Dear Speaker Pelosi

We are writing to commend the announcement and swift action taken by the Committee on House Administration, the Rules Committee, the House Parliamentarian, and the Office of the Clerk, upon a directive from the Speaker, to ensure that members of the House of Representatives can introduce bills, add cosponsors, and extend remarks digitally during the COVID-19 emergency.

This decision—and the laudable staff work that made the temporary policy possible—begin to address the unique challenges that Congress faces due to the pandemic, with members unable to safely travel or conduct business in person.

By opening this new digital channel until April 19, with an opportunity to renew, the directive balances the need to ensure continuity of operations in an emergency with respect for institutional traditions and norms that should not be altered lightly. The move admirably reflects an approach found in the world of startups: to release a “minimum viable product” and then learn and improve upon the solution. The agility to identify and quickly implement this solution is a credit to the 116th Congress and in keeping with the spirit with which it began — with the naming of a Select Committee on Modernization.
The coronavirus pandemic is demanding flexibility and sacrifice from Americans of all ages, as schoolchildren move to online classes and even our sacred rites of passage—the celebrations and the goodbyes—must occur virtually. In this same vein, we urge continued innovation and perseverance through technical, parliamentary, or procedural challenges to ensure the first branch of government continues to function throughout this emergency even if members cannot convene in person.

Sincerely,

College to Congress
Demand Progress
Democracy Fund Voice

Sincerely,

Beth Simone Noveck, Professor, New York University and Director, The Governance Lab
Brandie Nonnecke, Director, CITRIS Policy Lab, UC Berkeley
Camille Crittenden, Executive Director, CITRIS and the Banatao Institute, University of California; Chair, California Blockchain Working Group
Christopher Koopman, Executive Director, Center for Growth and Opportunity at Utah State University
Claire Abernathy, Assistant Professor of Political Science, Stockton University

Kevin M. Esterling, Professor of Public Policy, University of California, Riverside
John F. Leary, Managing Partner, DotGov.com
Jon Peha, Professor of Electrical Engineering and Public Policy, Carnegie Mellon University
Lorelei Kelly, Director of Congressional Modernization, Beeck Center for Social Impact + Innovation, Georgetown University
Marci Harris, Co-founder and CEO, POPVOX

Robert Cook-Deegan, MD, Professor, School for the Future of Innovation in Society, Arizona State University
Robert Seamans, Associate Professor of Management and Organizations, New York University, Stern School of Business
Sarah Miller, Executive Director, American Economic Liberties Project
Will Rinehart, Senior Research Fellow, Center for Growth and Opportunity at Utah State University