

My name is Chrissy Houlahan, and I am a first term member from Pennsylvania's 6th District. Being a freshman in Congress allows one to look at legislative procedures with fresh eyes. There are three particular areas of concern I would like to highlight today before this committee:

First,

I entered Congress in the midst of what would become the longest government shutdown in our country's history. This shutdown began before the freshmen class even took our oaths of office. The irony is that I was sent in part to Washington to restore order to our government, civility to our rhetoric, and trust Congress.

I listened to members of my community, the Pennsylvania 6th, who were federal employees as they went without pay. I listened to families who rely on government services, such as SNAP, to get by. I listened to farmers and businesses who depend on government services to operate and function.

I hope it's clear to everyone, both here in Washington and around the country, that using a government shutdown and the federal employees it affects as a negotiating tactic is failed policy and cannot happen again. Budgeting by crisis is an affront to our legislative processes and, in this instance, a way for the Executive Branch to run around Congress' power of the purse.

I introduced my first bill, HR 834, the Shutdown to End All Shutdowns Bill, to prevent such tactics from harming the American federal worker and government contractor. This bill would disincentivize shutdown as a negotiating tool by transferring the financial hardship of shutdowns to the Executive Branch and Members of Congress rather than on the people whom we serve. It is critical that, as a Congress, we act now and take preventative measures so American workers never have to endure such a shutdown again.

Second,

I wrote and signed a letter with Rep. Trahan urging House Leadership to re-evaluate the Motion to Recommit and its place in the legislative process.

Both Democrats and Republicans have used parliamentary procedures, like the Motion to Recommit, for too long to derail legislation. Our job is that of governance, not of politics.

In 2018, the American people made clear that their patience with partisan politics and business-as-usual in the nation's capital was exhausted. They want Congress to get to work again on the people's priorities with both sides debating their views openly and sincerely. As it currently stands, the MTR does not generate a debate over ideas that would genuinely improve the contents of a bill and its effect on the American people. That is why I, along with my fellow freshmen, am asking leadership to work with us to re-examine these sorts of procedures and determine the most effective path forward.

Third,

Frankly, there needs to be more collaboration between the committees when it comes to scheduling. Why can't committee meeting times be staggered so members who serve on multiple committees can meet their full responsibilities? First, there are times where Members have two committee hearings at the same time, sometimes with votes also happening. We should have more collaboration on committee work along with advanced planning.

The voting schedule needs more predictability. Of the four days we're in Washington each week, there is only one...one...on which the vote time is known in advance. Meetings with constituents are scheduled and get cancelled because of votes. Classified national security briefings are interrupted because of votes. No business or nonprofit would operate this way. This highly inefficient system is something we've come to accept, but I do not believe it needs be this way.

I thank the committee for its work, for the opportunity to be here today, and look forward to serving my community in a modernized Congress.

