

TO: House Speaker Nancy Pelosi

CC: Chair Zoe Lofgren, Committee on House Administration

Ranking Member Rodney Davis, Committee on House Administration

Chair James McGovern, Committee on Rules

Ranking Member Tom Cole, Committee on Rules

Thomas J. Wickham Jr., House Parliamentarian

Cheryl L. Johnson, Clerk of the House

Derek Kilmer, Chair, Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress

Tom Graves, Vice Chair, Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress

DATE: April 13, 2020

**RE: COMMENDING HOUSE ALLOWANCE FOR DIGITAL FILING
DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

Dear: Speaker Pelosi

We are writing to commend the announcement and swift action taken by the Committee on House Administration, the Rules Committee, the House Parliamentarian, and the Office of the Clerk, upon a directive from the Speaker, to ensure that members of the House of Representatives can introduce bills, add cosponsors, and extend remarks digitally during the COVID-19 emergency.

This decision —and the laudable staff work that made the temporary policy possible—begin to address the unique challenges that Congress faces due to the pandemic, with members unable to safely travel or conduct business in person.

By opening this new digital channel until April 19, with an opportunity to renew, the directive balances the need to ensure continuity of operations in an emergency with respect for institutional traditions and norms that should not be altered lightly. The move admirably reflects an approach found in the world of startups: to release a “minimum viable product” and then learn and improve upon the solution. The agility to identify and quickly implement this solution is a credit to the 116th Congress and in keeping with the spirit with which it began — with the naming of a Select Committee on Modernization.

The coronavirus pandemic is demanding flexibility and sacrifice from Americans of all ages, as schoolchildren move to online classes and even our sacred rites of passage—the celebrations and the goodbyes—must occur virtually. In this same vein, we urge continued innovation and perseverance through technical, parliamentary, or procedural challenges to ensure the first branch of government continues to function throughout this emergency even if members cannot convene in person.

Sincerely,

College to Congress

Demand Progress

Democracy Fund Voice

Issue One

Lincoln Network

NALEO Educational Fund

R Street Institute

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Director, The Governance Lab

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