

Rep. Doug LaMalfa Testimony:

Chair Kilmer, Vice Chair Timmons, and Members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify at this Member Day for the Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress.

I also want to thank you for the work you have put into investigating ways to improve the way Congress works. The 97 recommendations that were released on Oct 14, 2020 include many important ways we can bring Congress into the 21st Century.

One theme I believe is important to highlight is transparency. So much of what Congress does remains opaque, confusing, and inefficient.

The first thing I want to touch on is the House Calendar—included in your recommendations are ideas on how to improve the congressional schedule and calendar, allowing Members less time traveling and more time to legislate and solve the problems facing our country and our constituents. This would be incredibly helpful especially the section dealing with Committee scheduling—all too often in the past few years we have had Committee hearings interrupted by votes being called. Or we have had to delay the start times for votes to finish, which leaves the witnesses to sit around wasting their time. And if we try to keep the hearing going and have members rush to the floor to vote and then rush back to the hearing, it breaks up the continuity of the exchanges with witnesses and we have repeated questions which cuts down on the time we have for meaningful exchanges to actually learn and hear from those experts that we have brought in.

On top of the conflict with votes, there is also the scheduling conflicts of multiple committees at the same time, where again members need to go from one to the other cutting short their time. In my case, I sit on both Transportation and Infrastructure and Agriculture and they often have hearings simultaneously. I fully support the efforts of this Select Committee in finding creative ways to eliminate these scheduling conflicts and improve the overall manner in which the House functions. The more quality time members can put in, the better the legislative solutions, will come from the House.

The second issue I want to touch on is issues with the Congressional websites. I have had many constituents voice concerns with Congressional websites and the difficulty navigating them. Again, this shows that Congress lags behind in technological improvements. The recommendations from this committee identify some of the challenges that face Congress and offering some solutions that would help mitigate these concerns and make it easier for us to communicate effectually with constituents and for them to keep informed on what is being done back here in D.C..

On the topic of constituent engagement, I want to touch briefly on Franking. One of the recommendations from this Select Committee is to consolidate the regulations governing member office communications into one place—this would be incredibly helpful to my office as we work to communicate with my constituents.

Thank you for this opportunity and I look forward to continued improvements that we can make to bring Congress into the 21st Century, so we can continue to serve our constituents to the best of our ability.