

William Rayford Price was elected speaker on March 28, 1972, when Gus Mutscher resigned that post at the beginning of the 2nd Called Session of the 62nd Legislature. As presiding officer in the house of representatives during that and subsequent called sessions the same year, Price initiated a set of reforms in the house rules. The reforms included a reorganization of standing committees, the implementation of a limited seniority system, and the placement of various restraints on the power of conference committees.

William Rayford Price was born in Jacksonville on February 9, 1937. He was reared in nearby Frankston, where his father was owner and publisher of the Frankston Citizen. Price was valedictorian of his class at Frankston High School in 1955 and then entered Lon Morris College, a two-year institution in Jacksonville. There, he participated in campus politics and was elected student body president. Having acquired knowledge of the printing trade through his association with the family newspaper, Price worked as a printer to support completion of his undergraduate studies at The University of Texas. He also attended law school at the university and was admitted to the bar in 1963.

As were several of his predecessors as speaker, Price was elected to the house of representatives while still a law student. He entered the house in 1961 and served in the 57th through 62nd legislatures. Price served as chairman of the committee on contingent expenses during the latter part of the 57th Legislature, as chairman of the committee on constitutional amendments during the 60th Legislature, and as chairman of the committee on state affairs during the 61st Legislature. Having originally intended to run for speaker in 1973, he was elevated to that office somewhat ahead of schedule. Price entered the practice of law and moved from Frankston to Palestine between the 59th and 60th legislatures, and thus he was based in the latter city during the time that he was speaker.

A conservative, Price was opposed in the house by liberal representatives who were the core of a group known as the "Dirty Thirty." These representatives had their own favorites for the speakership in the upcoming 63rd Legislature. To challenge Price's continued occupancy of that office, a member of the Dirty Thirty moved into Price's newly changed legislative district in 1972, thereby pitting the two incumbents against each other in the elections held that year. In an upset that was close enough to require a recount, the opponent defeated Price in June in the Democratic primary runoff. Price subsequently served as speaker during the 3rd and 4th called sessions held later in 1972, and then retired from office when the 63rd Legislature convened in January 1973.

That same month, Price moved to Dallas and entered into the practice of law with the firm of Hutchison & Price. Having supported the Republican presidential ticket as a Democrat in 1972, Price switched parties and became a Republican in May 1973. He currently resides in Austin and is the owner of the law firm of Rayford Price & Associates.