 'Well, Republicans are going to cut Medicare,' knowing full well we are going from $4,800 to $6,700 per person knowing that, and they look your mother in the eye and your dad and assume that they do not know what is going on and say, 'The Republicans are going to cut your Medicare.' Wouldn't it be great to have a beep come on and for all these C-SPAN viewers out there to know the person who is now speaking is lying."	The Speaker ruled that the words were not a reference to a specific Member, and thus, they were not unparliamentary. The Speaker did, however, advise all Members to be respectful of House leadership and other Members.	*Congressional Record*, vol. 141 (November 14, 1995), p. 32472.

Date	Circumstances	Words or Actions Alleged to Be Disorderly	Ruling/Outcome	Citation
11/14/1995	House (consideration of a motion to postpone consideration of a veto message)	"We said let us make sure that part of the solution is not part of the political problem. That is why the Republicans put holding the line on the beneficiaries' part of the part B premium on the continuing resolution, to stop the President from this kind of political game playing. They will tell you it is for good and worthy purposes. It is for down-in-the-dirt gutter politics, and you people are going to pay."	The Speaker ruled that the words were not a reference to a specific Member or the President, so they were in order. The Speaker also cautioned Members to be respectful of other Members and to the President.	*Congressional Record*, vol. 141 (November 14, 1995), p. 32388.
11/09/1995	House (consideration of a bill)	"Ladies and gentlemen of this House, ladies and gentlemen of America, this bill is a patently petty political terrorist tactic that is what it is, an attempt to force the President of the United States to adopt things that you cannot get through your own Senate, not just the Congress. This bill adopts tactics that put America as a hostage to an extremist agenda."	The Speaker ruled that the words were not a reference to a specific Member, so they were in order. The Speaker also advised Members to observe the rules of decorum and civility in the House.	*Congressional Record*, vol. 141 (November 9, 1995), p. 31913.
11/08/1995	House (consideration of a motion to recommit)	"Yes, it is more restrictive than the last continuing resolution because the idea is to encourage both the Members of this body, the Members of the other body, to pay attention to the appropriation bills that have already passed the House of Representatives, and to also encourage the President to pay attention to those bills when they come to him and not frivolously veto them like he did the legislative branch bill."	The Speaker ruled that the words were not personally offensive to the President, so they were not unparliamentary.	*Congressional Record*, vol. 141 (November 8, 1995), p. 31785.
01/25/1995	House (one-minute speech)	"By the way. Mr. Speaker, the Second Amendment is not for killing little ducks and leaving Huey, Duey, and Louie without an aunt and uncle. It is for hunting politicians, like Grozny, 1776, when they take your Independence away. Thank you, Mr. Speaker."	The Speaker ruled that these words are not unparliamentary.	*Congressional Record*, vol. 141 (January 25, 1995), p. 2352.

Date	Circumstances	Words or Actions Alleged to Be Disorderly	Ruling/Outcome	Citation
01/24/1995	House (one-minute speech)	"But it is apparent to anyone who is paying attention to what is going on that the Democratic Party is doing everything they can to derail the Contract With America. They are proposing hundreds of amendments to slow down the process. All I want to say is that it is the height of hypocrisy, the height of hypocrisy for the Democrats to come down here and complain about what the Republicans are doing after the way they have run this House for the last 40 years."	The Speaker ruled that it is not out of order to refer to parties. In response to a parliamentary inquiry from the Member who demanded that the words be taken down, the Speaker stated that "collective political motivation can be discussed."	*Congressional Record*, vol. 141 (January 24, 1995), p. 2217.
01/18/1995	House (one-minute speech)	"That is what is happening here. The other side of the aisle is trying every tactic they can to stop the Contract With America. That is quite evident to the American people."	The Speaker ruled that the words were not an improper personal reference to a specific Member, and thus, were not unparliamentary. A Member appealed the ruling but withdrew the appeal shortly thereafter to make a parliamentary inquiry about what constitutes disorderly language. The Speaker responded with the following: "Members can engage in debate on political motivation which is not personal."	*Congressional Record*, vol. 141 (January 18, 1995), p. 1447.
05/13/1993	Committee of the Whole	"The Walker amendment, so-called middleclass amendment set-aside, in our opinion, demeans, demeans the well-established policy to bring minorities and women into the economic mainstream and should be strenuously opposed. And I ask my colleagues to again support the committee in opposing Mr. Walker's demeaning amendment."	The Speaker ruled that the term *demeaning* referred to the amendment itself and did not characterize the motive or character of the individual offering the amendment.	*Congressional Record*, vol. 139 (May 13, 1993), p. 9922.
10/03/1992	House (consideration a bill)	"Does this episode mean that sometimes rules of the House prevent one from speaking the truth on the House floor?"	The Speaker ruled that the words were not unparliamentary because they did not include a personal reference to a specific Member.	*Congressional Record*, vol. 138 (October 3, 1992), p. 31009.
06/09/1992	House (one-minute speech)	"Once again he has threatened to deny the reality of unemployment and veto the unemployment benefit extension for his own petty political gain."	The Speaker cited the definition of *petty* in *Webster's Dictionary* and ruled that these remarks were not out of order.	*Congressional Record*, vol. 138 (June 9, 1992), p. 13902.

Date	Circumstances	Words or Actions Alleged to Be Disorderly	Ruling/Outcome	Citation
02/05/1992	House (consideration of a question of privileges of the House)	"The criminal justice of this country is in danger when elected officials can tamper with the judicial system. And in this case, that is exactly what happened."	The Speaker ruled that the remarks did not allege improper conduct by a specific Member, so they were not unparliamentary. Following the ruling, the Member who was called to order asked for unanimous consent to revise the remarks in the *Record*.	*Congressional Record*, vol. 138 (February 5, 1992), p. 1603.
04/19/1988	House (consideration of a measure under suspension of the rules)	"You now have the opportunity of voting against dial-a-porn so nobody in your district will be able to say that you failed to vote against the continued availability of dial-a-porn, a classic example of duplicity, at the best it can be creating [sic] in the minds of those who brought this procedure to the floor today."	The Speaker ruled that "the use in the pejorative of the term 'duplicity' … was not directed at a specific Member, but rather, to the circumstance of consideration." Thus, the Speaker ruled that the words were not unparliamentary. The Speaker stated: "If the term had been directed expressly to a Member of the House as descriptive of a Member, then it would have been another matter."	*Congressional Record*, vol. 134 (April 19, 1988), p. 7335.
02/27/1985	House (special order speech)	"I think the Members should be allowed to express themselves during special orders without this kind of unfair stealing of time."	The Speaker ruled that there was no connotation of illegality in the remarks, and thus, they were not disorderly.	*Congressional Record*, vol. 131 (February 27, 1985), p. 3900.
04/12/1984	House (consideration of a special rule)	"And the same Members that are taking the floor tonight to argue against this resolution are the same Members in 1978 and early in 1979 who rose time and again to tell us how great Somoza was and to tell us how we had to keep arming and supporting General Somoza in Nicaragua."	The Speaker ruled that the words did not refer to a specific Member in an unparliamentary manner, and thus, they were not out of order.	*Congressional Record*, vol. 130 (April 12, 1984), p. 9480.
07/28/1983	Committee of the Whole	"I am concerned, as I said, about the statements that I have heard on the floor today, because I believe that what they have a tendency to do, even though that may not be the intention, I think they have the tendency to try to assassinate the character of the person making the statement rather than to effectively assassinate the argument."	The Speaker ruled that, because the Member whose words were taken down included in his statement "a disclaimer that he does not impugn the motives or intentions of any Member of the House," the words were not unparliamentary.	*Congressional Record*, vol. 129 (July 28, 1983), p. 21461.

Date	Circumstances	Words or Actions Alleged to Be Disorderly	Ruling/Outcome	Citation
05/26/1983	Committee of the Whole	"I do not want my colleague from Indiana to be ashamed whatsoever or to let this element over here who advocates unilateral disarmament to browbeat you into thinking they know more than you do."	The Speaker ruled that the remarks were not directed at a specific Member and, thus, were not unparliamentary. The Speaker cited a precedent set by Speaker Martin on November 24, 1947, in making this ruling. The Speaker also advised the Member that it is against the rules to make statements that are personally offensive toward a specific Member and that this personal offense may come through the tone of the Member's voice.	*Congressional Record*, vol. 129 (May 26, 1983), p. 14048.
02/13/1980	House (consideration of a question of privileges of the House)	"The gentleman from Missouri would like to reply to that. The gentleman from Missouri has not felt more strongly about a matter in a very long time than he does about this, and that is the reason that he took the unusual approach that he has taken of accepting at least a draft presumably developed by the minority leader. The gentleman from Missouri obviously has no difficulty with the content of the resolution and feels that he could in honor offer it. The gentleman from Missouri has a very, very strong feeling about the timing of the offering of the proposal by the minority, and the gentleman from Missouri has carefully differentiated between what he has said earlier about the minority leader and what he has said about the minority. I fear me, and I do not suspect the gentleman from Arizona of having this view, I fear me that there is some motivation other than fully objective concern for the House in the timing of the resolution, not in the content, and that is the reason that the gentleman from Missouri took the unusual course of offering the minority's proposition. He feels that it is appropriate for the House, through the Rules Committee, initially to look into this matter, but he thinks it might be done with greater dignity and, one might say, with greater honor, if it were not done at this particular time of confusion. Therefore, the gentleman from Missouri is happy to yield 5 minutes for debate to the gentleman from Arizona, the distinguished minority leader."	The Speaker ruled that the remarks were not personal attacks "on the honor or the dignity of the minority party or the minority leader" and, thus, were not unparliamentary.	*Congressional Record*, vol. 126 (February 13, 1980), p. 2768.

Date	Circumstances	Words or Actions Alleged to Be Disorderly	Ruling/Outcome	Citation
11/10/1971	Committee of the Whole	"The second lie which is deliberate, in my opinion, and ought not to be brought back time after time into this controversy, is that there is no such thing …"	The Speaker first ruled that the phrase *the second lie, which is deliberate* was unparliamentary. Following the ruling, the Member whose words were taken down stated that the remarks were not directed at a specific Member. This Member and the Speaker entered into an exchange to confirm that the remarks did not refer to a specific Member, and the Speaker ultimately ruled that the words were not out of order.	*Congressional Record*, vol. 117 (November 10, 1971), p. 40442.

Source: Full-text searches of the *Congressional Record* via Congress.gov and *ProQuest Congressional*.

Notes: This table presents data from January 1, 1971, through July 24, 2019. The start date was selected because it is the year following the adoption of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970 (P.L. 91-510), which is often considered to signal the start of the modern Congress. The *Congressional Record* was searched for all instances in which the phrase *taken down* appeared. The transcripts were then reviewed to identify instances in which a Member formally demanded that a colleague's words be taken down. In some cases, a Member asked that a colleague's words be taken down, but the Speaker did not recognize the Member for that purpose and did not initiate the procedure for taking words down (such as asking the Clerk to report the words). These instances were not included in this analysis.

Table 2. Language Ruled to Be Unparliamentary Following the Demand for Words Taken Down

Date	Circumstances	Words or Actions Alleged to Be Disorderly	Ruling/Outcome	Citation
07/16/2019	House (consideration of a resolution)	"Every single Member of this institution, Democratic and Republican, should join us in condemning the President's racist tweets. To do anything less would be a shocking rejection of our values and a shameful abdication of our oath of office."	The Speaker ruled that the words should not be used in debate, and thus, they were out of order. After the ruling, a Member made a motion to strike the words from the *Congressional Record*, which was rejected by a recorded vote. Another Member then moved that the Member whose words were ruled out of order be allowed to proceed in order, which was agreed to by a recorded vote.	*Congressional Record,* daily edition, vol. 165 (July 16, 2019), p. H5851.
03/07/2012	Committee of the Whole	"For the gentleman from Texas, having been part of the leadership that engaged in that shameful maneuver, to now accuse us of being excessively concerned with credit is the most hypocritical and dishonest statement I have heard uttered in this House."	The Speaker ruled that "the remarks constitute a personality directed toward an identifiable Member." At the initiative of the Speaker, the words were stricken from the *Record* by unanimous consent. (No Member made a motion or unanimous consent request to allow the Member whose words were ruled out of order to proceed in order.)	*Congressional Record*, vol. 158 (March 7, 2012), p. 3045.
03/21/2007	Committee of the Whole	"I wish you would have the decency, if you are going to do that to the people of south Mississippi, that maybe you ought to come visit south Mississippi before you hold them to a standard that you would never hold your own people to and that you failed to hold the Bush administration to."	The Speaker ruled that the remarks were out of order because they questioned the decency of a Member and, as such, "improperly descend to personality." At the initiative of the Speaker, the words were stricken from the *Record* by unanimous consent. There was an objection to the Speaker's attempt to secure unanimous consent to allow the Member whose words were ruled out of order to proceed. A Member then offered a motion to allow the Member to proceed in order, which was agreed to by a recorded vote.	*Congressional Record*, vol. 153 (March 21, 2007), p. 7074.
07/15/2004	Committee of the Whole	"I come from Florida where you and others participated in what I call the United States coup d'état. We need to make sure that it does not happen again. Over and over again, after the election, when you stole the election, you came back here and said get over it."	The Speaker ruled that the words were out of order because they accused an identifiable Member of committing a crime. The Member whose words were ruled out of order asked for unanimous consent to clarify the words, to which there was an objection. That Member then appealed the ruling, and the appeal was tabled by a recorded vote. At the initiative of the Speaker, the words were stricken from the *Record* by unanimous consent. Also at the initiative of the Speaker, the Member whose words were ruled out of order was allowed to proceed by unanimous consent.	*Congressional Record*, vol. 150 (July 15, 2004), p. 15859.

Date	Circumstances	Words or Actions Alleged to Be Disorderly	Ruling/Outcome	Citation
06/13/2002	House (consideration of a bill)	"So if the gentleman from California did not understand the context in which I referred to his argument about the fact that the gentleman from Connecticut was not allowed to appear in front of the full committee, in which I said there had been 17 full committee hearings, and only one had members in front of it, is baloney. I said it was the 'Maloney Baloney' and if the gentleman does not understand the use of that phrase let me explain it. Apparently the argument that the Democrats have been making for the last hour is baloney."	The Speaker ruled "that the use of another Member's surname as though an adjective for a word of ridicule is not in order." At the initiative of the Speaker, the word *Maloney* was stricken from the *Record* by unanimous consent. Also at the initiative of the Speaker, the Member whose words were ruled out of order was allowed to proceed by unanimous consent.	*Congressional Record*, vol. 148 (June 13, 2002), p. 10232.
04/17/1997	House (one-minute speech)	"I am surprised to see my Republican colleagues on the floor today congratulating Speaker Newt Gingrich for doing something he should have done months ago, paying $300,000 for lying to Congress. Speaker Gingrich admitted to bringing discredit on the House of Representatives. He has admitted to lying to this House."	The Speaker ruled that the words were out of order and stated: "Under the precedents, the debate should not go to the official conduct of a Member where that question is not pending as a question of privilege on the House floor. The fact that the House has addressed a Member's conduct at a prior time does not permit this debate at this time." There was an objection to the Speaker's attempt to secure unanimous consent to strike the words from the *Record*. The Speaker then posed the question of whether to strike the words to the House, and it was agreed to by a recorded vote. There was also an objection to the Speaker's attempt to secure unanimous consent to allow the Member whose words were ruled out of order to proceed. A Member then moved to allow the Member to proceed, and the motion was tabled by a recorded vote.	*Congressional Record*, vol. 143 (April 17, 1997), p. 5831.
07/25/1996	House (special order speech)	"I was aware of what you were going to say today. You know full well the reason you came down here on the floor and said what you said is that you didn't have the nerve to go up in the Press Galley [sic] and make those charges because you would be subject to a lawsuit."	The Speaker ruled that "the remarks question the integrity of the gentleman … and constitute a personality in debate." At the initiative of the Speaker, the words were stricken from the *Record* by unanimous consent. There was an objection to the Speaker's attempt to secure unanimous consent to allow the Member whose words were ruled out of order to proceed. Shortly after the initial objection, a Member sought and was granted unanimous consent to allow the Member to proceed in order.	*Congressional Record*, vol. 142 (July 25, 1996), p. 19170.

Date	Circumstances	Words or Actions Alleged to Be Disorderly	Ruling/Outcome	Citation
06/27/1996	House (consideration of a special rule)	"You are one of the most impolite Members I have ever seen in my service in this House."	The Speaker ruled that the remarks constituted a personality, and thus, they were out of order. At the initiative of the Speaker, the words were stricken from the *Record* by unanimous consent. There was an objection to the Speaker's attempt to secure unanimous consent to allow the Member whose words were ruled out of order to proceed. Shortly thereafter, the Member whose words were ruled out of order was granted unanimous consent to speak out of order and apologized for the remarks. The Member who previously objected then asked for unanimous consent to allow the Member to proceed, and there was no objection.	*Congressional Record*, vol. 142 (June 27, 1996), p. 15914.
11/18/1995	House (consideration of a special rule)	"We heard him now, I am sure you have seen the recent commercial. We also have Bill Clinton saying, I think it can be done. Well, it can be done, first of all it can be done in 7 years. That is May 1995. Then we heard him in 10 years, then we heard 9 years, and 8 years. Well, my colleagues, we are here to nail the little bugger down, and that is the purpose of this."	The Speaker ruled that the words were out of order as an improper reference to the President. At the initiative of the Speaker, the words were stricken from the *Record* by unanimous consent. There was an objection to the Speaker's attempt to secure unanimous consent to allow the Member whose words were ruled out of order to proceed. Shortly thereafter, another Member moved to allow the Member to proceed, which was agreed to by a recorded vote.	*Congressional Record*, vol. 141 (November 18, 1995), p. 33974.
06/08/1995	House (one-minute speech)	"One after another after another of our liberal colleagues take to the well to carp, to moan, to deceive and to distort. The lies roll off their tongues so easily. They can say the most outlandish things with such ease, you would swear that it was Mephistopheles himself that was up there speaking. For instance, they say that Republicans are drastically cutting Medicare. It is not true, and they know it. Far from cutting Medicare, Republicans are strengthening the programs and saving it from certain bankruptcy as said so by the trustees of the program itself. They tell the same lies about the programs for children, about education, about nutrition, you name it."	The Speaker ruled that the use of the word *lies* in reference to specific Members was out of order. At the initiative of the Speaker, the words were stricken from the *Record* by unanimous consent. Another Member then asked for unanimous consent to allow the Member whose words were ruled out of order to proceed in order (following the Speaker's initiation of the same request), and there was no objection.	*Congressional Record*, vol. 141 (June 8, 1995), p. 15267.

Date	Circumstances	Words or Actions Alleged to Be Disorderly	Ruling/Outcome	Citation
03/29/1995	Committee of the Whole	"I had [a] specific conversation with the gentleman from Michigan, and he stated to me very clearly that it is his intention to vote against this bill on final. Now, if that is not a cynical manipulation and exploitation of the American public, then what is? What could be more cynical? What could be more hypocritical?"	The Speaker ruled that referring to the hypocrisy of another Member had been ruled out of order in the past, so the words were out of order. At the initiative of the Speaker, the words were stricken from the *Record* by unanimous consent. There was an objection to the Speaker's attempt to secure unanimous consent to allow the Member whose words were ruled out of order to proceed. The Speaker put the question to the House, and it was agreed to by a recorded vote.	*Congressional Record*, vol. 141 (March 29, 1995), p. 9675.
01/25/1995	House (one-minute speech)	"Even Andrea Mitchell of NBC took note that [it] is Ronald Reagan's prerogative, George Bush's and all of us who wore the uniform or served in a civilian capacity to crush the evil empire. Clinton gave aid and comfort to the enemy." (Following the request that the words be taken down, the Member was yielded time by another Member to explain the remarks and stated: "I believe the President did give aid and comfort to the enemy, Hanoi.")	The Speaker ruled that the initial remarks were an improper reference to the President and, thus, were out of order. The Speaker also ruled that the words spoken during the Member's explanation of the words taken down were also out of order, although the Clerk did not report the additional words. At the initiative of the Speaker, both sets of words were stricken from the *Record* by unanimous consent. (No Member made a motion or unanimous consent request to allow the Member whose words were ruled out of order to proceed.)	*Congressional Record*, vol. 141 (January 25, 1995), p. 2351.
01/18/1995	House (one-minute speech)	"News accounts tell us that while the Speaker may have given up the $4.5 million advance, he stands to gain that amount and much more. That is a whole lot of dust where I come from. If anything now, how much the Speaker earns has grown much more dependent on how hard his publishing house hawks his book."	The Speaker ruled that "innuendo and critical references to the Speaker's personal conduct are not in order." A Member appealed the ruling of the chair, and the appeal was tabled by a recorded vote. There was an objection to the Speaker's attempt to secure unanimous consent to strike the words from the *Record*. The Speaker then put the question of whether the words should be stricken to the House, and it was agreed to by a recorded vote. The Member whose words were ruled out of order asked to be recognized and was then allowed to proceed in order by unanimous consent at the initiative of the Speaker.	*Congressional Record*, vol. 141 (January 18, 1995), p. 1441.

Date	Circumstances	Words or Actions Alleged to Be Disorderly	Ruling/Outcome	Citation
07/29/1994	House (one-minute speech)	"He had to be gaveled out of order because he badgered a woman who was a witness from the White House, Maggie Williams. I am pleased I was able to come to her defense. Madam Chairwoman, the day is over when men can badger and intimidate women." (After the demand for words taken down, the Member who was called to order attempted to be recognized several times despite the Speaker's instructions that she desist.)	The Speaker ruled that the term *badgering* was not in itself unparliamentary but found the Member's demeanor in refusing to accept the Speaker's instructions to desist to be out of order. At the initiative of the Speaker, the Member was allowed to proceed in order by unanimous consent.	*Congressional Record*, vol. 140 (July 29, 1994), p. 18609.
07/09/1992	House (one-minute speech)	"In continuing its downhill slide, the Senate Judiciary Committee has recommended by a 10-to-4 vote approval of the nomination of Edward Carnes to the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals. The simple fact is that Edward Carnes is unfit to serve on the Federal bench. His executioner mentality and active support for racial discrimination with the Alabama criminal justice system, and his failure to understand the concept of equal …"	The Speaker ruled "that critical references to the Senate or committees of the Senate are not permitted under the rules of the House."[a] At the initiative of the Speaker, the words were stricken from the *Record* by unanimous consent. Also at the initiative of the Speaker, the Member whose words were ruled out of order was allowed to proceed in order by unanimous consent.	*Congressional Record*, vol. 138 (July 9, 1992), p. 18342.
10/08/1991	House (one-minute speech)	"To be sure a person is innocent until proven guilty, but without a full and public hearing about these very serious charges a decision this evening to elevate Judge Thomas to the Supreme Court casts doubt on the entire process."	The Speaker ruled that the words referred to action by the Senate, and, as such, they were not in order in the House.[a] At the initiative of the Speaker, the words were stricken from the *Record* by unanimous consent. There was an objection to the Speaker's attempt to secure unanimous consent to allow the Member whose words were ruled out of order to proceed. The Speaker then put this question to the House, and a Member moved to table the motion, which was rejected by a recorded vote. The question of whether to allow the Member to proceed in order was put to the House again and agreed to by a recorded vote.	*Congressional Record*, vol. 137 (October 8, 1991), p. 25757.

Date	Circumstances	Words or Actions Alleged to Be Disorderly	Ruling/Outcome	Citation
06/20/1990	House (one-minute speech)	"But I swear I just cannot understand why you cannot be receptive to the veterans of this Nation when you are kowtowing to the ilk like Communist Youth Brigade to allow them to trample and desecrate our American Flag."	The Speaker, citing *Cannon's Procedure in the House of Representatives*, ruled that "it is not in order in debate to speak disrespectfully of the Speaker or to use words insulting to or unduly critical of him or calculated to be offensive, or to reflect on him personally or officially." At the initiative of the Speaker, the words were stricken from the *Record* by unanimous consent. The Member whose remarks were ruled out of order then asked for unanimous consent to be allowed to proceed in order, and there was no objection.	*Congressional Record*, vol. 136 (June 20, 1990), p. 14877.
05/09/1990	House (one-minute speech)	"It isn't, Mr. Speaker, that the President is intellectually dishonest."	The Speaker ruled that "precedents relating to references in debate to the President permit criticisms of official policy actions and opinions, but do not permit personal abuse, innuendo, or ridicule." The Speaker later clarified the ruling by stating "that an allegation of intellectual inconsistency is not necessarily unparliamentary. However, to whatever extent the phrase 'intellectual dishonesty' may connote an intent to deceive," the Speaker believed it to be personally offensive. There was an objection to the Speaker's attempt to secure unanimous consent to allow the Member whose words were ruled out of order to proceed. The Speaker then asked whether any Member had a motion to allow the Member to proceed in order. A Member made this motion, and it was agreed to by a recorded vote. (No Member made a motion or unanimous consent request to strike the words, and they remain in the *Record*.)	*Congressional Record*, vol. 136 (May 9, 1990), p. 9828.

Date	Circumstances	Words or Actions Alleged to Be Disorderly	Ruling/Outcome	Citation
09/29/1988	House (one-minute speech)	"This is the same Senator Quayle that supports wars that he won't fight, the same Senator Quayle who got into law school under an entry minority program that he later votes against. There is a word for it, my colleagues, it is called hypocrisy."	The Speaker ruled that House precedents "permit criticisms of official policy, actions, and opinions" of the President, Vice President, or nominees for either position, as well as Senators, "but do not permit personal abuse, do not permit innuendo, and do not permit ridicule." (Senator Quayle was a Senator and a candidate for Vice President at the time of these remarks.) The Speaker suggested that the Member whose words were taken down ask for unanimous consent to modify the remarks or withdraw them from the *Record*. That Member then asked for unanimous consent to strike the last sentence from the *Record*, and there was an objection. The Member then asked for unanimous consent to strike the entire statement, and there was another objection. (Following the objections to the unanimous consent requests, no Member made a motion to strike the words, and they remain in the *Record*. In addition, no Member made a motion or unanimous consent request to allow the Member whose words were ruled out of order to proceed.)	*Congressional Record*, vol. 134 (September 29, 1988), p. 26683.
03/19/1985	House (special order speech)	"One of the most important things to remember is that those Members who call for these wasteful votes are led by my distinguished colleague from Pennsylvania, Mr. Walker, who speaks constantly of the need to do away with government waste, and he is literally speaking out of both sides of his mouth."	The Speaker ruled that the words were out of order because they impugned the motives of another Member. At the initiative of the Speaker, the words were stricken from the *Record* by unanimous consent. A Member sought unanimous consent that the Member whose words were ruled out of order be allowed to proceed in order (following the Speaker's initiation of the same request), and there was an objection. Following these proceedings, a Member attempted to yield time to the Member whose words were taken down and was informed by the Speaker that the Member could not be yielded time without a unanimous consent request. The Speaker asked whether there were any objections to the Member proceeding in order, and a Member objected. Later, the Member whose words were ruled out of order was allowed to proceed by a unanimous consent request from another Member.	*Congressional Record*, vol. 131 (March 19, 1985), p. 5532.

Date	Circumstances	Words or Actions Alleged to Be Disorderly	Ruling/Outcome	Citation
05/15/1984	House (consideration of a question of personal privilege)	"My personal opinion is this: you deliberately stood in that well before an empty House and challenged these people and you challenged their Americanism and it is the lowest thing that I have ever seen in my 32 years in Congress."	The Speaker pro tempore ruled that the words, which were spoken by the Speaker, were not in order. After the ruling, the Member who demanded that the words be taken down asked for unanimous consent to allow the Speaker to proceed, and there was no objection.	*Congressional Record*, vol. 130 (May 15, 1984), p. 12201.
07/24/1979	House (consideration of a joint resolution to propose an amendment to the Constitution)	"Mr. Speaker, may I add that to use, as one of my colleagues used, Lincoln's name to promote the amendment seems to me to be the height of hypocrisy."	The Speaker ruled that using the term *hypocrisy* in reference to a specific Member was out of order. At the initiative of the Speaker, the words were stricken from the *Record* by unanimous consent. Also at the initiative of the Speaker, the Member whose words were ruled out of order was allowed to proceed by unanimous consent.	*Congressional Record*, vol. 125 (July 24, 1979), p. 20380.
06/12/1979	Committee of the Whole	"Mr. Chairman, I expected resistance to this amendment and not necessarily my getting involved. I am not a member of this committee. But this amendment is probably the most serious in a detrimental way to the main purposes of equal opportunity of education to the most needed segments of our society that has been presented thus far and probably could ever be presented. The insidiousness of the amendment is compounded by the sponsor's deceptive—I should say hypocritical—presentation of this amendment, disguising it as a quota prohibition."	The Speaker ruled that the use of the words *deceptive* or *hypocritical* would be in order if they were simply characterizing the effect of an amendment; these remarks were characterizing the motivation of the Member in offering the amendment, and thus, they were out of order. At the initiative of the Speaker, the words were stricken from the *Record* by unanimous consent. Another Member moved that the Member whose words were ruled out of order be allowed to proceed, and the motion was agreed to by voice vote.	*Congressional Record*, vol. 125 (June 12, 1979), p. 14461.
08/21/1974	House (consideration of a conference report, but the Member asked for and was granted unanimous consent to speak out of order)	"Mr. Speaker, I take this time so I may direct my remarks to the gentleman from Maryland…. I just want to say that I think in my opinion it was a cheap, sneaky, sly way to operate."	The Speaker ruled that the words in the last sentence were unparliamentary. There was an objection to the Speaker's attempt to secure unanimous consent to strike the words from the *Record*. Another Member then moved that the remarks be stricken, which was agreed to by voice vote. (No Member made a motion or unanimous consent request to allow the Member whose words were ruled out of order to proceed.)	*Congressional Record*, vol. 120 (August 21, 1974), p. 29652.

Date	Circumstances	Words or Actions Alleged to Be Disorderly	Ruling/Outcome	Citation
12/13/1973	Committee of the Whole	"An amendment like this can only be demagogic or racist because it is only demagoguery or racism which impels such an amendment like this."	The Speaker stated that precedents of the House do not allow references to specific Members as "demagogues" and ruled these remarks to be out of order. At the initiative of the Speaker, the words were stricken from the *Record* by unanimous consent. (No Member made a motion or unanimous consent request to allow the Member whose words were ruled out of order to proceed.)	*Congressional Record*, vol. 119 (December 13, 1973), p. 41271.

Source: Full-text searches of the *Congressional Record* via Congress.gov and *ProQuest Congressional*.

Notes: This table presents data from January 1, 1971, through July 24, 2019. The start date was selected because it is the year following the adoption of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970 (P.L. 91-510), which is often considered to signal the start of the modern Congress. The *Congressional Record* was searched for all instances in which the phrase *taken down* appeared. The transcripts were then reviewed to identify instances in which a Member formally demanded that a colleague's words be taken down. In some cases, a Member asked that a colleague's words be taken down, but the Speaker did not recognize the Member for that purpose and did not initiate the procedure for taking words down (such as asking the Clerk to report the words). These instances were not included in this analysis.

a. Prior to the 101st Congress, any reference to the Senate was out of order in the House. In the 101st Congress, the House rule was amended to allow some factual references to the Senate. An additional amendment to the rule in the 109th Congress allowed references to the Senate that otherwise adhered to the House rules prohibiting Members from engaging in personality (see *House Manual*, §371).

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Analyst on Congress and the Legislative Process

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