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Testimony for Modernization Committee Member Day: Fixing Congress
April 15, 2021

I thank the Chair and the Vice Chair for working together in a bipartisan manner to hold this hearing and I appreciate the opportunity to offer testimony.

During these deeply polarized and challenging times, the work of the Select Committee to make Congress more effective, efficient, and transparent on behalf of the American people is more critical than ever. I am encouraged by the collaborative and innovative spirit shown by the Select Committee.

Associate Justice of the Supreme Court Louis Brandeis popularized the phrase states “are the laboratories of democracy.” As a former California State Senator and Assemblymember, former County Supervisor, former City Councilmember and Mayor, and former Executive Board member of the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), I have a deep understanding of the prominent role states and localities play in experimenting and setting policies that affect day-to-day life and the economy more broadly.

My recommendations are all in this spirit.

My first recommendation is that the Select Committee establish an independent and nonpartisan group responsible for maintaining a centralized database of federal, state, and local legislation from across the nation.

This repository would allow lawmakers and staff to more easily explore whether policy ideas they are exploring have been tested across the country and better identify successful policy interventions.

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It is past time that we leverage the knowledge produced by our nation's great laboratories and democratic experiments to create more efficient and impactful legislation.

Secondly, I would offer that developing a body at the federal level to provide independent, nonpartisan analysis of bills introduced in Congress would benefit lawmakers and constituents alike.

In California, the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) provides fiscal and policy advice to the Legislature. Among its responsibilities, it provides unbiased analyses of bills and policy proposals offered in the Legislature. Having a body that can take the messaging and politics out of a bill analysis could go a long way toward restoring faith in Congress and bridging the partisan divide.

Finally, and more broadly, I would like to encourage the Select Committee to continue its vital work of reviewing best practices from state legislatures around the country and other legislatures around the world, which provides Congress with important insights into effective processes and procedures.

Again, I thank the Select Committee for seeking input from colleagues and the opportunity to offer testimony.

I support the Select Committee's continued bipartisan problem-solving work to revitalize Congress and ensure it better serves the American people.