

June 14, 2021

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Schumer and Minority Leader McConnell:

We write to commend the bipartisan effort led by Senators Durbin and Portman to address the critical issue of maintaining continuity of the United States Senate in the event of an emergency. We urge the Senate to explore all appropriate avenues to address this issue in a timely fashion.

Senators Durbin and Portman recently introduced S.Res.201, *A resolution amending the Standing Rules of the Senate to enable the participation of absent Senators during a national crisis*. The measure would allow for members of the Senate to use technology certified by Senate officers to cast their votes from outside the Senate chamber in circumstances when the Senate Majority and Minority Leaders jointly determine an “extraordinary crisis of national extent exists.”

Over the last 18 months, several events could have imperiled the ability of the Senate to convene and conduct business for days, weeks, or months. This underscores the susceptibility of our political system to crises and the importance of securing the smooth operation of the Senate and respect for the prerogatives of its members. While we hope that no such circumstances will arise again, prudence dictates that the Senate must be ready. We commend to your attention the bipartisan approach taken by Senators Durbin and Portman and urge you to take such steps as are necessary in advance of future emergencies.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We welcome the opportunity to discuss this further. Please contact Kristie De Pena, Vice President for Niskanen Center at [kdepena@niskanencenter.org](mailto:kdepena@niskanencenter.org), or Daniel Schuman, Policy Director for Demand Progress at [daniel@demandprogress.org](mailto:daniel@demandprogress.org).

Sincerely,

Campaign for Accountability  
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW)  
Consumer Action  
Demand Progress  
Democracy Fund Voice  
Government Accountability Project  
Government Information Watch  
Issue One

NALEO Educational Fund  
Niskanen Center  
Project On Government Oversight  
Protect Democracy  
Rachel Carson Council  
Senior Executives Association  
Social Security Works

Norman Ornstein, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research\*  
Lorelei Kelly, Beeck Center for Social Impact + Innovation at Georgetown University\*  
Robert Cook-Deegan, Consortium for Science, Policy, and Outcomes\*  
Brian Baird, Member of Congress (Retired)\*  
Tyler Fisher, Unite America\*  
Kevin Esterling, University of California, Riverside\*

\* Affiliations listed for identification purposes only.