



**Testimony of Joshua Bonet**  
**Legislative Associate, Issue One**  
**Before the House Appropriations Committee**  
**Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch for Fiscal Year 2025**

April 15, 2024

Chair Valadao, Ranking Member Espaillat, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on a matter that will help strengthen the legislative branch and ensure that Congress is fulfilling its Article I constitutional responsibilities.

My name is Joshua Bonet, and I lead the congressional modernization portfolio for Issue One, a leading crosspartisan organization working with Republicans, Democrats, and independents to advance pragmatic solutions to tackle the biggest challenges to our broken political system. Modernization efforts in Congress are crucial to strengthening democracy, as it enhances congressional capacity and preparedness to effectively represent the American people, while also fostering trust from the public towards the legislative branch.

Issue One's goal is to "fix Democracy first." In tune with that mission, we understand that building a representative, resilient and effective legislative branch is core to reaching our goal of fixing democracy. Keeping that in consideration, I request that the Modernization Initiatives Account (MIA) maintain level funding in FY2025 at \$10 million.

We commend the Subcommittee on Modernization for implementing a series of reforms that were first raised by the Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress. We also commend



your work within the Legislative Branch Appropriations Subcommittee for investing in a more robust and capable institution of Congress over the past few budget cycles. Moreover, we thank leadership on both sides of the aisle for establishing a permanent body focused on fixing Congress. This sort of collaborative spirit is the foundation of a healthy institution, and of a representative democracy.

Advancing bipartisan reforms to how Congress functions is necessary for rebuilding trust in Congress, and retaining the Modernization Initiatives Account is central to this mission of reform.

The MIA is the result of a recommendation from the bipartisan Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress. It secures \$10 million to implement operational and technological improvements that make Congress more effective and efficient. As a result of this investment, many proposed reforms have been actualized, including the early iteration of Deconflict by the House Digital Service and a legislative staff directory — both solutions which help build more congressional capacity and efficiency. More recent initiatives supported by the MIA encompass the creation and testing of FlagTrack, a tool designed to streamline the processing of constituent flag requests.

The MIA has strong bipartisan support and cross-committee support. Throughout fiscal year 2022, the Committee on Appropriations' Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch supported modernization projects by funding the MIA. For fiscal year 2023, the Appropriations Committee



passed legislation that increased the MIA from \$2 million to \$10 million<sup>1</sup>. Once more, this indicates the growing bipartisan momentum to make the institution better and a commitment to democracy during times of strong hyperpartisanship and distress because of bad actors inside and outside of Congress.

As time passes, these continued investments will help implement critical congressional reforms and projects already underway. The MIA sets aside resources to advance modernization efforts for meaningful and lasting change in Congress, including allowing offices to leverage and support a range of modernization related-activities.

Enthusiasm for representative democracy has declined in recent years – this extends to democratic institutions. [Polling](#) shows that many Americans lack faith in the legislative branch. Gallup’s annual update on trust in government institutions indicates Americans have the least faith in the legislative branch with only 44% responding they share a great deal or fair amount of confidence in Congress<sup>2</sup>. Building institutional legitimacy is no easy task, but the project of democracy can only survive if there’s trust between social actors and the entities representing them on their behalf.

A 2024 survey conducted by the Pew Research Center found that respondents described *government reform* as a possible solution to build trust in democracy as “many believe

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. House of Representatives. (2022). Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress: Final Report (117th Congress). Retrieved from [https://www.webharvest.gov/congress117th/20221224193203/https://modernizecongress.house.gov/imo/media/doc/modernization\\_committee\\_final\\_report\\_117th\\_congress.pdf](https://www.webharvest.gov/congress117th/20221224193203/https://modernizecongress.house.gov/imo/media/doc/modernization_committee_final_report_117th_congress.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Gallup. (2022, February 9). Americans' trust in local government, Congress least. Gallup. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/512651/americans-trust-local-government-congress-least.aspx>



improving democracy will require significant political reform in their country.”<sup>3</sup> Similarly, respondents listed *improving political leadership* as another potential resolution to achieve better governance, bolster competency and responsiveness to the public needs.

Fixing Congress should be part of the agenda in each and every budget discussion to restore Congress’ Article I role, strengthen oversight, and better serve constituents. A robust, effective first branch relies on all of us, but those serving in Congress must lead the way. Members of Congress deserve credit for investing in the institution, but just appropriating funds won’t suffice. Members must actually use these funds to support and revitalize Congress, and that is why the ongoing work of the Subcommittee on Modernization is of the utmost importance.

We encourage members to continue investing in the legislative branch, as well as to identify additional pathways to make the institution more effective, efficient, transparent, and representative of all those who make up American plurality. Undoubtedly, the MIA is one of the best resources available to reach our collective goal for a healthier and more robust Congress. Congress must continue building from it and holding discussions to bolster its utility.

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<sup>3</sup> Pew Research Center. (2024, February 28). Representative democracy remains a popular ideal, but people around the world are critical of how it's working. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2024/02/28/representative-democracy-remains-a-popular-ideal-but-people-around-the-world-are-critical-of-how-its-working/>



Thank you again for this opportunity and for your time. As an organization committed to supporting a strong legislative branch, Issue One stands ready to provide information, counsel, and assistance to the Subcommittee.