

So, the Republicans finally settled on a Speaker: Religious Right activist Mike Johnson. Johnson is a climate denier. In 2017, he said: “The climate is changing, but the question is, is it being caused by natural cycles over the span of the Earth’s history? Or is it changing because we drive SUVs? I don’t believe in the latter.”

Mike Johnson’s record promises little but trouble, not least for the environment. Having spent all of seven years in the House, he has never chaired a House committee. He is the least experienced Speaker in 140 years.

His environmental record is as bad as Jim Jordan’s. His lifetime score from the League of Conservation Voters is 2%. In his first six years in office, he voted for a grand total of 7 environmental votes out of 158 scored by LCV. Not surprisingly, his biggest campaign contributors have been the oil industry.

A lawyer, Johnson [described](#) his time in what he called his “legal ministry” as “defending religious freedom, the sanctity of human life, and biblical values, including the defense of traditional marriage, and other ideals like these when they’ve been under assault.” In Congress, he has an unblemished conservative record. He voted against certifying the 2020 election results, is an avid supporter of Trump, opposes same-sex marriage, and of course is zealously anti-abortion.

In political terms, Democrats will probably be happy to make him the face of the Republican Party — a person they can use as a target in swing districts where his brand of social conservatism is likely to be unpopular. In particular, he feeds into the Democratic strategy of profiting from the unpopularity of abortion bans. It’s also unlikely that he’ll be hugely successful as a fundraiser for the House GOP, given that he’s a virtual unknown to most donors.

Johnson’s lack of experience, his fractious leadership team, and the divided Republican caucus promise further trouble ahead. The acid test will be whether he can avoid a shutdown by moving appropriations bills through the House and making deals with the Senate and White House.