

ABC's *Good Morning America*

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[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Breaking at 8; One-on-One With House Speaker Mike Johnson]

WHIT JOHNSON: The U.S. Congress is coming back into session after the summer recess, and there are a number of top issues making headlines, so joining us now is House Speaker Mike Johnson. Mr. Speaker, it's great to have you this morning. We really appreciate it.

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE MIKE JOHNSON (R-LA): It's great to be with you.

WHIT JOHNSON: You have a very busy week coming up, I know there are a number of things you're going to tackle on the agenda, but I want to ask you about some of the turmoil at the CDC first. The director has been fired, some top officials walking off the job, at odds over RFK Jr.'s vaccine policies. Is this the change that you wanted to see, and what you expect could be happening in the coming days?

SPEAKER JOHNSON: Well, I think overall, Secretary Kennedy is doing a great job. There has been a shake-up that has been needed, and we've got to trust the secretary to do his job. They've had some great results there. We're getting America healthy again. That's well-received across the country and long overdue, in my view, so we're going to the cabinet do the job and I'm going to stay in my lane and do mine.

WHIT JOHNSON: But with this concern, does this turmoil only add to the deterioration of confidence in the CDC and there is some concern that if the vaccine policies change or if they're not recommended, then insurance companies won't provide coverage, and that could mean that people who want them may not have access. Does that worry you?

SPEAKER JOHNSON: We'll have to see how that all sorts out. The CDC plays an important role in our government and our society, and we wanted to be restored to its original intent. The secretary has made a good point that the existing leadership was not doing that, so we'll see who the replacement is. I don't know who that is yet, but it obviously plays an important function and we'll see how it plays out.

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Breaking at 8; Speaker Johnson President Trump's Spending Bill]

WHIT JOHNSON: Let's turn to the so-called Big Beautiful Bill that was a big accomplishment for the Republicans, for President Trump. The President himself, though is openly about rebranding it because it has been so far quite unpopular. A recent Pew survey shows that only 32 percent of Americans approve of it. Why do you think many Americans still aren't quite on board?

SPEAKER JOHNSON: Well, I'm not surprised by the number at all because the Democratic

Party and mainstream media has spent a lot of time trying to discredit the bill. The individual components of it, when they're polled, are wildly popular, so what we did over the August district work period is all the Republican members of Congress — House and Senate — went out, fanned out across the country in their districts, and talked with the American people about the extraordinary provisions that are in this bill. It is aptly named — it is big and it is beautiful — and every single American is going to benefit from it. It was written for lower and middle class earners and they're going to have higher wages, more opportunity. The U.S. economy is going to grow, and that was the whole point of it. We have the largest tax cuts in U.S. history in the bill and the largest savings in history at the same time, so there is a lot to crow about.

WHIT JOHNSON: And some big cuts, though, even some Republicans concerned about some of them.

SPEAKER JOHNSON: Well, no, the cuts were to fraud, waste, and abuse, and they were to things that, again, are wildly popular when the American people actually understand what was done. And so, the good news for us is we have plenty of time for people to feel the effects of that before they vote in the midterm election that comes up next fall and for us to go out and talk about what's really in the bill and not the fake news about it.

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Breaking at 8; Speaker Johnson on the Epstein Files]

WHIT JOHNSON: When Congress comes back in session, there will also be a new push for the release of the Epstein files. There have been some critics within your own party, Republican Congressman Thomas Massie among those who have been critical of your efforts on this. He is joining a bipartisan effort to try to force a vote on the House floor. How would you respond to that, and do you believe that Americans deserve more transparency on the Epstein issue?

SPEAKER JOHNSON: Absolutely. We have been 100 percent consistent about this forever.

WHIT JOHNSON: What about a vote on the floor?

SPEAKER JOHNSON: If it's necessary, it will. I think what has happened over August over the last few weeks has probably mooted to the necessity because right now the administration is in full compliance with congressional subpoenas. They've submitted over 34,000 Epstein documents to Congress just in the last couple weeks and our Oversight Committee is going through the deliberate process. We are for maximum transparency. We always have been, but we also have to be careful to protect the innocent victims, and it takes time to do that, to redact the necessary information. You don't want, for example, minors who are subjected to these unspeakable Epstein evils to go through another round of harm. And so, that's the protective sort of lens that's being used for this, but everything we need to be out. We trust the American people to make their own decisions and they will soon have all that.

WHIT JOHNSON: So, you wouldn't oppose a vote on the floor?

SPEAKER JOHNSON: No, we'll — we'll move vote if necessary. But right now, that process is

actually underway, and we're grateful to see it. I mean, I have been the — from — from the very beginning, we said we want all of it out, so long as we protect the innocent.

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Breaking at 8; Speaker Johnson on Minnesota School Shooting]

WHIT JOHNSON: I want to ask you about another difficult tragedy. We saw the school shooting in Minnesota. There have been so many of these, and there's growing frustration that whenever something like this happens, people talk about it, but the politicians are failing to get anything done. Do you have any plans this time in the wake of this latest tragedy to propose new legislation or anything as it relates to gun violence or mental health?

SPEAKER JOHNSON: Let me be real clear about this. I mean, everyone in America is heartbroken over this disaster. It's the latest in a string — it's just terrible. Our gratitude goes out to law enforcement, the first respondents, and our prayers go out to the families and everyone involved in the community. We saw the father of that little boy, the eight-year-old Fletcher Merkel, who lost his life, give some heartbreaking remarks yesterday, showing strength. But listen, it's important that politicians on either side of the aisle do not politicize a moment like this. There are many common sense measures that can and should be taken to protect children at schools and churches that do not involve taking away the constitutional rights of law-abiding American citizens. At the end of the day, the problem in these situations — is not the gun. It's the human heart and we can put more resources towards the treatment of mental health. Obviously, this terrible evil person who did this was suffering from serious mental health issues. We've got to be on guard to make sure that we can foresee that and prevent it and then harden our facilities. There's a lot of things that can be done —

WHIT JOHNSON: But will we see something this session? Do you plan on proposing something?

SPEAKER JOHNSON: — look, we're open to any bipartisan solution that address these kinds of issues that actually go to the heart of the matter. And, you know, we're always open for that.

WHIT JOHNSON: Speaker Johnson, we appreciate your time.

SPEAKER JOHNSON: Thanks a lot, good to see you.