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MAKING CONGRESS WORK BETTER FOR THE AMERICAN PEOPLE:

A RECOMMENDATION STATUS REPORT

Thursday, January 20, 2022

House of Representatives,

Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress,

Washington, D.C.

The committee met, pursuant to call, at 9:02 a.m., via Zoom, Hon. Derek Kilmer [chairman of the committee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Kilmer, Perlmutter, Phillips, Williams, Timmons, Latta, and Joyce.

The Chairman. I will bang the virtual gavel, and the committee will come to order.

Without objection, the chair is authorized to declare a recess of the committee at any time.

I now recognize myself for 5 minutes for an opening statement.

First off, I just want to wish everyone a happy new year and Representative Phillips a happy birthday. We apologize for the early morning singing.

This is our first hearing of 2022, and what better way to kick things off than with a look at how the committee's recommendations are actually making Congress work better for the American people.

Our implementing partners have done an amazing job of putting the committee's ideas into action and making sure that our hard work lives well beyond our tenure. That is important and so central to the mission of this committee.

I say this because change isn't possible without action. We can talk about fixing Congress and come up with great ideas until we are blue in the face. That is the easy part. The hard part is figuring out how to bring those great ideas to life. And it definitely takes a village. And I am so grateful for the tenacity and creativity that our partners bring to the table. We could not do this important work without them.

And I also want to just take a moment to acknowledge the groundbreaking work this committee has done not only to pass recommendations but to ensure that our recommendations are implemented. In assigning these responsibilities equal weight, the committee, according to the Congressional Research Service, might very well be the premier example of a reform committee that managed to both recommend and implement during its tenure.

We should all be proud of that. And by "all," I mean this committee's members and its staff as well as our implementing partners and their staff. Listen, Congress can be a tough place to get things done, but I think we are proving that it is possible.

To date, the committee's passed a total of 142 recommendations to make Congress a more efficient and effective institution. Over 60 percent of the 97 recommendations passed in the 116th Congress have been implemented or have seen meaningful action toward implementation. Twenty-four have been fully implemented, and 15 more are nearing full implementation.

That is a tremendous accomplishment, and we are just getting started. There is so much work currently underway on a bunch of new projects to get off the ground. And I am really looking forward to hearing from our witnesses today about the great work they have done and have planned.

I also want to hear about how the committee can support your work and any modernization ideas you have that we haven't already thrown at you.

This is a little tricky in a virtual format, but we are going to try to use the committee rules we adopted last year that give us some more flexibility in the Q&A portion of a hearing. Our goal is to encourage thoughtful discussion and the civil exchange of ideas and opinions.

So, in accordance with clause 2(j) of House rule XI, we will allow up to 30 minutes of extended questioning per witness. And, without objection, time will not be strictly segregated between the witnesses, which will allow for extended back-and-forth exchanges between members and witnesses.

Vice Chair Timmons and I will manage the time to ensure that every member has equal opportunity to participate. Any member who wishes to speak should just raise their virtual hand, and either Vice Chair Timmons or I will make sure you can jump in.

Additionally, members who wish to claim their individual 5 minutes to question each witness pursuant to clause 2(j)(2) of rule XI will be permitted to do so following the period of extended questioning.

Okay. I would like to now invite Vice Chair Timmons to share some opening remarks as well.

[The statement of the chairman follows:]

***** COMMITTEE INSERT *****

Mr. Timmons. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to thank everybody for joining us for the first hearing of 2022. And I want to thank our witnesses for being here to provide an update on their progress in implementing this committee's previous recommendations.

In my view, our hearing today has two purposes: first, to give our witnesses, our partners in implementation, an opportunity to discuss the good work that is being done to improve the House and help us better serve our constituents; second, to hear about the recommendations that still need some attention, to identify obstacles, and to learn how we can work with you to begin to move those recommendations forward.

It is important to highlight here that our committee doesn't make recommendations merely for the purpose of building a historical record. Rather, we are here to make actual change to improve how Congress works. And we can do that by following up on the recommendations we have made and by doing what we can to ensure that they are implemented.

Indeed, this has been one of the distinguishing aspects of this select committee, and I believe it is an advantage that the committee's extension through the entirety of this Congress has afforded us. I give the chairman and our fellow committee members credit for making implementation a priority as we have continued our other work.

I also want to say that, while we have seen some implementation success thus far, that does not mean it is time to rest. The committee is authorized for 1 more year, and we intend to run through the finish line. There is much left to do to make Congress work better for the American people.

In that vein, we have been discussing what the committee's agenda for this year, our final year, will look like, and I am also looking forward to learning today if our

witnesses have any ideas for other recommendations and topics that we might consider as the committee moves forward.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I yield back.

[The statement of Mr. Timmons follows:]

***** COMMITTEE INSERT *****

The Chairman. Thanks, Vice Chair Timmons.

I am pleased to welcome our witnesses who are here to provide status updates on the select committee's recommendations.

Before introducing our witnesses, I just want to quickly acknowledge that Brett Blanton, the Architect of the Capitol, was unable to join us after some last-minute committee scheduling hurdles. We tried to move this committee meeting up as a consequence of votes. You all have the written testimony that he submitted, and that will be part of the record for this hearing as well.

[The statement of Mr. Blanton follows:]

***** COMMITTEE INSERT *****

The Chairman. Witnesses are reminded that your written statements will be made part of the record.

Our first witness is Cheryl Johnson. Ms. Johnson is the Clerk of the House, a role she has held since 2019. Previously, she served as the director of the Smithsonian's Office of Governmental Relations.

Ms. Johnson has had a long career on Capitol Hill, having served in numerous offices for nearly 20 years, including as chief education and investigative counsel for the House Committee on Education and the Workforce and as director and counsel for the Committee on House Administration's Subcommittee on Libraries and Memorials.

She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in journalism and mass communication from the University of Iowa and a Juris Doctorate from Howard University.

Ms. Johnson, you are now recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENTS OF CHERYL L. JOHNSON, ON BEHALF OF THE OFFICE OF THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES; AND CATHERINE SZPINDOR, ON BEHALF OF THE OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

STATEMENT OF CHERYL L. JOHNSON

Ms. Johnson. Thank you. Good morning, Chair Kilmer, Vice Chair Timmons, and members of the committee. Thank you for inviting me to testify.

The Office of the Clerk pursues numerous and diverse goals and priorities. Primary is supporting the day-to-day operations of the House. I have submitted my written testimony, and I will highlight some of it now.

To start, one of the recommendations made by this committee has been implemented already. With this Congress, the House rules continued the policy adopted last Congress that allows committees to electronically submit committee reports and related material electronically. Clerk staff implemented and maintain a secure, email-based solution. This change in process was welcomed and has had no negative impact.

Related to the electronic submission of committee reports is the electronic submission of bills and resolutions. Members and staff can do this via the eHopper, a secure, email-based alternative to the historic wooden box on the House floor. The eHopper is now the House's primary way of introducing bills.

Currently, my staff is working to deliver an improved eHopper experience for Members and their staff. This updated solution will meet the needs of the bill clerks as they process an increasing number of bills, while improving the user experience for

Members and staff.

As the committee is aware, my staff, along with the Office of Legislative Counsel and contractors, continue to build a suite of software programs that will create comparisons between legislative texts. Understanding legislative text changes is critical to making decisions on pending legislation.

As part of our pilot program, more than 160 individuals from across the House committees have access to the software. Their collective feedback about the system's usability, learnability, and accuracy of the system is positive and helpful.

Currently, the project team is working on operational tasks related to House-wide deployment, including migrating the application to a cloud environment. We are looking forward to delivering the Comparative Print suite House-wide pending the completion of the migration to the cloud and the required security audits.

A critical but often dry topic to discuss is standard-setting. However, it is a delight to know that a small, dedicated group of staff from my office, the Senate Secretary Office, GPO, and the Library of Congress and others are doing just that. The United States Legislative Markup standard will allow for a more modern production and exchange of our congressional legislative documents.

This standardization work is important and a required foundation for modernizing the lawmaking process. We value this committee's continued support of this project.

Additionally, my written testimony mentions the work we are doing around the lobby disclosure system. Given the system's age, we recommend that the system be redesigned and built anew. A contemporary system will improve the user experience, provide more efficient processing, and provide strategies for maintaining a single account for lobbyists regardless of a job or name change.

In addition to the work I have already mentioned, Clerk staff are researching two

potential projects that impact the committees: a central location to share committee vote data and the creation of a common scheduling tool for committees.

To assist in our analysis and scoping of this work, we are working to release two RFIs, requests for information, for the purpose of gathering information and investigating possible solutions, and we expect that the RFIs will be released later this month.

Finally, I want to lend my support to other recommendations that this committee has made -- namely, the recommendations to improve staff recruitment, diversity, retention, compensation and benefits, and to improve accessibility. I fully support these recommendations.

Thank you again for this opportunity to speak before the committee, and I look forward to your questions.

[The statement of Ms. Johnson follows:]

***** COMMITTEE INSERT *****

The Chairman. Thank you, Ms. Johnson.

Our next and final witness is Catherine Szpindor, the Chief Administrative Officer for the House. She has served in this role since 2020. Previously, she served as the Chief Information Officer for the House. She joined the House in 2011 as the Director of Enterprise Applications and was promoted to Deputy CIO before becoming CIO.

Prior to working for the House, she was the vice president of IT for Thomas Nelson Community College. She holds a Master of Science degree in information systems from Mercer University and a Certificate in Strategy and Innovation from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Ms. Szpindor, you are now recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF CATHERINE SZPINDOR

Ms. Szpindor. Thank you. I want to thank Chairman Kilmer, Vice Chairman Timmons, and members of the Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the progress that the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer has made in implementing recommendations made by the select committee. I am pleased to report that the CAO has made significant progress on many of the recommendations of the select committee, and I will highlight some of our efforts today.

On August 9, 2021, the CAO officially launched the House Human Resources Hub, a one-stop shop of human resources best practices. The site now contains over 90 resources, tools, and other references for employees who are responsible for hiring, developing, and retaining Hill staff. The H.R. Hub resources are designed to be used as best practices, tips, and tools, and they provide a solid foundation that offices are encouraged to utilize, adapt, and customize to meet their unique needs.

Our new staff training program called "CAO Coach" was launched in June 2021, and the response has been overwhelmingly positive. CAO Coach aims to train staff to do their jobs in a way that is relevant, efficient, and dynamic.

To date, we have hired four coaches, two experienced former chiefs of staff, and two experienced former district directors, and in the coming months, we plan to add two legislative directors.

The coaches have hosted highly attended programs featuring their colleagues as panelists. They are creating one-on-one video series for every job position in a House office -- that is significant progress -- and hosting staff networking events, helping to

facilitate retreats, and providing customized trainings at the request of Member offices.

The coaches have had more than 485 confidential sessions with individual staffers on topics such as managing office budgets and staff, to approaching difficult casework, and to how to introduce a bill.

The CAO is implementing the select committee's recommendation to create a Congressional Leadership Academy to offer training specifically for Members. As we prepare to roll out this new program, the CAO is currently hiring and training a diverse team of world-class leadership consultants that will work with the Members on the leadership, management, and resiliency skills necessary in our challenging and dynamic environment.

To address the select committee's recommendation to expand the use of digital signatures for a majority of House business, CAO teams have made significant progress while launching Quill, the electronic signature system for congressional group letters, and rolling out electronic signatures for constituent casework forms, currently used on 265 Member office websites, as well as a digital privacy release form for IRS-related casework.

Additionally, we just initiated a project to modernize and simplify administrative forms requiring Member signatures, such as the Payroll Authorization Form and the Student Loan Repayment Program Enrollment Form.

The select committee recommended we improve Member access to innovative technology tools that enhance offices' operations. In response, the CAO is building a House digital service team to, one, identify and deliver solutions that improve on Member offices' most significant challenges; two, bring ideas and methodologies from the private sector into spaces within the House that have more freedom to experiment and iterate; three, leverage modern development tools to rapidly prototype and build production-grade software and to deliver better products and services to the House.

The efforts of the select committee to further modernization for the House are tremendous and commendable. The CAO is making substantial progress on these modernization efforts. To make the most use of funds established for these initiatives, we must carefully balance all requests and recommendations that we receive to ensure we provide the best services possible with the funding allocated to us.

I am honored that I and my employees -- and the employees are very significant in their contribution and their desire to work on these recommendations, and we can play a critical role in implementing recommendations established by the select committee.

I want to thank the members and staff of the committee for your support. We look forward to a continued and constructive relationship. Thank you.

[The statement of Ms. Szpindor follows:]

***** COMMITTEE INSERT *****

The Chairman. Thanks so much to you both for your testimony.

I want to now recognize both myself and Vice Chair Timmons to begin a period of extended questioning of the witnesses. Any member who wishes to speak or ask a question can just raise their virtual hand.

Ms. Szpindor, I was hoping to just start with you. Specifically, our committee is, I think, really double-clicked on some of the issues related to staffing, just recognizing how important the staff of the institution is to the function of the institution. There are a few areas where I just was hoping we could get a bit of an update.

There was a recent staff capacity report. The House OIG advocated for raising the staff cap to 25 from 18 full-time employees as a short-term solution and then removing the cap altogether as a long-term solution. I was just hoping for your comment on those recommendations and if you can tell us what you think would be necessary to implement changes like that.

Ms. Szpindor. Well, we have spent some time reviewing the report from the OIG and talking with them, and we think it was, quite frankly, a very excellent report that they provided.

We generally support their conclusions that -- however, there are costs that I think everyone needs to be aware of, such as benefits and services, that are not covered by the MRAs. So I think some reasonable cap, probably around the 25-person cap that they were recommending, is a good number to start with.

To implement, of course, requires planning. And the first point is, the current staff cap is set in statute, so, of course, we would have to make sure that we take care of that change.

And then what we would like to do is work with the committee to make sure that

we are identifying the costs that would be requested for services and staff. Right now, those services and cost for benefits is not covered within the MRA, and that has been running, currently, approximately about 40 percent of the current cost of salary.

So those are things that we are going to need to look into. They are not anything that we cannot do, but just to make you aware that there are some things that we have determined that we are going to need to work with you on and work with the committee to make this happen.

The Chairman. Sticking on the theme of staff retention, I was hoping for an update on just two specific recommendations the committee made. We have made a host of recommendations related to expanding the tuition assistance program. And then you mentioned in your testimony the Staff Academy.

Ms. Szpindor. Yes.

The Chairman. And, certainly, opportunities for professional development can be part of retention.

One of our recommendations in the last Congress was for the creation of certification documents so individual staff positions, through the Congressional Staff Academy, you could, in essence, validate your continued training and get certified and kind of work your way up a certification ladder.

Can you give us just an update on both where things are with the certification within the Staff Academy and then the expansion of tuition assistance?

Ms. Szpindor. Certainly.

As far as our staff -- let's talk about the Staff Academy certifications first. As far as -- we do have some courses that are certified and we provide certifications for them. We are looking at other types of courses, and will continue to look, by which we can do that. We are looking, as I said, at developing classes right now for different staff to take

based on their particular position within a Member office.

We believe, if we build that out, not only just with the coach program that we are working on but also with our Staff Academy videos, instructor-led training, and others, that we will have a very good package of training that someone can take.

All of that is maintained within our system where we track our training, and anyone can go and get a complete listing of all the courses that they have completed successfully.

We are going to have to work at defining what is a required certification for a particular position within the House. And I think that is something we are going to have to work on with you to determine what are the qualifications for any positions that would determine that they are certified.

I think that another question that was asked at one point and some discussions we have had with the committee is around tuition assistance as well. And money would need to be appropriated, of course, for that, because usually some -- it can be anywhere between \$2 million to \$6 million annually that could be allotted for tuition assistance. But we are open to work with you on the tuition assistance program.

The Chairman. Okay. I am tempted to ask a followup on that, but I want to make --

Ms. Szpindor. Please.

The Chairman. -- sure to give other members time.

Ms. Szpindor. That is fine.

The Chairman. One thing I will -- and we can take it --

Mr. Timmons. Go ahead, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman. -- we can take it offline. I guess I am just wondering, that is not necessarily so, is it?

Because, currently, there are offices that don't fully tap the tuition assistance program as it is currently constructed, right, where you are basically paying off people's loans. You know, I think the idea of this committee is to give folks, kind of, front-end help if they are -- you know, if I have an MLA who wants to get a master's degree in national security, I could use part of that allotment and help them sort of pay the tuition in real-time rather than help do loan repayment on the back end.

I would love to see more funding appropriated to that. But I am just wondering, is that necessarily so? Couldn't an office choose to -- if we just changed the rules, couldn't an office use that allocation for that purpose?

Ms. Szpindor. We think that, if we work through House Admin, there are changes that are possible, yes.

The Chairman. Perfect.

Vice Chair Timmons.

Mr. Timmons. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

During Ms. Szpindor's testimony, I couldn't help but remember when I was an intern on the Hill and people would bring the letters around and you had the big auto-pen machine, and, inevitably, you never put the signature exactly where you wanted it, and it was always very stressful.

So the interns and staff assistants these days will not ever appreciate what it was like to be the last signature on a letter, now that we have electronic signatures. I just -- that struck me.

I want to ask about schedules, strangely enough.

Ms. Johnson, one of the biggest challenges to the workflow in Congress are the scheduling conflicts created by overlapping committee meeting times. In the 116th Congress, the committee recommended the creation of a committee calendar portal to

help reduce the number of conflicts.

Could you talk about what work has been done to implement that recommendation? And have you come across any challenges as this tool is being developed?

Ms. Johnson. As I mentioned in my oral statement and is expanded on in my written statement, we are looking to put out a request for information to work with an outside vendor to sit down with us and see what type of software we can develop for this. So we have not, as of yet, fully investigated all of the information that we need for this.

Personally, I was struck by, I mean, just even today's hearing, the fact that we had to change it to accommodate the votes that were going on on the floor today. So that certainly will be one of the matters that the vendor takes into consideration, how reactive we are to what goes on on a daily basis as Congress is constantly in flux.

Mr. Timmons. I think we all appreciate that. Is this something you think we could get done this year, or is that going to be a challenge?

Ms. Johnson. I would think -- I don't know how to answer that, in that we are going, at the end of this month, just to get a request for information. That is not even a request for a contractor. So information is just coming up with a design. So the first step would be trying to design such a system, and then the second step would be development. And, with everything that we do in the House, accuracy and security is paramount.

So we would like to strive towards this year, but we also have a number of other projects, and that is always the concern. With the number of recommendations that we are working on, where is the priority? Because, in terms of our project team, we only have one project team, and we have multiple projects. So that one project team is

working on the Comparative Print suite, the enhanced eHopper, and at the same time tending to day-to-day operations.

Mr. Timmons. Sure. No, I hear you, and I know that we have made a lot of recommendations. I think that the schedule -- between Congresses is always the best time to try to make changes to these conversations, and having that resource by the end of year, I think, would be very helpful. But we can talk about that more later.

I have one more question, again, Ms. Johnson: the committee's recommendation on a committee vote database. You mentioned the disparate systems and applications in use across committees and that careful consideration needs to be made as you implement that recommendation to ensure that we are improving workflow and transparency without causing unintended harm.

Can you expand on that? What are the challenges that we are facing with that recommendation?

Ms. Johnson. Again, each committee certainly has the discretion to design its voting system as it desires. There is no standardized process, as it is on the floor.

On the floor, as you know, votes are available -- within 15 minutes after the vote, you can go to the Clerk's website and pull up how a Member voted. With the committee, it is a little more challenging. The committee vote process may be open a lot longer, or there could be so many votes, there might -- you know, a defense committee hearing may have 15 votes, or Veterans' Affairs.

So, given the number of votes, given the varied committee process of votes, those are some of the challenges.

Mr. Timmons. Would you think that we should standardize that across committees and remove their ability to not have the same platform and application?

Or --

Ms. Johnson. Well, it would certainly help. I mean, standardization -- there are tradeoffs. Standardization certainly gets us quicker to more transparency. But, then, committees are unique. So we really have to -- you all should discuss what it is that you are willing to give up for the benefit of transparency.

But I want to be clear: We don't take a position here in the Clerk's Office. You make the decision, you provide us the reasonable time and sufficient resources, and we will certainly make certain that it is developed and implemented, and we will do so with very high-quality standards.

Mr. Timmons. Sure. I really appreciate that. Thank you.

I think that is something we should look into, Mr. Chairman, just creating a portal, a platform that everyone can use. It can be a versatile platform that meets all the different committees' needs, but standardization, I think, would go a long way.

Thank you, Ms. Johnson.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

The Chairman. Thanks, Vice Chair Timmons.

Mr. Latta.

And just a reminder to members: If you have a question, feel free to raise your virtual hand if you want to get in on this conversation.

Mr. Latta. Well, thanks very much, Chairman and Vice Chair, for today's hearing.

And to our witnesses, thanks very much for being with us.

My other life down here -- I am the ranker on Telecommunications and Energy and Commerce. I am just curious, with everything that we are doing electronically today, what are we doing in both of your spheres out there when it comes to making sure that we are cyber-secure out there?

Ms. Szpindor. Is that for me --

Mr. Latta. For both of you.

Ms. Szpindor. -- or for either one of us?

Mr. Latta. Right. For both of you.

Ms. Szpindor. And I am sorry. I didn't hear the question clearly. Could you please --

Mr. Latta. Yeah.

Ms. Szpindor. -- repeat it?

Mr. Latta. Again, with everything that we are doing electronically today, and, you know, again, we are not pushing as much paper, you know, we are trying to reduce that for your office and the Clerk's Office, what are you doing to make sure on the cyber side -- because, again, everything that we talk about today is how do we protect everything? Because, all of a sudden, all you have to do is have one attack and, all of a sudden, then we are really shut down. So what are we doing out there to protect ourselves?

Ms. Szpindor. Well, our cybersecurity team is working -- for everything that we roll out, for all the technology we have, they do assessments on all of our systems to make sure that they do meet cybersecurity requirements, that they are behind the proper firewalls, that they have the proper review and auditing and analysis that they require on an ongoing basis.

We have 7-by-24 support for our cybersecurity team by those who are monitoring to make sure there are not any unusual circumstances that are occurring.

We are currently under a review by KPMG of all of our cybersecurity processes, including staffing and policies, procedures that we are doing. And we have had them come in and do a review several years ago. We are doing it again. We want to make sure that there is nothing that we need to be including that we are not.

Mr. Latta. Madam Clerk?

Ms. Johnson. We use many of the systems and procedures that Catherine, the CAO, just mentioned. Cybersecurity is one of those areas where there is a lot of collaboration between the Clerk's Office and the CAO's Office.

I would also like to point out, with many of our systems, they are closed systems, meaning they are one-way. One of the examples I can give you is your voting card. Your voting card is an internal system, and that voting card could only be used to vote.

There was a proposal at one point, not by this committee, but there was a proposal at one point that the voting card might also be used as a security card to enter certain areas. And the Clerk's Office was completely against that, because we only want that voting card to have one dedicated purpose, to make certain that the vote is secure at all times.

But it is also exercised with most of our electronic functions -- checking and rechecking and rechecking, as Catherine mentioned.

Mr. Latta. Madam Clerk, let me follow up with another question. You know, as we always want to make sure things are flowing on the floor and keeping things moving, do you have suggestions on what we could do to make, you know, floor time the best time that we utilize? Any recommendations?

Ms. Johnson. I -- we --

Mr. Latta. Not to put you on the spot.

Mr. Johnson. I mean, personally, I just think we have come a long way with the -- you know, it is a little difficult to answer because we are in COVID now, and so votes tend to last longer because you are trying to do some type of distancing and not having so many people in the Chamber at one time.

But, prior to COVID, we had gotten down where, if there were a long series of

votes, we would have even 3- to 5-minute votes --

Mr. Latta. Right.

Ms. Johnson. -- for very long series.

Mr. Latta. I remember our 2-minute amendment votes.

Ms. Johnson. Yes. Correct.

And, you know, hopefully, we will get through this pandemic and we could go back to some sort of efficiency in voting.

Mr. Latta. Just a real quick followup on that, because, again, you know, when I first came down here, you know, we had our 15 minutes, and then we thought, well, let's try, you know, to keep things changing. We got things down to, you know, 5 minutes and then 2 minutes.

Is there any problem with those 2-minute votes for you all when we have those? Do we function pretty well right now with the 2 minutes?

Ms. Johnson. We function pretty efficiently with the 2-minute votes. We have a great -- a very, very, very good team.

Mr. Latta. Thank you.

Well, Mr. Chair, I am going to yield back the balance of my time.

The Chairman. Thanks, Mr. Latta.

Mr. Perlmutter.

Mr. Perlmutter. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

You know, just thinking about the different areas I was concerned about a few years ago about modernizing Congress, we have taken some really, I think, good steps on human resources, you know, updating and upgrading our personnel kinds of policies and things like that. And I want to thank this committee and our witnesses in that effort.

I think we have made some strides on technology. And part of it, you know, was

intentional, and part of it was "necessity is the mother of invention." We had to because of COVID, and, you know, the ability to really have good communication through a Zoom type of approach like this.

I am still concerned -- and I would ask the chairs that we do have the Architect of the Capitol join us for a hearing in the near future, because I am not -- I need to know more about the campus proposals and the layout he suggests.

Because one of the concerns we have all had is, the basic structure of a committee room, you know, does not lend itself to collaboration. It lends itself to conflict more than collaboration. This, actually, Zooming, you know, I can look at William and, you know, know if he is listening to me or not. You know, Dean is asleep; I know he is not. So, you know, it gives us a chance to really kind of just judge how people are responding to things.

So I would love to get the Architect of the Capitol in, and I am sorry he is not here.

Now, here is my question. And then I will yield to Mr. Phillips. But the one place where I see that there is something on the horizon but we haven't really implemented anything yet -- there will be significant change next year. Whether Democrats hold the House, there are a lot of people moving on -- for instance, me. If the Republicans take the House, there are going to be, obviously, changes -- is on that leadership training, so that if Mr. Latta or Mr. Timmons or Mr. Phillips are all suddenly chairs, that they know what the resources are, they know how to run their committee, they are able to hit the ground running.

So my question to you two is, what are we doing on the leadership training piece of these things?

Ms. Szpindor. I can go first.

For Members and for their Member offices or to assist them also with any other

responsibilities they may have with committees, I mentioned we are -- and I am personally interviewing people, looking for some of the top consultants in management/leadership training in the United States.

And I have worked with my staff; we have selected some individuals to participate and a person to lead that particular team of individuals. We hope to have more information on it in the next couple of weeks.

Because, right now, what we are doing, for those that we have selected, we are getting them onboarded from an acquisition standpoint, but we are also looking to give them some preliminary training on a framework that we are recommending that they all understand and adhere to.

So, even though every consultant may be approaching things a little differently, they are all adhering to the same overarching framework for how they are going to work with the Members one-on-one, with their staff, and help them in, one, setting goals for their offices, two, understanding that they are needing their team to work together to make sure that the Member is able to perform the functions that he has to perform or she has to perform.

Mr. Perlmutter. I guess I would also suggest that, if they are out there -- and I don't know whether they are -- that, you know, from both sides of the aisle, you know, maybe somebody who has chaired a particular committee, you know, and has gone through, you know, trial by fire as to how to manage and run the committee -- because there will be business aspects that a management consultant could present but also the political and sort of management aspects of being a Member of Congress.

So, if there are some retired folks out there who have been chairs, you might bring them in for a class or two, would be my suggestion.

Ms. Szpindor. And we have discussed that. We --

Mr. Perlmutter. Okay.

Ms. Szpindor. -- have discussed that.

We are also working with the Congressional Management Foundation to provide us some podcasts with discussions by previous Members of Congress on various topics as well. And we will be introducing that also in the next several weeks.

Mr. Perlmutter. Okay. Thank you.

And I will yield back to the chair.

Ms. Johnson. Could I --

Mr. Perlmutter. Oh, sure.

The Chairman. Yes, please go ahead.

Ms. Johnson. Could I just add that, here in the Clerk's Office, we have a course called "Committee Clerk" in the Congressional Academy where we train the committee clerks to make certain that, in any transition -- and even if there is not a transition in leadership; just on a day-to-day basis, there is a lot of turnover -- but to make certain that the committee clerks continue to have development, professional development.

Mr. Perlmutter. Great. That is exactly what I am talking about, or it could be the committee parliamentarian or counsel or --

Ms. Johnson. Right.

Mr. Perlmutter. -- whatever too. All right. Thank you. I am glad to hear that.

And I will yield back.

The Chairman. Thanks, Mr. Perlmutter.

Mr. Phillips.

Mr. Phillips. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Szpindor, I would like to ask you about space. You know, as you know, we

have made some recommendations about allocation of space, one of them creating a bipartisan Members gathering area in the Capitol.

As you think about space allocation in the Capitol complex, you know, what do you think are the most pressing issues that we face? And if you could wave a magic wand and make some changes, what might they be?

Ms. Szpindor. Well, first of all, happy birthday.

Mr. Phillips. Thank you.

Ms. Szpindor. And, you know, space is a premium, even for the CAO. We have I think every inch of every office that we have fully utilized.

I do believe that we are doing a good job in administering any of the committee rooms that we have. We have a registration process for that. But, as far as additional space, we beg and borrow, as well, within the CAO to negotiate any additional space.

I don't have a lot of input into space for the Members, other than we make sure that the space you have, we have our teams and our logistics group that are going to help you in designing and trying to make the most optimum use of the space that you do have.

Mr. Phillips. May I just ask, just for my own edification, you know, who controls space ultimately? Whose domain is that?

And I am not sure if anybody has a complete grasp on this. If you could just articulate, you know, who ultimately makes those decisions in the Capitol complex, at least on the House side in this case.

Ms. Szpindor. We go through our Committee on House Administration to request space for us.

Mr. Phillips. Okay.

Ms. Szpindor. And we are working also at times with the Architect of the Capitol. I think that they primarily are the ones that have a pulse on all the space that is available

across the Capitol buildings.

Mr. Phillips. Okay. All right. Well, thank you, ma'am. I appreciate it.

Ms. Johnson, one quick question for you too. In your testimony, you had articulated a system to track lobbying disclosures. And I would love if you might just spend a moment just sharing with us a little bit more on that and letting us know if you believe you have the authorities and the funding already to pursue such a system.

Mr. Johnson. Currently, we do not have the authority. We --

Mr. Phillips. Okay.

Ms. Johnson. -- are still in discussions. The committee hasn't given us direction in terms of how far we should go.

And this is one -- because lobbying disclosure is in conjunction with the Senate side as well, so it is both chambers working together --

Mr. Phillips. Yeah.

Ms. Johnson. -- on that project.

Mr. Phillips. Okay. All right. I appreciate it.

I yield back. Thank you very much.

Ms. Johnson. And happy birthday as well.

Mr. Phillips. Thank you so much. I do appreciate it.

The Chairman. Indeed, happy birthday, Mr. Phillips.

Let me just ask -- I am not seeing if anybody else has further questions.

I am just curious on two fronts: one, whether -- you know, obviously, a lot of offices over the last year have figured out how to telework. And my sense is, that is going to be part of the institution's future, where you may not go back to having every member of a staff in every single day.

That may actually be helpful as we look at, for example, raising the staff cap,

because there is a question of, how do you fit all these people into one office?

I guess I am just curious for your thoughts on that, going forward.

The other thing I want to ask: One of the recommendations the committee just made prior to the holidays was around, sort of, co-working space. You know, I think our thought here is that you would have some space set aside that, if a couple offices wanted to collaborate on something or even, let's just say for the sake of argument you had 25 people in the office on a given day and you had to have someplace for a team member to go, that there might be some space that -- you know, not unlike we see in private industry, where there are, sort of, co-working opportunities.

Do you see that as something that could be implemented? Is that more likely to be implemented in the realm of more teleworking happening?

Ms. Johnson. Well, I can go first.

And, even before the pandemic, the fact that some of our staff is in O'Neill, across the highway, here with our offices in the Capitol we have some hotel space so that that space is dedicated for persons who need to be in the Capitol or closer to the floor on a given day. Persons would not work at their O'Neill space but would take a desk and a computer here in the Capitol.

And in terms of what we are doing right now, we -- for protective staffing, we have, let's say, six tally clerks. Currently, we are only bringing in two or three a day -- we have Team A and Team B -- to make certain that we have a healthy staff number at all times to support legislative operations. So three would work from home and three would come in, depending on what day it is. Because our concern is always to have the appropriate staff to make certain that Congress can continue its business on a daily basis.

But, yes, in the future, we do see more and more telework. I think it is the only way we are going to be able to stay competitive, particularly with our IT persons.

Ms. Szpindor. And I would tell you, I am a proponent of people teleworking, even without the pandemic. It has been necessary, but I do believe it is what we are going to see in the future.

One, as we look to fill positions, particularly technical positions, more and more individuals are asking in the interview if they could telework. It is growing in popularity.

And I will tell you, a huge majority of our staff do telework every single day, especially our engineers on the IT side in the HIR. In the past 2 years, we have moved data centers remotely, copying data from one data center to the other. There is very little that many of our organizations cannot do remotely.

Of course, we have to have our logistics crew onsite. We have to have our continuity group, many of them, onsite at times. There are some of our payroll, our front -- our Member-facing, staff-facing organizations have, from the very beginning of COVID, been onsite, and commendably so, supporting and making sure that the House operations continue to work like they are supposed to.

And I know Cheryl --

The Chairman. We sure appreciate that. Please thank them for us too.

Ms. Szpindor. Yeah. They work very, very hard.

The Chairman. Can I just ask -- and, unless other members have additional questions, I will perhaps wrap up with this. This may be asking you to make an admission against interests, because, as we have peppered you with recommendations, perhaps your thought is, "Please, dear God, stop."

But as you look at the -- you know, the mission of this committee is just to make Congress work better for the American people. Are there areas under your purview, under your jurisdiction, that you think, hey, I am surprised the committee hasn't pulled on this string, or, hey, this is an area of opportunity?

We have another year for the existence of this committee before it hits its end date. I am just curious if there are areas where you think, hey, this is an area of opportunity to improve how the institution works and the committee ought to look at it.

Ms. Szpindor. We have things going in so many different areas at the request of the committee and other individuals to improve and modernize, I really think that we are good --

The Chairman. I think I heard you say --

Ms. Szpindor. -- we are good where we are right now.

The Chairman. -- "Please, dear God, stop," but in a more diplomatic way.

Ms. Szpindor. We still have a lot of the recommendations that is going to take us -- we are doing it, you know, a phase at a time, and will take us another year or so to complete.

I do want to say one thing. For both you and -- Congressmen Kilmer and Timmons, your staff have been so wonderful to work with.

The Chairman. Thank you.

Ms. Szpindor. They have collaborated with us. It has been a joy over the past year, quite frankly, to sit down with them and actually go over things and get a better understanding from them and us be able to work collaboratively. It has been a great experience.

So, if there are other ideas that you may have or that we can think of, we will certainly pass them on, but we will work to try and deliver what you are asking us to do.

The Chairman. Terrific.

Ms. Johnson, any comments on that?

Ms. Johnson. I would like to echo what the CAO just stated. Your staff, both Chair Kilmer and Vice Chair Timmons, are extremely helpful, extremely reasonable, and

very, very committed. And to the extent that we identify challenges, they are very receptive. And I have been very, very impressed with working with them and look forward to continuing that.

I would just say, in terms of the recommendations, mine that I would recommend that you continue to emphasize are probably in the area of the CAO, which has to do with personnel. I think this institution is just second to none. And to continue that in years and decades going forward, to make certain that we continue to have high-quality staff by providing them good salaries and good benefits and good working conditions.

Thank you.

The Chairman. Thanks very much.

Let me just see if any other members have additional questions.

Mr. Phillips, your hand is up. I assume that is just a relic of your prior question.

Mr. Phillips. Yes, it is a relic. I will virtually take it down.

The Chairman. All right.

Well, with that, I want to thank our witnesses for their testimony today and thank our committee members for their participation.

I will echo the words of both of our witnesses with gratitude to our staff, not just for pulling together another informative hearing but for their work. I think, insofar as possible, we are trying to do this work with you, not to you. So, appreciate your collaboration and the work of our staff in that regard.

Without objection, all members will have 5 legislative days within which to submit additional written questions for the witnesses to the chair, which will be forwarded to the witnesses for their response. I ask our witnesses to please respond as promptly as you are able.

[The information follows:]

***** COMMITTEE INSERT *****

The Chairman. Without objection, all members will have 5 legislative days within which to submit extraneous materials to the chair for inclusion in the record.

[The information follows:]

***** COMMITTEE INSERT *****

The Chairman. I also want to just thank the team at C-SPAN for showing our hearing today. I am sure we are tearing it up on ratings at 6:00 a.m. Pacific time. We are killing it, you guys.

I think we are also on Twitch, so I would like to thank all gamers out there for watching our hearing as well.

Ed Perlmutter, I will explain to you what Twitch is when we adjourn.

So, with that, everybody, our hearing is adjourned. Thanks, everybody.

[Whereupon, at 10:02 a.m., the committee was adjourned.]