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NEWS & POLITICS

A Former Yankees Star Struck Out in Congress's Office Lottery

Incoming House members have five minutes to choose their Capitol Hill offices. Former baseball star Mark Teixeira drew last—but knows how to be a team player.

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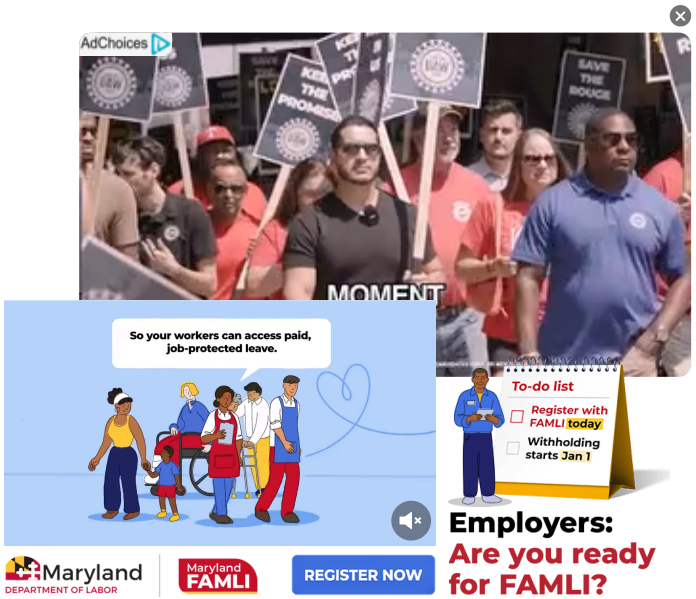



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As Mark Teixeira, a newly elected US Congressman from Texas, made his way toward a wooden box of numbered tokens that would decide when he could choose his Capitol Hill office, he was feeling optimistic. A randomized list had already placed the former Major League Baseball star 25th in line for the box—a sign of good luck, Teixeira had thought, because that was the same number he wore on his New York Yankees jersey.

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Teixeira's optimism quickly faded after the 2009 World Series champion drew a token imprinted with the number "105"—the very last spot.

"My immediate first thought was, 'My team did all that work for nothing,' " Teixeira, who retired from the MLB in 2016, said. "I would say that my team put in probably 20 hours of work, if not more, on this office selection. So I was just so disappointed for them."

It lasted only a few seconds, because almost immediately after revealing the token, the 14-season MLB player threw his arms up and yelled, "105!" The crowd broke into applause and cheers as Teixeira made his way around the room, offering high fives to his new colleagues. He said after the initial knee-jerk disappointment, he thought, "How cool is it that I get to have all 104 other freshmen in front of me? I'm here to be a part of the team."

This year's House of Representatives office lottery, with 105 tokens for incoming members, is already one of the largest freshman classes of the last few decades with some races still yet to be called. Teixeira ended up with a space that used to belong to outgoing GOP Rep. Addison McDowell of North Carolina on the main floor of Longworth, which has notoriously smaller offices.

This year, Democrat Shannon Taylor of Virginia drew the coveted No. 1 spot. She was also celebrating her 59th birthday that day. "Oh, I got [number] one!" announced Taylor, as she held the token up for the room to see. She chose a space in the Rayburn building.

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While incoming senators choose their offices based on seniority, the House has a biennial lottery where new members convene to pick spaces in one of three office buildings: Cannon, Longworth, or Rayburn. It happens during new member orientation after the November elections; this year, the lottery fell on November 17.

During the lottery, incoming members get only five minutes to choose their space once it's their turn, so they often tour available offices ahead of time—a practice that DC Delegate-elect Robert White, a Democrat, said is akin to the reality TV series *House Hunters*.

"There are so many different styles and shapes of offices, you have to figure out what your priorities are, then find out all the available offices," the former DC Councilmember explained on Monday. Everything from ceiling height to outside views to proximity to the House floor or committee rooms can come into play.

White, whose new office is in Longworth, said that new members don't get a lot of time in their orientation schedules to look at spaces. As he scoped out offices early in the morning or later in the evening, White said it became a friendly competition with other freshmen who were doing the same.

"I ran into a new member when I got off the elevator and I told him he might as well stop looking for offices because I already took the best one," White had joked before the lottery.

During the lottery, Teixeira also played into the banter, joking with a Democratic colleague who sat beside him.

"We were kind of just joking around once I got 105, like, 'Hey, I might have to come use your bathroom if I don't have my own bathroom,' " Teixeira teased.

Although Teixeira didn't get much of a choice, he says the office he ended up with "checked every box" that he and his staff wanted. He also said he "really enjoyed the process" and having the entire freshman class together.

"I do think that the overarching joke that we all said, Republicans and Democrats, was, 'You have an office in the Capitol, and your opponent doesn't,' " Teixeira said. "So any office is great and I can't wait to bring constituents in and share my office space with them because I'm proud of it, my staff is proud of it, and we're super excited about the 120th."

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Juliann Ventura

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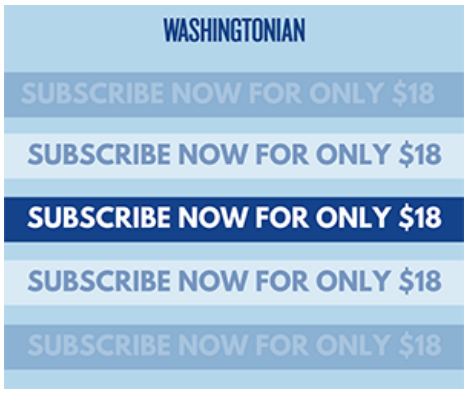

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