

September 12, 2018

Dear Members of Congress:

In a few short months the House of Representatives will vote to adopt rules for the 116th Congress, and tomorrow the Rules Committee will hold a hearing on what rules reforms members would like to see adopted. As you know well, political process often determines policy outcomes. The next few months present a rare opportunity for you to ensure that all members' voices are heard during policy debates and that congressional offices have the tools they need to do their jobs. We believe now is the time for systemic reform.

Accordingly, we submit for your consideration the following ten principles for reforming the rules of the House of Representatives. In addition, we commend to your attention a white paper recently released by Demand Progress that contains recommendations for implementing these principles.¹ While we may not agree with every idea, we believe they are worthy of your attention.

Sincerely yours,

American Library Association
Campaign Legal Center
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW)
Common Cause
Demand Progress Action
Free Government Information
Government Accountability Project
Government Information Watch
GovTrack.us
Lincoln Network
National Security Archive
National Security Counselors
Open the Government
Other98
Protect Democracy
Public Citizen
Revolving Door Project
Senior Executives Association
Sunlight Foundation
The OpenGov Foundation

¹ House Rules Reform Recommendations, Demand Progress (Sept. 12, 2018), available at https://s3.amazonaws.com/demandprogress/reports/House_Rules_Reform_Recommendation_2018-09-12.pdf.

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Ten Principles for Reforming the Rules of the House of Representatives

- 1. The House must reimagine the chamber floor as a forum for open, informed debate on competing visions for America.*
- 2. The House must reimagine committees as a place where open, informed debate on legislative proposals and government activities takes place, and where committee members are fully empowered and encouraged to participate on an equal footing in service of the best interests of the entire chamber.*
- 3. Members of the House must be supported in their efforts to self-organize around shared interests and be able to access information that belongs to the House and relates to their interests.*
- 4. The House must recruit, hire, promote, empower, protect, and retain expert staff who have a diversity of skills, backgrounds, and expertise.*
- 5. House ethics enforcement and oversight must focus on preventing the emergence of ethical conflicts and promptly addressing conflicts before they become problems for the institution.*
- 6. House support offices and agencies, and data concerning House activities, must be transparent, support the work of the full House, and be responsive to the will of the House.*
- 7. House technology must be modernized to support the oversight, legislative, and constituent service responsibilities of members, committees, support offices, and leadership.*
- 8. Electronic information touching members and staff in whatever capacity, as well as committees, leadership, and support offices and agencies, must be secure from unwanted access.*
- 9. Transitions in membership of the House must not adversely impact constituent services.*
- 10. The House must continuously renew itself and study new approaches to its operations.*