

February 2, 2021

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Vice Chair
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate

Re: Strengthening American Democracy by Increasing Legislative Branch Capacity

Dear Chair DeLauro, Chair Leahy, Ranking Member Granger, and Vice Chair Shelby:

On behalf of the undersigned individuals, civil society organizations, and industry groups, we urge you to increase the share of discretionary funding available for the Legislative branch both to address the historically diminished resources available to the Legislative branch and to meet the challenges facing Congress in our current time of crisis. We firmly believe that dedicating resources to build a stronger, more capable Congress is of key importance to our democracy and is necessary for it to fulfill its constitutional responsibilities. Therefore, **we urge you to increase the 302(b) allocation for the legislative branch by 10 percent** as you determine spending levels for FY 2022.

Over the decades, funding for Congress and its support offices and agencies have significantly lagged behind increases in discretionary spending for the rest of the federal government, creating a yawning gap between Congress's legislative, oversight, and constituent service responsibilities and its capacity to meet those responsibilities.¹ In addition, the vast majority of new funding made available for Congress have been allocated for the U.S. Capitol Police and the Architect of the Capitol, leaving virtually unchanged the funding available for policymaking and support staff even as their duties have increased geometrically.

We appreciate and acknowledge FY 2021's increase in the 302(b) allocation, which was a significant step towards addressing the Legislative branch's historic diminishment of its capacities to meet its obligations as well as growing resource requirements. Unfortunately, the effects of the longstanding defunding of the First Branch have been augmented by significantly increased responsibilities and tempo of work in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and other crises.

¹ See: Daniel Schuman, "The Undermining of Congress," Demand Progress, February 2020, https://s3.amazonaws.com/demandprogress/reports/2020-02_The_Undermining_of_Congress.pdf.

Congress must have sufficient resources to lead in federal policymaking, provide services for constituents, and conduct oversight that roots out waste, fraud, abuse, and malfeasance. It must also modernize its information technology and digital infrastructure to meet these challenges. We respectfully urge you to increase the share of funding available for the Legislative branch by an additional 10 percent, or \$530.9 million, which is a tiny percentage of overall discretionary spending and is essential to the functioning of our republic. This is a worthy investment to further rebuild Congress's lost institutional capacity and ensure the Legislative branch is strong enough to fulfill its constitutional responsibilities to the American people in this time of crisis.

Thank you for your consideration. To discuss this further, please contact Daniel Schuman, Policy Director for Demand Progress at Daniel@DemandProgress.org or Zach Graves, Head of Policy for the Lincoln Network at zach.graves@joinlincoln.org.

Sincerely,

American Family Voices
American Library Association
American Principles Project
Bipartisan Policy Center Action
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW)
College to Congress
Congressional Management Foundation
Defending Rights & Dissent
Demand Progress
Democracy Fund Voice
Democracy 21
DotGov.com
Fix the Court
Free Government Information
FreedomWorks
Government Accountability Project
Government Information Watch
GovTrack.us
Issue One
Lincoln Network
NALEO Educational Fund
National Security Counselors
Niskanen Center
Open The Government
Other98
Partnership for Public Service
Pay Our Interns Action
Project On Government Oversight (POGO)
Protect Democracy

Public Citizen
R Street Institute
Rachel Carson Council
Revolving Door Project
Senior Executives Association
Social Security Works
TechFreedom
Union of Concerned Scientists
X-Lab

Norman Ornstein, American Enterprise Institute*
Robert Cook-Deegan, Arizona State University*
Mahmud Farooque, Arizona State University*
Lorelei Kelly, Beeck Center for Social Impact + Innovation at Georgetown*
Mike Miesen, Belfer Center for Science & International Affairs*
Jon Peha, Carnegie Mellon University*
Matt Glassman, Claremont McKenna College*
Hebah Kassem, Congressional Progressive Caucus Center*
Alex Howard, Digital Democracy Project*
Jillian Grennan, Duke University*
Kenny Gutierrez, Electronic Frontier Foundation*
Jennifer Pahlka, Former US Deputy Chief Technology Officer*
Rick Shapiro, Former Executive Director of the Congressional Management Foundation
and Former Senior Consultant for Democracy Fund*
Beth Simone Noveck, The Governance Lab*
Richard Skinner, Johns Hopkins University*
Brian Baird, Member of Congress (Retired)*
Lee Drutman, New America*
Robert Seamans, New York University*
Caroline Wagner, Ohio State University*
Marci Harris, POPVOX Inc*
Sarah E. Hunt, Rainey Center Freedom Project*
Laura Manley, Technology and Public Purpose Project*
Maurice Turner, Turner Consulting, LLC*
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** Affiliations listed for identification purposes only.*

cc: Members of the House of Representatives and United States Senate
Chairs and Ranking Members of Congressional Committees