

**Oral Presentation of Taylor J. Swift**  
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**Before the House Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress,**  
**On Civility and Collaboration**  
**September 29, 2021**

Chair Kilmer, Vice Chair Timmons, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Taylor J. Swift and I am a policy advisor at Demand Progress where I focus on strengthening Congress's capacity, technology, and efficiency.

Don't you hate it when you put all this work into a bill that you and your constituents really care about, but you know it won't go anywhere? Wouldn't it be better if there was a structure in place to help you garner more support from the very beginning?

Like many of the witnesses during last week's hearing on collaboration and civility mentioned, members need increased incentives and fewer challenges to work together. Moreover, to get anything passed in the Senate, it almost always requires bipartisan support.

I am here to discuss two proposals that the select committee should examine to help strengthen Congress's collaboration and civility: (1) creating a co-sponsor committee threshold similar to the House Consensus Calendar and (2) making it easier for members to work together through caucuses by reintroducing and strengthening Legislative Service Organizations.

First, we urge The Select Committee to recommend a committee(s) in the House pilot a committee co-sponsorship threshold program. The pilot program would require a committee to markup a piece of legislation that has received co sponsorships by at least 2/5 of committee Members (if it has a bipartisan co-sponsor on the committee) or 218 cosponsors in the House. A committee in the House will pilot this cosponsorship threshold program for one year and report out its findings to the full House within 90 days.

Second, we recommend the Select Committee to encourage the House to reinstate and strengthen Legislative Service Organizations (LSOs). Historically, LSOs were provided significant funding for research, staff support, and coordination and produced a variety of legislative products that helped Members engage in the legislative process — and often did so across party lines.

However, the 104th Congress adopted House Rules that ended LSOs as part of a greater effort to centralize power towards leadership. Since then, LSOs have transformed into Congressional Member Organizations (CMOs or caucuses) that have significantly less capacity and funding.

The 116th Select Committee recognized the benefits of strengthening CMOs and recommended that Congress increase their resources (recommendations 71 and 72).

We recommend taking this previous recommendation a step further. The Select Committee should encourage the House of Representatives to reinstate LSOs and provide up to \$10,000 in (centrally administered) funding per Member for LSO research, staff support, and coordination to help encourage Members to organize around issues about which they care (separate from other political structures driven by leadership or committees).

Thank you for the opportunity to present these proposals. I look forward to any questions you may have.