

The Honorable Kevin Yoder
2433 Rayburn House Office Building
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

May 23, 2018

Dear Representative Yoder:

Thank you for your strong advocacy in support of restoring the House of Representatives to its proper role as a legislative body capable of performing its legislative, oversight, and constituent service duties. The FY 2019 Legislative Branch Appropriations bill, recently reported out of the House Appropriations Committee, constitutes a significant stride towards returning the people's house to the people. The fact that you reached across the aisle, earned the unanimous support of the committee, and brought the public in to the process is both notable and noteworthy.

The legislation contains so many significant, constructive measures that we will highlight only a few of them, starting with funding adjustments. The very modest 1.7% increase in the Member Representational Account and the slightly larger increase in the account for House Salaries, Officers, and Employees is essential to the House fulfilling its duties, especially considering overall funding for the House of Representatives is down by 10% since FY 2010. Indeed, the legislative branch is appropriated less than 0.1% of the federal budget to oversee the entire federal government, with much of that funding going towards non-legislative functions like security and facilities. This essential funding for the legislative branch is tiny compared to the enormous amounts spent by the executive branch, which too often is spent for wasteful purposes, and this legislation will help bring balance to the branches. Additionally, we commend you for eliminating the office for former Speakers of the House, which brings in useful cost-savings and shows your careful attention to the bottom line.

Secondly, we commend your efforts to strengthen Congress's capacity to govern. The CRS study on establishing a technology assistance office and identifying the resources available to members of Congress on science and technology is sorely needed and long overdue, as the recent hearing on Facebook demonstrated. Similarly, the GAO study on avenues for whistleblowers to connect to the proper congressional offices could potentially lead to significant cost savings, as improved communications will help root out waste, fraud, abuse, and malfeasance. In addition, the study on congressional staff pay and retention — including its comparison of congressional staff pay against the executive branch as well as

its inquiry into whether staff are receiving equal pay for equal work — is timely because it will help ensure that Congress has the staff necessary to do its job, and that some of the problems raised by the #metoo movement are appropriately ventilated and addressed.

Finally, your efforts to improve Congressional transparency will make a world of difference to congressional staff, civil society, and the public. We commend you for requiring the Library of Congress to publish a unified calendar for hearings and markups. We appreciate your working to make witness disclosure forms available online. We are glad to see that the bioguide information will be available as structured data and appreciate your direction to GPO to explore the costs of doing the same for the Statutes at Large. And we look forward to the Law Library of Congress's strategic plan on digitizing major parts of its collection.

These last two years have been banner years. We have not forgotten your efforts around public access to CRS reports last year. What you did this year will have a salutary effect inside the legislative branch. We are grateful for the opportunity to participate in the legislative process, for your leadership, and for your willingness to work in a non-partisan fashion in promoting the best interests of the country.

With gratitude,

Center for Data Innovation
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington
Congressional Management Foundation
Defending Rights & Dissent
Demand Progress Action
Government Information Watch
GovTrack.us
Issue One
National Security Archive
Project On Government Oversight
R Street Institute
Senior Executives Association (SEA)
The OpenGov Foundation
Norman J. Ornstein
James A. Thurber