

Congressman Pete Olson (TX-22) Testimony
Committee on House Administration
November 21, 2019

Chairwoman Lofgren, Ranking Member Davis and members of the Committee:

As members of the United States Congress, the work we do has a direct impact on the lives AND businesses of the people in our districts. In times of crisis, people look to their elected leaders to guide them to help.

And yet, as members of Congress, our ability to highlight the success of local organizations and to act as a resource to our constituents during times of crisis is hampered by rules that make no sense.

I can go to the floor of the House of Representatives on a Monday afternoon and make a speech honoring the amazing work of an organization like the Red Cross, but on Monday night I am prevented from putting the text of that same speech on social media.

I'm not talking about some hypothetical — this is a very real disparity, and I have firsthand knowledge of the negative impact it can have.

Two years ago, in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey, people across my district, TX22, bombarded my office with messages asking, **“Where can I go to help?”**

You'd think the answer would be easy — but it wasn't.

Hands tied by House rules, all I could do was say, “There are plenty of places you can go. I suggest you look them up.”

That's not what I wanted to say, but it's what I had to say.

Of course, if I went to the House Floor, I could have rattled off dozens of organizations that were on the ground, repairing homes, hosting blood drives and in desperate need of volunteers.

That's not fair.

I can't promote official VA Veterans Health fairs on social media — even if hosted by a local VFW, if the VFW is located at a private venue. Vets don't get care because we can't let them know where to go to get assistance.

That's not fair.

It's not fair to the people of TX22, and it's not fair to anyone who looks to their member of Congress for help, or some small bit of recognition for doing something that makes our communities better.

I ask that the Committee on House Administration revisit and reform current rules.

Our constituents deserve it, and the Freedom of Speech provided to all Americans in our Constitution demands it.

Thank you.