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## THE 116TH HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES'

### SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE MODERNIZATION OF CONGRESS

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**Established:** Jan. 4, 2019, as part of the 116th House rules package

**Authorized:** Feb. 7, 2019, through Dec. 31, 2019

**Mission:** The Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress (SCOMC) is tasked with studying and making recommendations for modernizing Congress. Specifically, the Committee is to consider:

- Rules to promote a more modern and efficient Congress;
- Procedural reforms, including those involving the schedule and calendar;
- Policy reforms to help develop the next generation of leaders;
- Staff recruitment, diversity, retention and compensation and benefits reforms;
- Technology and innovation reforms;
- The work of the House Commission on Congressional Mailing Standards;
- Administrative efficiency reforms, including those involving purchasing, travel, outside services and shared administrative staff.

**Membership:** The SCOMC is a 12-member bipartisan committee comprised of six Democrats and six Republicans

Rep. Derek Kilmer (D-Wash.)  
CHAIR

Rep. Tom Graves (R-Ga.)  
VICE CHAIR

Rep. Emanuel Cleaver (D-Mo.)

Rep. Suzan DelBene (D-Wash.)

Rep. Zoe Lofgren (D-Calif.)

Rep. Mark Pocan (D-Wis.)

Rep. Mary Gay Scanlon (D-Pa.)

Rep. Rob Woodall (R-Ga.)

Rep. Susan Brooks (R-Ind.)

Rep. Rodney Davis (R-Ill.)

Rep. Dan Newhouse (R-Wash.)

Rep. William Timmons (R-S.C.)

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## SETTING A NEW PRECEDENT ...

**Track Record:** As of Sept. 1, 2019, the SCOMC has held **seven public hearings, a Member-day hearing and three business meetings**. Although the SCOMC does not hold legislative authority, the Committee's work thus far has resulted in **29 recommendations for reform**, presented in two packages. Both packages have received unanimous approval by the Committee's 12 members.

### REFORM PACKAGE 1:

#### Recommendations to "Open Up" Congress: Transparency Recommendations

1. Adopt one standardized format for drafting, viewing and publishing legislation to improve transparency and efficiency throughout the lawmaking process.
2. Provide resources to train staff and finish the legislation comparison project on schedule in order to improve the American public's ability to understand how amendments change legislation and how proposed legislation affects current law.
3. Modernize the lobbying disclosure system to improve the filing process and allow users to more easily find and track individual disclosures.
4. Develop a centralized electronic hub that would list all federal agency and program reauthorization expiration dates by committee.
5. Develop a centralized electronic hub of committee votes that would be accessible via House.gov in machine-readable format.

### REFORM PACKAGE 2:

#### Recommendations on Staffing, Technology and Accessibility in Congress

##### Streamline and Reorganize House Human Resources

1. Create a one-stop Human Resources hub dedicated to Member, committee and leadership staff.
2. Make permanent the Office of Diversity and Inclusion.
3. Examine the viability of updating the staff payroll system with the goal of transitioning from monthly to semimonthly pay.
4. Raise the cap on the number of permanent staff and additional staff allowed to work in Member offices.
5. Regularly survey staff on ways to improve pay, benefits and quality of life.

### **Overhaul the Onboarding Process and Provide Continuing Education for Members**

6. Through the Office of the Clerk, give newly-elected Members the option to hire and pay one transition staff member for the duration of the time between when they are elected and are sworn in.
7. Make available orientation courses and services to all new Members (including incoming Members elected through a special election) and present them in a nonpartisan way.
8. Reimagine and reorganize orientation to offer a “just in time” approach where appropriate.
9. Offer a course in the new Member Orientation and Ongoing Education portal to instruct Members on the House Rules of Decorum and Debate, as well as other practices, to promote civility and respect.
10. Create a pilot Congressional Leadership Academy for Members that offers professional development and institutional training.
11. Make cybersecurity training mandatory for Members.

### **Modernize and Revitalize House Technology**

12. Re-establish an improved Office of Technology Assessment to study and recommend emerging technologies, provide nonpartisan information and policy analysis to Member offices, support legislative branch agencies in their examination of new technologies, focus on general oversight and policy, and facilitate peer reviews of potential new technologies.
13. Reform House Information Resources (HIR) by collaborating with outside entities to develop a roadmap for addressing the root cause of HIR’s systemic inability to deliver enterprise programs and information technology services in a timely manner that satisfies Member office needs.
14. Require HIR to, as soon as practicably possible, allow the following:
  - Video calls (using applications such as FaceTime or Skype, for example) from Member and staff mobile devices or computers;
  - Secure e-signatures for letters, bills and constituent consent forms, in conjunction with the Clerk’s office;
  - The setup of a virtual private network on any device and the development of relevant security guidelines;
  - The uploading of casework and requests digitally through a Member’s website.
15. Require HIR to create an approval process for outside vendors developing new technologies that is transparent, scheduled and timely.
16. Have HIR create a program that allows Member offices to opt-in to beta test new technologies.

17. Create one point of contact for each Member office within HIR who would be responsible for all technology points of contact, including technology, telecom, web, district office technologies, etc.
18. Create a customer satisfaction portal on HouseNet that allows Members and staff to rate and review outside vendors and HIR services. The Chief Administrative Officer should leverage the bulk purchasing power of the House and provide a standard suite of quality, up-to-date devices and software such as desktop and laptop computers, tablets, printers, mobile phones and desk phones at no cost to the Members' Representational Allowance.
19. Prioritize a Congressional Research Service "rapid response" program for nonpartisan fact sheets on key issues and legislation under consideration in Congress.
20. Develop a HouseNet page on best practices for nonpartisan constituent engagement and services.

#### **Make the House Accessible to all Americans**

21. Scan and analyze all House websites and apps to determine the accessibility level of each congressional website and provide resources and assistance to ensure all systems are compatible with common programs used by members of major disability groups.
22. Require all broadcasts of House proceedings to include closed caption service.
23. Require a comprehensive review of the Capitol grounds by the Architect of the Capitol, the Sergeant at Arms and the Office of Congressional Workplace Rights to determine accessibility challenges for individuals with disabilities and implement a remediation plan.

#### **Resources:**

**The SCOMC official website:** <https://modernizecongress.house.gov>

**SCOMC Twitter:** @ModernizeCmte

**LegBranch.org SCOMC Resource page:** <https://www.legbranch.org/research-2/select-committee-on-the-modernization-of-congress/>