

April 26, 2016

United States Senate
Committee on Rules and Administration
305 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt, Ranking Member Schumer and Members of the Committee:

We are organizations, businesses, libraries, coalitions, and associations from across the political spectrum and around the country that today call on the Rules Committee to speedily vote to recommend to the full Senate that Dr. Carla Hayden be confirmed immediately as the nation's 14th Librarian of Congress. We appreciate the thoughtful hearing with the nominee on April 20th and look forward to your acting promptly.

The relationship between the Librarian and Congress is of significant importance, as is the role the Library of Congress should play in the life of our nation. Indeed, the Library of Congress is in the midst of a critical transformation to serve the public as a 21st century institution and a strong leader is necessary to prioritize that digital change. There is no time to waste in bringing more congressional information online and doing so in formats that allow public engagement and comprehension. We commend the following three issues to your attention throughout the nomination process and afterward.

First, the Library of Congress plays—or should play—a key role in making information about Congress available to the public. Over the last few years the House and Senate made tremendous strides in publishing legislative data online in formats the public can reuse, but the Library often has not been at the forefront of these efforts. We hope the Library will embrace the mission of publishing congressional information online in formats that allow the public to fully engage with information held by the Library. In addition, we hope the Library will build tools to enhance public comprehension of information held by the Library, including through collaboration with the public and civil society.

Second, the Library of Congress has garnered a reputation in some quarters as an insular institution. We hope the Library will commit to a process of ongoing public and stakeholder engagement on its missions and programs, particularly concerning its mission of online public access to congressional information. We would welcome a permanent stakeholder advisory group in support of that mission.

Finally, the Library of Congress holds many important documents, from committee documents to Congressional Research Service Reports, from the Constitution Annotated to the Statutes at Large. We hope the Library of Congress will adopt a pro-disclosure bias, supporting online public access to information held or generated by the Library except in limited circumstances.

Based on her experiences and testimony, we are hopeful Dr. Hayden will take these concerns to heart and work to transform the Library into the 21st century institution the American people need it to be. We look forward to her confirmation.

For more information, please contact Congressional Data Coalition co-chairs Daniel Schuman or Zach Graves at daniel@demandprogress.org or zgraves@rstreet.org.

With best regards,

Center for Data Innovation
Data Coalition
Demand Progress
Government Accountability Project
GovTrack.us
iSolon.org
New America's Open Technology Institute
OpenTheGovernment.org
Project On Government Oversight (POGO)
R Street Institute
Sunlight Foundation
The OpenGov Foundation