

October 29, 2024

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Democratic Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Johnson, Democratic Leader Jeffries, and Members of the Committee on House Administration:

We, the undersigned civil society organizations who care deeply about strengthening Congress, are writing to express our strong support for the continuation of the Committee on House Administration's Subcommittee on Modernization into the 119th Congress and beyond. As organizations that have worked together to support House modernization efforts for many years, we have had a front row seat to the successes of this approach. Under both Republican and Democratic leadership, the House has undergone its most impressive transformation in decades. The work of this Subcommittee is essential to ensuring that the U.S. House of Representatives remains an effective, efficient, and transparent institution that can serve the American people.

As you are aware, the House Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress, made 202 recommendations aimed at improving the functioning and accessibility of the House of Representatives. These recommendations covered a broad range of issues, including increasing staff professional development and retention, enhancing technology and cybersecurity, improving the legislative process, and fostering a more collaborative and bipartisan work environment. The Select Committee's work was bipartisan and driven by a shared commitment to making Congress more effective and responsive.

In the 118th Congress, the Subcommittee on Modernization was tasked with implementing these critical recommendations. Under the direction of Chair Stephanie Bice (R-OK) and Ranking Member Derek Kilmer (D-WA) the Subcommittee has continued to make tremendous progress and meaningfully improve how the institution works for Members, staff, and the American people. Just a few of these accomplishments include:

- **Establishing the Office of Congressional Excellence** which provides leadership training and resources directly to Members and senior staff. To date, dozens of members from both parties have taken advantage of the program.
- **Improving Committee Operations** by streamlining the purchase of eDiscovery tools and advocating for the widespread adoption of electronic voting in committee markups to make better use of Member time.
- **Establishing the House Intern Resource Office** within the CAO to support the professional development of all congressional interns and provide resources to member office intern coordinators.

- **Coordinating the Construction of ADA Compliant Drop-off/Pick-up Zones** so that all Americans can more easily access and navigate the Capitol complex.

The Subcommittee has also undertaken its own ambitious agenda for a more functional Congress. Cutting-edge efforts to determine how to safely integrate artificial intelligence into House operations has put the chamber first among world legislatures in dealing with this society altering technological development. The Subcommittee also initiated a long overdue review of the performance and leadership of the Congressional Research Service, setting this important support agency on a path to better serving Congress in the 21st Century.

While significant progress has been made, much work remains to be done. The Subcommittee's ongoing efforts to modernize our legislative processes, strengthen the institution's infrastructure, and promote transparency are crucial for the long-term success of the House of Representatives.

The continuation of this Subcommittee into the 119th Congress is vital for several reasons:

- **Sustained Progress:** The complexity and scope of the 202 recommendations require sustained effort over multiple Congresses to ensure full and effective implementation. Without the continuity provided by the Subcommittee, there is a risk that this important work could stall or be deprioritized.
- **Institutional Memory:** The Subcommittee provides a dedicated space for preserving institutional memory and knowledge of modernization efforts. This is crucial to ensure that future Congresses can build upon the work already done rather than starting from scratch.
- **Bipartisan Collaboration:** The work of the Subcommittee has been a model of bipartisan collaboration, an essential element in today's political climate. Continuing this work sends a strong message to the American people that their elected representatives are committed to making Congress more effective, regardless of party affiliation.

The Supreme Court's recent decision overruling *Chevron* deference has ignited debates about how and whether Congress can fulfill its constitutional lawmaking role. The last five years of modernization efforts have positioned Congress to rise to that challenge. In June, the full Committee on House Administration held a hearing where bipartisan consensus emerged: Congress must continue strengthening its institutional capacity to avoid ceding more power to the other branches. We believe the Subcommittee on Modernization is the right venue to continue driving this needed progress.

We urge you to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Committee on House Administration's Subcommittee on Modernization is reauthorized and adequately resourced for the 119th Congress. By doing so, you will help to ensure that the House of Representatives remains a dynamic and responsive institution, capable of meeting the challenges of the 21st century.

In today's challenging environment, increasing Congress's functionality is no small task. We deeply appreciate your leadership and unwavering commitment to upholding the institution of Congress, and we fully support these efforts. Thank you for the opportunity to make this recommendation and for the opportunity to collaborate.

Sincerely,

American Governance Institute
Bipartisan Policy Center Action
Business for America
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW)
Former Members of Congress Association
Government Accountability Project
GovTrack.us
Issue One
Partnership for Public Service
POPVOX Foundation
Project On Government Oversight
Protect Democracy
R Street Institute
Senior Executives Association
Taxpayers for Common Sense

Kevin Esterling, University of California Riverside*
Bradford Fitch, Former CEO of the Congressional Management Foundation*
Kevin Kosar, American Enterprise Institute*
Zach Graves, Executive Director, Foundation for American Innovation*
Dan Lips, Foundation for American Innovation*
James Townsend, Director, Carl Levin Center for Oversight and Democracy at Wayne State University Law School*

*= Affiliations listed for identification purposes only.