

**Written Statement for Rep. Derek Kilmer (WA-6)**  
**Committee on House Administration**  
**Member Day, November 21, 2019**

Chairperson Lofgren and Ranking Member Davis, thank you for hosting today's Member Day hearing. Thank you for your leadership of the Committee on House Administration, and for your partnership on the Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress.

I am here today to talk about the important work of the Select Committee on Modernization, which I chair. We have been tremendously fortunate to work closely with the Committee on House Administration and I look forward to our continued collaboration. As you know, many of the issues in our mandate are issues that the Committee on House Administration has been diligently working on for decades. We are very fortunate to have your committee's expertise and guidance as we do the Select Committee's work.

Every few decades, Congress takes a look inward and decides it needs to fix itself. Historically, Congress has formed bipartisan Select Committees and charged them with figuring out what the problems are and recommending solutions. The Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress is the latest incarnation (the last one was in 1992).

The Select Committee on Modernization was created as part of the House Rules package for the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress and consists of six Democrats and six Republicans.

Our mandate is pretty broad. We are tasked with looking at:

- Rules to promote a more modern and efficient Congress;
- Procedures, including the schedule and calendar;
- Policies to develop the next generation of leaders;
- Staff recruitment, diversity, retention, and compensation and benefits;
- Administrative efficiencies;
- Technology and innovation;
- And franking and digital communications.

The Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress has also looked at issues that do not fit neatly into its mandate, but that committee members feel are important. For example, the committee held a recent hearing on encouraging civility and collaboration in Congress – something our members agreed was really important to talk about, especially now.

The Select Committee does not have legislative authority. But we are packaging our recommendations into legislation as a way of ensuring that they actually get implemented further on down the road. By moving legislation to implement our reforms in “real time,” we hope to have the opportunity to support the work of the referral committees. This innovative approach sets us apart from our predecessor reform committees, none of which introduced legislation to implement their recommendations before they were officially dissolved.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi recently extended the Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress through the end of the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress, for which I am very grateful. The Select Committee was originally set to expire at the end of this year but now we have an additional year to continue working to modernize Congress so that we

can better serve the American people. Receiving this year-long extension also sets us apart from our predecessor committees and we intend to use the additional time to dig into tough issues and continue churning out recommendations and legislation.

There are a couple of additional things about the Select Committee that I think make it really unique.

- It is truly bipartisan. I mentioned that we have six Democrats and six Republicans. I chair the Committee and Rep. Tom Graves (R-GA) serves as Vice Chair. We work as partners, as do our committee members. Our members have formed a number of issue-specific working groups and meet regularly to explore problems and hammer out recommendations. The bipartisan collaboration on this committee has been so encouraging.
- We have a unified, non-partisan staff with one budget and one office. This breaks with the tradition of dividing resources between the parties.
- Over the past several months, our committee staff have held ongoing listening sessions with personal and committee staff in order to solicit input on how to best modernize Congress. Between our staff and our members, we have heard ideas from over 300 House staffers and 150 members. The problems we hear about are the same, regardless of party or position. If anything is clear, it is that we are all in this together. We face the same challenges in trying to do our jobs and we all want to do better by the American people.
- We are adopting recommendations on a rolling basis. Most previous Select Committees have issued end-of-the-year reports that contain all of their recommendations. Our approach is to

move when we have consensus. So far we have unanimously passed 29 recommendations.

- We have also played around with some small – but not insignificant – things. For example, we sometimes mix up the seating at our hearings so that members are not divided by party. And when we did a hearing on next generation leadership issues, we handed the gavel over to our two freshman members to co-chair.

I want to close with a few words about the Select Committee's process and progress thus far.

The Select Committee's game plan has been to start with small but important wins, while building support and buy-in as we move on to more challenging topics. Our work so far this year reflects this plan. The extension we recently received, combined with the institutional support we have worked so hard to build over the course of this year, will help us as we work through the tough issues we intend to take up next year.

We look forward to working with the Committee on House Administration as the legislation implementing our reforms moves forward. We understand that that legislative version of most of our recommendations will end up in this committee and we will do our part to support and promote your process and work.

Thank you again for your leadership and support.