

The Honorable Brian Baird Ph.D., Member of Congress (WA-3, 1999-2011)

Testimony for the Record on FY 2022 budget request

Request for Funds to Establish a Select Committee on Continuity of Government

Distinguished members of the committee, colleagues, and friends. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on a matter of truly profound importance – the continued existence and legitimate functioning of the Congress itself.

I know this committee will receive countless funding requests, but I urge you to make a relatively small amount of funds available in the budget and in appropriations to ensure that the Congress, The Executive Branch, and the Judiciary will all be able to function even, and especially, in times of grave national crisis. If there is a more fundamental or more consequential use of funds, I am not sure what it could be, but I am absolutely certain that this matter must be addressed and resolved.

As it stands now, none of the three branches of our government has in place viable, constitutionally valid, and practical procedures to ensure their continuity under circumstances that are entirely feasible and possible and in fact have nearly come to pass. As described in detail in the three-volume report by the non-partisan Continuity of Government commission that was formed after the attacks of September 11, 2001, this vulnerability poses an existential danger to this institution, to our democratic republic and, frankly, to each of you individually.

The truth is, Congress is woefully unprepared to manage an attack or pandemic that kills or incapacitates large numbers of members. What is more, the very real possibility exists that deaths from disease or, worse, targeted assassinations of even as few as a single member could alter the political and ideological makeup of the institution.

The experience of the COVID19 pandemic, and the attacks of January 6th should amplify the urgency of this matter. Congress simply must act as quickly as possible to study the threats and shortcomings to continuity and implement solutions not only for itself but for the other branches of our government as well. This is in your own personal interest and is vital to the national interest.

To accomplish this, it is recommended that Congress establish a bi-cameral, bi-partisan select committee to study and report recommended continuity solutions for action by both chambers. This request is for funding sufficient to support the establishment, staffing and activities of the proposed committee for the coming fiscal year.

At the beginning of each Congress, we all swear an oath to uphold and defend the Constitution. If we knowingly leave all three branches of our constitutional government vulnerable to terrorist attacks, assassinations, or natural calamities, we have failed to uphold that sacred oath.

I am here today asking you to fulfill that oath by dedicating the necessary resources to solve these continuity shortcomings once and for all. Thank you for your consideration.

Biography

Congressman Brian Baird (WA-3, 1999-2011) led post 9/11 efforts in Congress to address continuity of all three branches of government, with special focus on the House of Representatives. Baird has continued to study and write about the issue and is now helping re-establish a non-partisan Continuity of Government commission to review continuity vulnerabilities and solutions. Baird holds a Doctorate in Clinical Psychology and practiced clinically for more than two decades with a specialization in neuropsychology and brain injury rehabilitation. During the past year Baird has worked closely with the Congressional Management Foundation to provide online training designed to help congressional staff cope with the stresses brought on by the COVID19 pandemic and the January 6th attacks on the Capitol. Baird now lives in Edmonds Washington.