

July 7, 2025

The Honorable Markwayne Mullin
Chair, Legislative Branch Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Martin Heinrich
Ranking Member, Legislative Branch Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Mullin and Ranking Member Heinrich:

On behalf of a bipartisan coalition of organizations supportive of a strong and capable Congress, we write to express our deep appreciation for the Subcommittee's attention to ensuring that the entirety of the Legislative Branch is able to operate effectively and meet the many demands placed upon it. As you consider the FY 2026 Legislative Branch Appropriations bill, we recognize the complexity of the task before you—balancing urgent needs across the institution with the realities of constrained resources—and are grateful for your efforts to ensure the foundational capacities of Congress.

We especially acknowledge the Subcommittee's ongoing attention to threats faced by Members of Congress and their staffs and the importance of safeguarding Members in Washington and across the country. Ensuring every Member of Congress can fulfill their constitutional duties without fear is a matter of the highest importance.

We further recognize that over the past three decades, funding for congressional security—including necessary investments to strengthen and modernize the physical infrastructure—has accounted for the vast majority of growth in Legislative Branch appropriations.¹ By contrast, funding for other critical functions of the institution, such as policymaking support, oversight capacity, and institutional modernization, has remained largely flat or declined in real terms.²

As you deliberate, we wish to share our deep concerns regarding the drastic reductions in certain accounts proposed by the House Appropriations Committee.³ If enacted, these cuts will significantly reduce Congress's capacity to carry out its constitutional responsibility to ensure taxpayer funds are used efficiently and to prevent waste, fraud and abuse.⁴

¹ See *Inside how the Capitol Police has changed since Jan. 6, 2021*, POLITICO (Dec. 25, 2024), <https://www.politico.com/news/2024/12/25/capitol-police-change-since-jan-6-00195947>.

² Article One: Rebuilding Our Congress (December 2020), https://s3.amazonaws.com/demandprogress/reports/ArticleOne- Rebuilding_Our_Congress.pdf.

³ See *Orgs Oppose Effort to Slash Essential Congressional Resources*, The R Street Institute (June 2025), <https://www.rstreet.org/outreach/orgs-oppose-effort-to-slash-essential-congressional-resources/>; *House Republicans Advance Plan to Halve GAO's Funding: Provisions Would Curbs GAO's Authorities on Impoundment and Oversight and Prevent GAO from Serving Non-Appropriators & Non-Defense Committees*, First Branch Forecast (June 24, 2025), <https://firstbranchforecast.substack.com/p/house-republicans-advance-plan-to>.

⁴ See *Republicans Propose Gutting Independent Watchdog, Budget cuts at GAO and LOC will harm taxpayers, Taxpayers for Common Sense* (June 24, 2025), <https://www.taxpayer.net/budget-appropriations-tax/republicans-propose-gutting-independent-watchdog/>.

Specifically, the bill reported by the House Appropriations Committee on June 26, 2025, would decrease funding of the Government Accountability Office (GAO) by \$396.5 million, or nearly 49 percent.⁵ It also would hamstring the GAO from ensuring funds are spent as Congress intends by prohibiting enforcement of the Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act. In addition, it reduces funding of the Library of Congress by \$84.6 million, or 10 percent, adversely affecting the ability of the Library to meet its mission. Since 2002, GAO's work has achieved \$1.5 trillion in financial benefits.⁶ Cutting GAO will result in tens of billions of federal tax dollars misspent. Furthermore, the vast majority of congressional committees will be largely, if not entirely, unable to request support from GAO for their investigations.⁷

The reduction of authorities for GAO and the funding cuts for GAO and the Library are unwarranted and unwise. If anything, Congress should consider opportunities to bolster GAO's return on investment. Funding for the Legislative Branch has lagged significantly behind the growth of non-defense discretionary spending, at roughly half the growth rate over the last three decades. Moreover, much of the Legislative Branch was funded at essentially flat levels in FY 2025 relative to FY 2024—levels that have not kept pace with inflation, let alone with the need.

A strong and effective Congress relies on robust policymaking capacity, adequate staff support, and institutional resources that allow it to meet its constitutional obligations to legislate, conduct oversight, and serve the American people. These capacities already are severely strained and cannot withstand further cuts.

Accordingly, as the Subcommittee considers its priorities and appropriators determine the proper 302(b) levels, we urge that total funding for the Legislative Branch be increased to provide for necessary investments in security while preserving GAO's authorities and GAO and the Library's funding. Cuts at this time to the Legislative Branch's policymaking functions would provide a false economy deleterious to the best interests of the American people.

We thank you again for your leadership and commitment to strengthening Congress.

Sincerely yours,

American Governance Institute
Association of Research Libraries (ARL)
Center for Progressive Reform
Center for Study of Responsive Law
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW)
Clean Elections Texas

⁵ See *House Bill Would Lay Waste to Congress's Watchdogs and Information Experts: Appropriators propose a 50% cut to GAO, 12% cut to the Library of Congress*, First Branch Forecast (June 22, 2025), <https://firstbranchforecast.substack.com/p/house-bill-would-lay-waste-to-congresss>.

⁶ See *Written Testimony of Dan Lips, Senior Fellow, Foundation for American Innovation, U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch* (April 4, 2025), <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/AP/AP24/20250409/118124/HHRG-119-AP24-Wstate-LipsD-20250409.pdf>.

⁷ See, *supra*, *House Republicans Advance Plan to Halve GAO's Funding*.

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Demand Progress
Due Process Institute
Essential Information
Fix the Court
Free Government Information (FGI)
Friends of the Earth
Government Information Watch
Greenpeace USA
Independent Center
Internet Archive
Jobs to Move America
Massachusetts Law Reform Institute
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Preservation of Electronic Government Information (PEGI) Project
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cc:

Chairs and Ranking Members, Senate and House Committees on Appropriations
Members of the House and Senate Legislative Branch Appropriations Subcommittees