

February 5, 2019

The Honorable Adam Schiff
HVC-304, The U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Schiff:

We, the undersigned organizations, urge you to ensure that the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (HPSCI) business meeting, scheduled for Wednesday, February 6, is open to the public and press as required by the rules of the House of Representatives. Currently, the committee announcement declares the meeting is “closed.”¹

House Rule XI (2)(g)(2), concerning open meetings, requires that business meetings held by standing committees be open to the press and public except when the committee holds a record vote in open session to close it.² House Rule X, clause 11(d)(1), applies this provision to HPSCI. Committee proceedings may only be closed for a limited number of reasons stated in the rules.

HPSCI has not yet had an opportunity to meet in the 116th Congress and accordingly has not held a public, roll call vote to close its proceedings. In addition, the meeting location, HVC-304, is a Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility. Accordingly, even were the meeting deemed “open,” the some press would be unable to attend. House rules require access for “radio, television, and still photography coverage.”

We understand that it likely is inconvenient for the committee to hold its business meeting in a room open to the public and then to move to a secure room should the committee vote to close the proceedings. However, the principle of defaulting to an open and accountable government and the requirement that moving to closed proceedings occur only after a public vote, enshrined in the House rules, controls in these circumstances.

We appreciate your thoughtful attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Campaign for Liberty
Constitutional Alliance
Demand Progress Education Fund
Defending Rights & Dissent
FreedomWorks
Government Information Watch
GovTrack.us

National Security Counselors
Project On Government Oversight
R Street Institute
Restore The Fourth
Revolving Door Project
RootsAction.org

cc: The Honorable Devin Nunes

¹ <https://docs.house.gov/Committee/Calendar/ByEvent.aspx?EventID=108866>

² <https://rules.house.gov/sites/democrats.rules.house.gov/files/116-1/116-House-Rules-Clerk.pdf>