October 1, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Republican Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Implementing recommendations by the House Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy:

Issue One writes to express our support for the House Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress’ final package of recommendations. These 40 new proposals will significantly improve the House of Representatives so it can better serve the American people. We urge bipartisan leadership to implement any recommendations it can immediately, and to commit to implementing in the next Congress those that require further action.

At a moment of great national uncertainty, a functioning legislative body is more crucial than ever. Americans are looking for signs that their elected representatives can actually represent them and be responsive to their needs, concerns, and aspirations. Over the past two years, the Modernization Committee has held 16 hearings, six virtual discussions, and has unanimously voted to approve 97 total recommendations to fix the dysfunction in Washington. It is now up to the House to ensure that this hard work does not fall by the wayside when the Modernization Committee adjourns at the end of this year.

Among the Committee’s new recommendations, we are especially pleased to see proposals to improve congressional staff retention and boost policy capacity. Congress has suffered a “brain drain” in recent decades, with diverse, talented, and experienced staff leaving Capitol Hill for K Street, largely due to low pay and poor management. The Modernization Committee’s recommendations to create a voluntary pay band system for congressional staff, to provide more flexibility for staff health benefits, and to reevaluate the Members’ Representational Allowance will help Congress retain much-needed staff expertise.

The Modernization Committee has also put forward several proposals dedicated to improving bipartisan legislating and Congress’ ability to fulfill its Article One constitutional responsibilities. By adopting the recommendations to hold bipartisan member retreats and pre-hearing committee meetings, experiment with alternative hearing formats, hire bipartisan committee staff, and reduce scheduling conflicts between committee meetings, members of Congress will be able to engage in more collaborative, thoughtful policymaking.
We thank you for your leadership in creating the Modernization Committee in 2019, which has continued to enjoy support from a vast number of Members of Congress from both parties. Together with the Committees on Rules, House Administration, and Appropriations, the Modernization Committee has made significant strides toward a more functional, accessible, transparent, representative, and technologically adept institution. Not only has the Modernization Committee studied and recommended solutions to some of the most pressing issues concerning the House, but it has served as a groundbreaking model for how committees can function effectively. Committee Chair Derek Kilmer (D-WA) and Vice Chair Tom Graves (R-GA) have demonstrated that a strong bipartisan approach works.

While a new issue or crisis seemingly dominates the headlines every day, this is precisely why Congress must invest in the future of the institution and of our democracy. Implementing the Modernization Committee’s recommendations is a concrete step that you can take quickly to begin restoring Americans’ faith in their legislative body. We urge you to commit to implementing these recommendations that will help shape Congress into the 21st century institution that Americans deserve.

Respectfully submitted,

Meredith McGehee
Executive Director
Issue One
1401 K St NW, Ste. 350
Washington, DC 20005
202-299-0265

CC:
Hon. Steny Hoyer, House Majority Leader
Hon. Steve Scalise, House Minority Whip
Hon. Collin Peterson, Chairman, House Agriculture Committee
Hon. Mike Conaway, Ranking Member, House Agriculture Committee
Hon. Nita Lowey, Chairwoman, House Committee on Appropriations
Hon. Kay Granger, Ranking Member, House Committee on Appropriations
Hon. Adam Smith, Chairman, House Armed Services Committee
Hon. Mac Thornberry, Ranking Member, House Armed Services Committee
Hon. John Yarmuth, Chairman, House Committee on the Budget
Hon. Steve Womack, Ranking Member, House Committee on the Budget

issueone.org