



January 22, 2024

The Honorable Stephanie Bice
Chair
Subcommittee on Modernization
2437 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Derek Kilmer
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Modernization
1226 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: Issue One's ReFormers Caucus Call to Adopt Recommendations for Collaboration and Civility in Congress

Dear Chair Bice and Ranking Member Kilmer:

We, the undersigned, former public officials, many of whom served in Congress, write to reiterate our deep support for the work of the Subcommittee on Modernization, and to particularly emphasize the importance of adopting recommendations that foster collaboration and civility in the institution in the wake of ongoing tensions between federal lawmakers. Throughout the 118th Congress, we have witnessed two near-fistfights, 19 votes for the speakership, and, up until now, 39 retirement announcements. The challenges we face as a nation require a united and cooperative effort from our elected representatives, and it is essential that Congress take proactive steps to rebuild public faith in our democratic processes and ensure that the legislative branch remains an efficient and responsive institution.

The evident lack of bipartisan collaboration erodes confidence in Congress, which the institution can ill-afford. A [Pew Research Center report](#) in September 2023 found that only 26% of U.S. adults have a favorable opinion of Congress, while 72% have an unfavorable view. These figures are alarming and should prompt federal lawmakers to explore strategies that uphold the credibility of the legislative branch, designed to represent and serve the interests of the people.

The [ReFormers Caucus](#) is dedicated to the proposition that tangible bipartisan reforms encouraging good governance will help restore the public's confidence in Congress and improve the operations of the institution. Enhancing collaboration in Congress can enable a healthier and more civil environment which benefits members, the congressional community, and our national interest. Strengthening bipartisan collaboration will lay the groundwork for Congress to tackle rapidly evolving policy challenges, including grappling with the rise of generative artificial intelligence and protecting our critical infrastructure from cyberthreats.

The Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress made significant strides in identifying key challenges and proposing thoughtful solutions to improve the functionality of the legislative branch. The select committee's recommendations, focused on enhancing transparency, accountability, and efficiency, are crucial for the effective functioning of our democracy. We commend the Subcommittee on Modernization, under the leadership of Chair Bice and Ranking Member Kilmer, for continuing this important work and ensuring that these recommendations are not only acknowledged but also implemented.

We urge you and your colleagues serving on the subcommittee to continue the implementation of recommendations that promote [collaboration and civility](#) in Congress, including the following:

- Convene a bicameral, bipartisan group of members to discuss rules changes to require reciprocated consideration for widely supported, bipartisan legislation.
- Provide clearer accounting of member contributions and involvement in legislation for public awareness and transparency through *Congress.gov*.
- Provide committees with flexibility to host periodic events to foster collaboration and further develop working relationships among committee members.
- Create a bipartisan, public-facing website with nonpartisan information about each committee and its operations.
- Examine best practices from state legislatures to sustain relatively functional cultures of bipartisan work despite deep divisions.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We trust that your leadership can take on this task in the name of our democracy.

Sincerely,

The Honorable Jason Altmire (D-PA)

The Honorable Brian Baird (D-WA)

The Honorable Gresham Barrett (R-SC)

The Honorable Charles F. Bass (R-NH)

The Honorable Mark Begich (D-AK)

The Honorable Douglas K. Bereuter (R-NE)

The Honorable Charles Boustany (R-LA)

The Honorable Cheryl L. Bustos (D-IL)

The Honorable Michael Capuano (D-MA)

The Honorable John W. Carlin (D-KA)

The Honorable Arne H. Carlson (R-MN)

The Honorable Bob Carr (D-MI)

The Honorable John J. Cavanaugh (D-NE)

The Honorable Ben Chandler (D-KY)

The Honorable William Lacy Clay (D-MO)

The Honorable Barbara Comstock (R-VA)

The Honorable Sam Coppersmith (D-AZ)

The Honorable Carlos Curbelo (R-FL)

The Honorable Thomas A. Daschle (D-SD)

The Honorable Susan Davis (D-CA)

The Honorable Jim Davis (D-FL)

The Honorable Lincoln Davis (D-TN)

The Honorable Charles W. Dent (R-PA)

The Honorable Byron Dorgan (D-ND)

The Honorable Donna F. Edwards (D-MD)

The Honorable Karan English (D-AZ)

The Honorable Russ Feingold (D-WI)

The Honorable Harold Ford (D-TN)

The Honorable Richard A. Gephardt (D-MO)

The Honorable Phil Gingrey (R-GA)

The Honorable James C. Greenwood (R-PA)
The Honorable Steve Gunderson (R-WI)
The Honorable Gary W. Hart (D-CO)
The Honorable Dennis M. Hertel (D-MI)
The Honorable Paul W. Hodes (D-NH)
The Honorable Joseph Hoeffel (D-PA)
The Honorable Elizabeth Holtzman (D-NY)
The Honorable Robert D. Inglis (R-SC)
The Honorable Steven J. Israel (D-NY)
The Honorable John B. Johnston (D-LA)
The Honorable Ron Kind (D-WI)
The Honorable Ronald Klein (D-FL)
The Honorable Larry LaRocco (D-ID)
The Honorable Rick Lazio (R-NY)
The Honorable Mel Levine (D-CA)
The Honorable Blanche L. Lincoln (D-AR)
The Honorable Andrew Maguire (R-WY)
The Honorable Marjorie Margolies (D-PA)
The Honorable Matthew F. McHugh (D-NY)
The Honorable John R. McKernan Jr. (R-ME)
The Honorable C. Tom McMillen (D-MD)
The Honorable Susan Molinari (R-NY)
The Honorable Jim P. Moran (D-VA)
The Honorable Constance Morella (R-MD)
The Honorable Carol Moseley-Braun (D-IL)
The Honorable Patrick E. Murphy (D-FL)
The Honorable Patrick J. Murphy (D-PA)
The Honorable Glenn Nye (D-VA)
The Honorable Leon E. Panetta (D-CA)
The Honorable Tom Petri (R-WI)
The Honorable Earl Pomeroy (D-ND)
The Honorable Reid Ribble (R-WI)
The Honorable August W. Ritter (D-CO)
The Honorable Timothy J. Roemer (D-IN)
The Honorable Roy R. Romer (D-CO)
The Honorable Claudine Schneider (R-RI)
The Honorable John J. Schwarz (R-MI)
The Honorable Chris Shays (R-CT)
The Honorable Karen Shepherd (D-UT)
The Honorable David Skaggs (D-CO)
The Honorable Peter Smith (R-VT)
The Honorable Olympia J. Snowe (R-ME)
The Honorable Robin Tallon (D-SC)
The Honorable Mark Udall (D-CO)
The Honorable Zach Wamp (R-TN)

Cc: The Honorable Mike Johnson
The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Members of the House Administration Committee
Members of the House Administration Subcommittee on Modernization