March 4, 2022

The Honorable Zoe Lofgren
Chair
Committee on House Administration
1306 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rodney Davis
Ranking Member
Committee on House Administration
1216 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chair Lofgren, Ranking Member Davis, and Members of the Committee on House Administration:

We request the Committee on House Administration address a gap in public access to public records held by the Office of the Clerk. The Clerk manages the Legislative Resource Center (LRC), which makes available lobbying disclosure filings, other public disclosure forms from all House Officers, Members, and staff, and other records. While some of those records are available online, others are not, including Legal Expense Fund Disclosures. The House of Representatives has been closed to the public for nearly two years, impeding public access to these records and undermining the purpose of public disclosure.

Many documents maintained by the Clerk within the LRC are in digital form but are not available online. Instead, requesters must use a terminal located in the LRC and print out the records — it is not currently possible to make an electronic copy. While this practice may have been reasonable when it was instituted, its consequences are two fold. First, most members of the public and press must go to the office to access these documents, which in normal circumstances limits access to those in Washington, D.C. and in COVID times restricts access further. Second, paid services such as printing, scanning, and digitizing the documents create unequal access for those who can afford the costs. This is a perverse result.

Please direct the Clerk to examine how to make these public documents available online in a user-friendly format and provide a plan of action for review and implementation. We would welcome the opportunity with them to find a way forward. Please contact Daniel Schuman, policy director at Demand Progress, at Daniel@demandprogress.org.

Sincerely,

Bipartisan Policy Center
Campaign for Accountability
Campaign Legal Center
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW)

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1 For more information, see Public Disclosure, Office of the Clerk, United States House of Representatives https://disclosures-clerk.house.gov/
2 For more information, see Legal Expense Fund Disclosures, Office of the Clerk, United States House of Representatives https://disclosures-clerk.house.gov/PublicDisclosure/LegalExpenseFund
CODEPINK
Community Research
Constitutional Alliance
Consumer Action
Defending Rights and Dissent
Democracy for America
Fix the Court
Government Information Watch
GovTrack.us
Greenpeace USA
Issue One
Levin Center at Wayne Law
Media Alliance
NALEO Educational Fund
National Freedom of Information Coalition
National Security Archive
Open The Government
OpenSecrets
Pay Our Interns
People For The American Way
Project On Government Oversight
Protect Democracy
Public Citizen
R Street Institute
Rachel Carson Council
Revolving Door Project
RootsAction.org
Social Security Works
Take on Wall Street
The Digital Democracy Project
Unite America
X-Lab

Kevin Kosar, American Enterprise Institute*
Norman Ornstein, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research*
Robert Cook-Deegan, Arizona State University*
Lorelei Kelly, Beeck Center for Social Impact + Innovation at Georgetown University*
Jodie Evans, CODEPINK*
Jason Pye, Due Process Institute*
Kevin Esterling, University of California, Riverside*

*= Affiliation listed for identification purposes only.

cc: Members of the Committee on House Administration
Members of the House Ethics Committee