

**Statement for Rep. Derek Kilmer (WA-6)
House Committee on Appropriations
Legislative Branch Subcommittee
Member Day, March 5, 2020**

Chairman Ryan and Ranking Member Herrera Beutler, thank you for hosting today's Member Day hearing. Ensuring that the House of Representatives is equipped to uphold its Article One responsibilities is important and challenging work and I thank you for your leadership.

I am here today to talk about the work of the Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress, which I chair alongside Vice Chair Tom Graves. We work as partners, as do our committee members. I have been incredibly impressed and encouraged by the collaboration on the Select Committee. We are proving that it's possible for Members from both sides of the aisle to sit down together, engage in tough discussions, listen and learn from one another, and ultimately find bipartisan solutions to the challenges we all face.

The Select Committee's guiding principle is to make Congress work better so that we can better serve the American people. This simple but profound goal guides all of our work; it helps us identify institutional problems and develop helpful solutions. So far the Select Committee has unanimously passed 45 recommendations to improve the way Congress works.

We do not have legislative authority but are introducing our recommendations as legislation to ensure that they actually get implemented further on down the road. H. Res. 756, which contains our first two sets of recommendations, was introduced in December and we're expecting floor action soon.

Today Vice Chair Graves and I want to highlight some of the Select Committee's recommendations that we think the Legislative Branch Subcommittee should fund. Investing in these recommendations would improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the legislative branch so that we can better serve the American people.

Select Committee Members believe that Congress is stronger when Members find ways to work together to solve problems and civility is key to making Congress a more productive institution. In order to encourage more bipartisan work at the committee level, the Select Committee requests an allotment of appropriated funds to committees for the sole purpose of establishing bipartisan briefings, trainings, and retreats. This would promote productive engagement across the aisle and encourage better policy making.

The Select Committee has and will continue to look at congressional staff recruitment, retention, and diversity issues. Staff are the backbone of this institution and Congress must do more to attract and hold onto the best and brightest. Increased funding for intern pay, including interns working in district offices, would help open doors for those who can't afford to work for free while bolstering a pipeline of future potential staff. Increased funding for staff development and training programs would help prepare and broaden the skill sets of staff who are often expected to do multiple jobs or cover multiple policy issues. The Select Committee also encourages the subcommittee to support the Chief Administrative Officer in establishing a much-needed centralized human resources office. And we encourage the subcommittee to check in regularly with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion to see what support they need to be successful.

This year, we celebrate the 30th anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act. While much progress has been made, there is still a lot of work to do to ensure Americans with disabilities do

not face discrimination. The Select Committee recommends investing in consistent audio and video recording of House hearings, as well as funding to impart ADA compliant practices in all committees and floor proceedings.

The Select Committee has also sought ways to improve efficiency through technology. We recommended updating House procedures to allow Members to electronically add or remove their names from bills and encourage the subcommittee to fund costs associated with modernizing these procedures. We also encourage the subcommittee to support the Committee on House Administration and the Franking Commission as they update and develop social media guidelines for Members.

Making Congress work better for the American people is a worthwhile investment. The Select Committee sees value in modernizing this institution so that we're not relying on outdated processes and technologies to address 21st century problems. But modernizing doesn't always mean spending; the Select Committee has also recommended streamlining purchases across the House and Senate and encouraging House-wide bulk purchasing of goods and services to cut back on waste and inefficiency.

On behalf of the Select Committee on Modernization, I appreciate your consideration of these requests and am happy to provide additional information to support your work.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak before the subcommittee today.