

Congressman Jack Bergman
Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress Testimony
March 12, 2019

Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on the subject of the modernization of the U.S. congress.

Having just begun my 2nd term as a Member of Congress, I'd like to offer the Committee my opinions of what I believe modernization should truly encompass.

I applaud the House and Member of this Committee who are here to look for ways to make Congress a more effective legislative body.

But as I look at the list of areas we have tasked you to focus on: policies to develop the next generation of leaders, technology and innovation, and rules to promote a more modern and efficient Congress –

These are all commendable goals, and should be looked at, of course –

But I believe that only focusing on the inner workings of Congress just addresses symptoms of our dysfunction, and not the real source of the problem.

If we are to truly fix some of our deep-rooted, significant institutional problems, we must look at the vision of our founding fathers and the document that we all hold dear in carrying out our oaths of office—the Constitution.

Twice in our country's history we have amended the Constitution to reflect necessary change in our elected leadership

The first – via the 17th amendment – in 1913, we changed the election of senators from being elected by the state legislatures to an election by the popular vote.

The second – via the 22nd amendment – in 1951, we limited the term of the president of the US to two terms.

But it should be noted that we have never in the history of our country changed, modified, or amended the way we elect our U.S. House of Representatives.

We now have the opportunity, while we attempt to modernize Congress, to look at the realities of what it takes to be an effective Member of the House of Representatives in the 21st century and to enable us to function in such a way that we are serving our constituents in the best way possible.

I believe the time is now, to start the conversation about changing, via an amendment to the Constitution, how we elect our US Representatives.

While there are many options available, I believe:

1- Changing the term of office from 2 years to 4 years

and

2- Limiting the number of terms that a rep can serve to 5 consecutive terms, applying to members elected in the 115th Congress and forward, will yield the most effective long term results while maintaining the founder's vision.

With those changes, starting with members elected in the 115th Congress and moving forward, it will enable our representatives to better serve the American people, the country, and to continue the vision of our founders that enabled us to live in a free society governed by the people and for the people.

Modernization should be more than addressing the inner workings and administrative functions of Congress.

The task laid out to this Select Committee is a formidable one, and I appreciate the Committee's time and attention this morning.