

**Member Day Testimony to the Select Committee on the
Modernization of Congress**

Thank you so much, Chair Kilmer, Vice Chair Timmons and Members of the Select Committee. I really appreciate the opportunity you've provided to weigh in on modernizing our Congress.

I listened to the last three fellow testifiers and it was gratifying that they all said something that I completely agree with. Ms. Lee, that's way overdue; Ms. Jacobs, intern pay and accessibility, that's what I want to testify to you about; and finally, I want to endorse and associate myself with the remarks of Mr. Errington on budget reform. Fiscal responsibility is getting away from us very very rapidly. I am a member of the 30 by 30 group of bipartisan members with Scott Peters who are trying to keep this flame alive and trying to make sure that we actually go back to some form of fiscal responsibility.

I again appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today and I want to focus on Congressional transparency, accessibility and accountability.

First of all, thank you for your tireless work. In a time of growing partisanship and dysfunction in our Congress, it's gratifying to see this Select Committee demonstrate that we can reform this institution to help foster constructive discussions and create solutions that meld diverse views to address the issues that Americans all face.

I want to say that in my particular, role on the U.S. House Appropriations Committee and in particular the Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch, we are operating in parallel with and hopefully in coordination with you; to be sure that we are doing the same goals and resourcing the implementation of the goals that you have identified, and I certainly want to continue working with you on that.

Let me talk about expanding transparency throughout government. Of course there is the need to retain the confidentiality of some sensitive information, but that should be the exception based on demonstration of specific need rather than the rule. Unfortunately, we still have a little bit too much of a culture that guards information too closely, information that should be in public domain.

I endorse the Select Committee's recommendations to increase transparency, and I believe they will advance public understanding of and trust in our work. I hope you will continue your focus in this critical area and definitely want to help.

Transparency is not only about public access to start with, but it's also ease of access, and we have a way to go in this area. I think we would all agree. I encourage the Select Committee to further consider ways to centralize information for public review. Ideally, this would be a single location for whatever is desired whether it be bills, committees, programs, process and other information.

Currently, if this information is even posted online, which much of it is not, it is strewn across a multitude of websites, making it difficult and time-consuming for the public to find it, let alone our own staff. This comment comes from my own staff, who can find it difficult to find information about our Congress from within our own Congress. If they run into this problem, I'm sure it's a common problem outside of Congress.

There also continues to be lags in updating the information, which can be very frustrating all around in a 24-7 news cycle and social media world. In this environment, misinformation too easily can first be disseminated, and if not countered immediately, it can take hold and is very very difficult to dislodge.

Additionally, I wholeheartedly agree with the Select Committee's recommendations to ensure that all Americans, including individuals

who use closed captioning or are non-English speakers, can fully engage with the People's House. This is critical in my home state of Hawai'i where about one in four residents speak a language other than English at home. Efforts here will ensure that all of our constituencies can be a part of the legislative process.

Finally, to expand upon the Select Committee's recommendations from the 116th Congress, I would encourage you to further investigate how we can make Congress more accountable and ethical through the review and updating of our House ethics rules.

I know that is a daunting task, but it is a necessary one and given the wide range of existing rules and guidance, that govern us and our staff. They are outdated, they are possibly ineffective at achieving the high ethical standards that we want given our modern world, and they simply need to be modernized. The principles are sound, but the practices and requirements sometimes don't fit the circumstances that we face. We all have a piece of this, but I think the Select Committee, especially, can contribute in this area.

I thank you for your time and attention this afternoon and I look forward to continuing to engage each and all of you and support you through my assignment on the House Appropriations Legislative Branch subcommittee.

Mahalo, and I look forward to working with you.