

Rep Meijer, Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress Member Day Remarks

Members of the distinguished Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress, thank you for allowing me to share my thoughts on how we can improve and modernize the way we conduct business on behalf of the American people. Since its creation, the Select Committee has advanced 97 recommendations to make Congress more efficient, effective, and transparent. One of these recommendations would incentivize congressional committees to experiment with alternative hearing formats. I believe this would encourage more bipartisanship that delivers results.

Congress is an inherently deliberative body. While there are obvious differences between the two major parties, opportunities for sincere, bipartisan conversation do not have to be few and far between. I have only been in Congress for a few short months, yet I have already noticed that when the cameras aren't running, we're far more likely to have candid discussions despite political differences. We should look for more opportunities for members of Congress to have honest, fair, and meaningful conversation that will surely expose numerous areas of bipartisan agreement amongst members of all ranks.

Insulation from the varying agendas of hyper-partisan media, pressure politics, and special interest groups better positions members to ask frank questions, provide honest input, and ultimately reach compromise. These member-to-member interactions help us move away from messaging bills, show votes, and partisan legislation that is drafted in secret. I believe if we incentivize committees to consider conducting more candid discussions and unstructured work, we will diminish the sound bites and instead produce bipartisan dialogue that strengthens our legislative process.

In addition, there are opportunities to improve formatting of legislation – especially legislation that amends or modifies prior statutes – in order to decrease reliance on drafting organizations and improve members' ability to understand changes and communicate those changes with constituents. The incorporation of hyperlinks to existing statutes with CRS notation on impact of modifications – think 'track changes' and comments – would move power from a priestly caste of drafting experts to become more broadly intelligible. For this reason I would encourage the reconsideration of initiatives such as Rep. Stefanik's EDIT Act to improve line-by-line transparency and understanding.

Thank you for providing me and my colleagues the opportunity to share our thoughts with the committee. It is through this work and these discussions that we will restore this sacred, esteemed institution.