

Thank you, Chairwoman Lofgren, Ranking Member Davis and members of the Committee.

Thank you for the invitation to offer testimony this morning.

The Committee on House Administration plays a pivotal role in my top priority here in Congress: restoring trust in our government through reforms that put the American people back at the center of our system.

It's my mission to advance reforms that reduce the influence of money in our politics and protect our democracy through legislation like H.R. 1, the For the People Act, and the SHIELD Act - but I'm here today to speak about a different type of desperately-needed reform in the halls of Congress themselves.

Here in the House, we work in social, organizational, and physical environments that were designed for workers in the early 20th century – Congress, it seems, is designed to make collaboration and innovation difficult.

And it's working.

A prime example of processes that fail us and our constituents is orientation.

Like many of my freshman colleagues, I entered this Congress ready to listen, to learn, to advance good ideas no matter what party they come from, and to serve the American people.

My first recommendation deals with Freshmen orientation. While I thought the work of the House Admin Committee and its staff was exceptional with regards to planning and executing such a large logistical operation, I wanted to respectfully request that House Leadership consider some improvements to the content of the orientation, focused greatly on the professional development of Members.

For example, many new Members, like me, have no experience in government, let alone legislative bodies. Breakout sessions on procedures of this institution could significantly improve the ability of freshman members to hit the ground running for our constituents.

Furthermore, as Members of Congress, we are supposed to provide oversight to enormous government agencies without many of us having experience in these agencies. Professional development sessions with academics from the Congressional Research Service or employees from the agencies themselves would be very useful to giving us a foundation of knowledge.

Finally, at a time when partisanship is at a fever pitch, I think orientation needs to focus on intentionally creating spaces for cross-partisan relationship building. As an example of this, I've taken steps to lay a foundation of understanding and respect with my Republican colleagues by joining the bipartisan Problem Solvers Caucus, partnering

with my fellow Minnesotan, Congressman Pete Stauber, to send our staff to the first-ever depolarization workshop in Congress, and forging friendships with my Republican colleagues and their families.

In my view, this should be the rule, not the exception.

The American people are expecting us to put party politics aside and get things done – and not doing so is a dereliction of our duty. We can and should be looking ahead and being intentional to ensure that every opportunity is taken to streamline the processes of Congress to get work done on behalf of the people.

One possible way to do that for orientation would be instituting a bipartisan orientation committee. Much like the Select Committee on Modernization of Congress has worked dutifully and respectfully move forward institutional reforms, perhaps a similar group of members could work together to plan orientation with an eye toward educating members in the fundamentals of work in this institution and creating events conducive to relationship building.

And we must look beyond ourselves. How have the successful organizations across the country innovated at onboarding employees? Where can we improve?

We should apply this critical eye not just to our processes, but to our environments themselves. Right now, my staff work behind desks older

than they are in – cramped in spaces that seem to have been designed to disincentivize even speaking to one another.

Insofar as our space limits us, we must not simply accept it and move forward hindered in our ability to work for our constituents. We must use design to inspire outcomes.

The reality is that while these spaces and these processes may have worked decades ago, the world outside Washington, D.C. has moved forward swiftly. If we continue to fail to keep up with that progress, we will become less and less able to deal with the emerging issues of the 21st century on behalf of the American people.

If we're to catch up, we need to be open to a broader range of ideas.

That's why I believe that we should also hold a "Summit to Reinvent Congress," where we bring in the best minds to help buttress and expand on the work currently being done here and in the Select Committee on Modernization.

There, we can elicit the experience of those across the private sector, those who have managed large shifts in organizational culture or environment and learn how to implement such changes to streamline Congress.

We must take every opportunity now to improve the House of Representatives for tomorrow. Failure to do so will continue to diminish our ability to work on behalf of the people who sent us here.

Thank you, Madam Chair and members of the committee.