

**Testimony of Daniel Schuman Before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on
the Legislative Branch, FY 2027, Concerning Sustaining Technological
Modernization and Innovation in the House of Representatives**

Dear Chair Valadao, Ranking Member Espaillat, and members of the House Legislative Branch Appropriations Subcommittee:

Thank you for providing the opportunity for written public witness testimony. I commend the Committee's efforts over the years aimed at responsibly strengthening congressional operations and look forward to advancing congressional modernization on a bipartisan basis for FY 2027. I respectfully request that the Subcommittee provide sufficient funding for 1 FTE within the House Clerk's Office to support the Congressional Data Task Force in furtherance of legislative branch data and technology initiatives.

My name is Daniel Schuman, and I serve as the Executive Director of the American Governance Institute, a non-profit organization dedicated to renewing and modernizing the institutions of American government. I am a former congressional staffer and a longtime supporter of the Subcommittee's work.

I submit this testimony to encourage further support for the Congressional Data Task Force. The Appropriations Committee created the task force, originally called the Legislative Branch Bulk Data Task Force, in 2012 to facilitate greater openness and access to congressional information.¹ Its main successes have been the establishment

¹ H. Rept. 112-511

of common data standards across the legislative branch and the creation of a forum for stakeholders. Since 2012, CDTF has provided an essential collaboration platform for leadership, committees, personal offices, legislative branch support offices and agencies, parliamentary institutions worldwide, and the public. The Congressional Data Task Force has changed the working culture of Congress for the better and is the most significant modernization success I have seen in my 25 years in Washington.

The datasets CDTF has unlocked have allowed developers to create congressional-focused applications that were heretofore impossible to build. Creative individuals with technical skills across the legislative branch are increasingly experimenting with their own tools and applications. We saw this most vividly at the latest Congressional Hackathon, an event co-sponsored by the House Speaker, Minority Leader, and the Chief Administrative Officer, which featured a coding session using congressionally generated data with nearly eighty developers participating and produced seven new prototypes. Legislative branch staff, members of civil society, and private companies also demonstrated a myriad of tools they built for congressional users and the public, including tools that use artificial intelligence to analyze legislative branch datasets.

I've watched the pace of internal innovation build since my time at the Sunlight Foundation in 2009 and accelerate following the founding of the Congressional Data Coalition in 2014. **The confluence of institutional and public good-minded technical talent, accessible datasets, and emerging AI platforms now have the**

potential to make the United States Congress the most technologically innovative and capable parliament on the globe. To make that happen, however, the legislative branch needs further investment in its coordinative capacity.

We still need to do the basics. First, the congressional tech community still needs support in cataloging what legislative branch datasets exist and where they reside across various offices. Thanks to you, this process is beginning to be addressed through the creation of a congressional data map, but that map must be continuously updated and made available to all. Second, congressional stakeholders need a central resource for tracking various *technology projects* that relate to congressional information. The Appropriations direction on the co-development of technology is a step in the right direction, but we need a catalog of projects just as a map of datasets is now emerging.

Third, Congress has long invested in AI platforms, but the rise of generative AI provides additional opportunities and challenges. The Committee on House Administration has provided instruction to the CAO to establish standards for the use of AI and has directed offices and agencies to catalog those projects, but more is necessary to create a comprehensive framework and exchange of ideas.² Indeed, there are excellent examples of AI adoption from abroad that are worth considering.³ Given the variety of AI-related activity, there is also a need for continued mapping of existing projects and

² "CHA, CAO Announce House of Representatives AI Policy," September 19, 2024, Committee on House Administration website

<https://cha.house.gov/2024/9/cha-cao-announce-house-of-representatives-ai-policy>

³ "AI Use Cases in Parliament," International Parliamentary Union, <https://www.ipu.org/ai-use-cases>

for encouraging the development of appropriate internal AI-enabled tools, including GenAI, that expand congressional capacity.

I respectfully request that the House Appropriations Committee set aside funds for a full-time position to support the coordination efforts of the Congressional Data Task Force and its work to strengthen collaboration on legislative branch data and technology initiatives. The Task Force does tremendous work across the legislative branch, but the staff supporting its activities wear too many hats. We should build on this successful legislative branch-wide collaborative forum by providing the Task Force with the modest additional resource necessary to scale its work. Doing so will facilitate greater further information sharing and collaboration and reduce bottlenecks and duplication. Furthermore, direct staffing support would enable CDTF to increase the frequency of its communications with the congressional community.

Currently, Kirsten Gullickson in the House Clerk's Office serves as the Coordinator and Chair of the Congressional Data Task Force. She should be supported by a full-time senior professional with experience working with the legislative branch and civil society partners. The Congressional Data Task Force exists because of this Subcommittee's leadership, and its continued success depends on modest but sustained institutional support.

Thank you for your consideration. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss these recommendations further.