

Union Calendar No. 329

116TH CONGRESS }
2d Session }

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

{ REPORT
{ 116-407

**RECOMMENDATIONS TO STREAMLINE HOUSE
HUMAN RESOURCES, OVERHAUL THE
ONBOARDING PROCESS, IMPROVE MEMBER
CONTINUING EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES, MOD-
ERNIZE HOUSE TECHNOLOGY, AND IMPROVE
ACCESSIBILITY**

R E P O R T

THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE
MODERNIZATION OF CONGRESS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



FEBRUARY 25, 2020.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House
on the State of the Union and ordered to be printed

U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

99-006

WASHINGTON : 2020

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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE MODERNIZATION OF CONGRESS,
Washington, DC, February 25, 2020.

Hon. CHERYL L. JOHNSON,
Clerk, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MS. JOHNSON: I present herewith a report entitled, "Recommendations To Streamline House Human Resources, Overhaul The Onboarding Process, Improve Member Continuing Education Opportunities, Modernize House Technology, And Improve Accessibility."

Sincerely,

DEREK KILMER,
Chair.

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RECOMMENDATIONS TO STREAMLINE HOUSE HUMAN RESOURCES, OVERHAUL THE ONBOARDING PROCESS, IMPROVE MEMBER CONTINUING EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES, MODERNIZE HOUSE TECHNOLOGY, AND IMPROVE ACCESSIBILITY

FEBRUARY 25, 2020.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union and ordered to be printed

Mr. KILMER, from the Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress, submitted the following

R E P O R T

I. PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

The Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress has been charged with the important responsibility of recommending improvements to the U.S. House of Representatives to help Members of Congress and their staff better serve the American people. On May 23, 2019 the Select Committee passed its first set of recommendations to “open up” Congress and improve transparency across the Legislative Branch. Since then, the Select Committee has identified key challenges and capacity issues throughout the Legislative Branch that affect the ability of Members and congressional staff to best serve the American people. To address these challenges, the Select Committee proposed its second series of recommendations which fit into four broad categories.

The first set update Human Resources (HR) policies and consolidate the many HR-related offices in the House to provide a one-stop shop to help Members and staff with questions about recruitment, retention, diversity, legal counsel, training and benefits.

The second set overhaul the onboarding process for new Members, provide continuing education opportunities for all Members, and emphasize the necessity of civility and respect throughout Congress.

The third set of recommendations modernize House technology resources to keep the institution on the cutting edge and emphasize quality IT services to reduce reliance on outside vendors, leverage bulk purchasing power, and save taxpayer dollars.

The fourth set of recommendations seek to address the equal access challenges persons with disabilities face when working for, visiting, or interacting with the House, and establish that proceedings

and functions of the House must be made accessible to all Americans.

II. BACKGROUND AND NEED FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

The importance of a strong and coequal Legislative Branch is a pillar of our democratic republic. Yet deficiencies in the capacity of Congress to execute the responsibilities established in Article I of the Constitution have diminished the role of the House and Members' ability to serve their constituents.

The Select Committee identified the following issues to be addressed with recommendations to improve the capacity of Congress:

1. Attracting and retaining a diverse and highly qualified workforce requires competitive benefits for staff. Congressional staff are too often unaware of the benefits and services offered by the House resulting in underutilized services. Furthermore, there is no centralized, one-stop shop for managers and senior staff in congressional offices to find best practices related to benefits and policies, or get answers to questions about how to handle management issues. A centralization of resources under a single human resources department helps prioritize the function and evolution of services available for congressional offices to provide to staff. Improving services to Member offices and staff will help recruit and retain staff who may otherwise seek opportunities elsewhere and improve Congress's ability to serve the public.

2. The lack of diversity among staff in the House has been highlighted in various reports and surveys, and remains a challenge for the institution. To help make improvements, the Rules of the House of Representatives for the One Hundred Sixteenth Congress (H. Res. 6) established the Office of Diversity and Inclusion to develop a plan including, in part, "policies to direct and guide House employing offices to recruit, hire, train, develop, advance, promote, and retain a diverse workforce." The Office, however, is only authorized for the current session of Congress. The establishment of the Office for this period alone could prove ineffective given the time required to establish the Office and execute the responsibilities prescribed in H. Res. 6. If the "People's House" is to make earnest efforts to improve diversity among our workforce, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion should be established permanently and efforts to evaluate its effectiveness and mission should be ongoing.

3. As the Select Committee continues to evaluate issues related to pay for staff, one common problem for younger and lower-level staff remains a monthly pay schedule. While previous legislation failed to bring the institution in line with the Senate and other federal employee pay schedules, issues persist among staff that exasperate struggles to meet monthly financial obligations. Examining the cost and logistics of moving to semimonthly pay can address ongoing concerns about bringing the House in line with the rest of the federal government. Moving the House closer to a system that functions better for lower-level staff is also designed to improve recruitment and retention of a workforce that best serves the American people.

4. In 1975, a cap was placed on the amount of staff that can serve in Member offices yet the population offices are required

to represent continues to grow. This cap effectively places a higher workload on staff and increases the House's dependence on outside resources and research (i.e. lobbyists, trade associations, etc.). By allowing Member offices to hire additional staff by increasing the cap, offices can better serve their constituents, reduce stress on the staff, and improve staff retention.

5. Currently, the staff of the House are not regularly surveyed to capture information about staff pay, diversity, benefits, and quality of life. This lack of basic information hinders the ability of the House to identify why staff leave Congress, and ways to improve retention and diversity. The Rules of the House of Representatives for the One Hundred Sixteenth Congress (H. Res. 6) included a survey on staff diversity, and outside groups have compiled reports on staff pay and education. However, consistently surveying staff internally will improve results and help the institution make data-based decisions.

6. When Members are elected to the House, they can bring one "designated aide" with them to the official House orientation. These aides are not paid and do not receive benefits and, as a result, it can be difficult for new Members to hire qualified individuals for the duration of the transition period. Paying a "designated aide" and allowing them to receive benefits can improve the transition process for new Members as they begin serving their constituents.

7. Ensuring new Members have a productive and informative orientation at the beginning of their term is important to starting the work of serving their constituents. However, there are no archived audio or visual recordings of orientation sessions and orientation is not provided to Members who won special elections. Additionally, Members have shared how separating orientation sessions by political party furthers partisanship in Congress. The transition for new Members can be improved by archiving orientation sessions and presentations for reference and providing orientation in a nonpartisan way.

8. Orientation for new Members can be overwhelming as they have approximately two months from the day they are elected to when they are sworn in. During the transition period, new Members have many responsibilities from hiring staff to finding district offices while also having to digest important information about the legislative process, rules of the House, and ethics. Instituting a "just-in-time" approach to orientation would compartmentalize and prioritize the information new Members need and provide it to them when they need it.

9. Americans expect and deserve a functioning Legislative Branch, yet too often partisanship slows the work of Congress. As new Members transition into office, the orientation process provides an opportunity to emphasize the importance of working relationships with Members from across the aisle. Providing a session on House Rules of Decorum and Debate and other practices to promote civility in Congress during new Member orientation establishes the importance of a civil and productive tone for new Members.

10. Members currently lack professional development and institutional training opportunities. Newly-elected Members re-

ceive initial training through new Member orientation, but after orientation there are few—if any—opportunities for Members to continue learning. Members who are interested in learning more about House procedures and rules, leadership and negotiation skills, or even computer software and systems should have easy access to online and in-person training. Members should be surveyed to help determine which courses they would find most useful.

11. Members of Congress are not required to take cybersecurity training despite their vulnerabilities to cyber threats. Cybersecurity training should be mandatory for Members. As part of this training, Members should be trained in cell phone security and receive cybersecurity guidance for traveling abroad.

12. The Office of Technology Assessment, a nonpartisan agency tasked with helping Congress navigate science and technology issues, was formed in 1972 and defunded in 1995. Given the growing complexity of science and technology issues confronting Congress today, Members and staff need expert assistance in understanding these issues. Developing policies to address complex science and technology questions requires a level of professional expertise that Congress currently lacks. Reestablishing (and renaming) the OTA is necessary for Congress to address modern science and technology challenges, but the agency must have an updated vision and mandate that reflects current thinking and approaches to effectively addressing these issues.

13. Members and staff cannot adequately perform their representational and legislative duties when the technology services they rely upon are lacking. The House Information Resources (HIR) office is meant to provide Members and staff with quality, in-house technology services, but many Member offices turn to outside vendors for assistance because they currently can't rely on HIR for consistent and quality service. A thorough, outside review of HIR operations and services will help the House develop a roadmap for successfully reforming HIR.

14. Member offices need quick access to the newest technologies in order to perform basic office functions and effectively engage with constituents. While review processes are necessary in order to adequately address security concerns and other technical issues, these processes need to be expedited so that Member offices can function in a way that meets 21st century demands.

15. For outside vendors who wish to provide new technology services to the House, the approval process is long and arduous. This discourages new vendors from doing business with the House, which puts the House at a technological disadvantage. The vendor approval process should clearly describe the requirements, restrictions, and processes to encourage new vendors to engage. By clearly designating points of contact within relevant offices, creating a process for early vendor consultation, and providing annual information sessions, the House could better attract new vendors providing innovative technologies.

16. There is currently no formalized way for Member offices to know what new technologies HIR is beta testing. Member offices that are interested in experimenting with new technologies should be able to easily access information about what new technologies HIR plans to beta test, then request that their office participate in the beta testing. Such a program would allow HIR to better gauge Member office interest in new technologies, as well as how new technologies perform in Member offices settings.

17. Members and staff currently must contact a number of customer service providers for their various technological needs. This creates confusion and wastes valuable time. Assigning each Member office a "Technology Customer Advocate" would alleviate staff time spent trying to figure out the appropriate point of contact for various technology concerns that arise. The Technology Customer Advocate would be the Member office's first point of contact for any office technology question and would assist staff in connecting to the appropriate point of contact.

18. There is currently no formal mechanism for Members and staff to rate their experiences in working with HIR. In order to consistently improve the services they provide to Members and staff, HIR needs to solicit direct input from Members and staff about the services they receive. Incorporating Member and staff feedback into HIR's decision-making processes will increase accountability and hold HIR to a higher standard. Developing a survey mechanism that will allow Members and staff (including district-based staff) to rate their HIR customer service experiences, as well as HIR's technical performance, on an annual basis will provide HIR with necessary and important customer feedback. There is also no formal mechanism for Members and staff to tell HIR which unapproved technologies they wish to use. An annual survey of Members and staff on which unapproved technologies they wish to use will help HIR prioritize and expedite the approval process.

19. Bulk purchasing allows entities to buy at a reduced cost. The price a Member office pays to purchase 10 computers is higher than the price an office would pay to purchase 1,000 computers. Currently, Member offices are responsible for purchasing their own technologies (for example, computers, tablets, printers, phones, etc.) out of their Members' Representational Allowance (MRA). The CAO could purchase in bulk and make available to Member offices these same technologies for a greatly reduced cost. Removing these basic office operating expenses out of the MRA saves taxpayer dollars by eliminating one-time purchases and reducing overall House spending on technology.

20. Constituents, as well as staff, frequently seek brief, non-partisan explanations of complex policy issues. The Congressional Research Service is uniquely equipped to assist Members and staff in their efforts to provide constituents with this information. Even when Members do not agree with constituent opinions, providing constituents with considered re-

sponses that address issues in a nonpartisan, factual manner improves constituent satisfaction and overall discourse.

21. Modern technologies have made it possible for Members to interact with constituents in an ever-expanding number of ways. Some Members are currently experimenting with new constituent engagement technologies while others are relying on older, more traditional technologies. A nonpartisan constituent engagement and services best practices portal would provide a one-stop shop for Member offices to access new ideas and technologies for improving constituent engagement. This would encourage better, more modern interactions between Members and constituents.

22. The “People’s House” should be accessible to all people. Having a disability shouldn’t preclude constituents from having full access (physical, electronic, etc.) to their Representatives’ offices. Many congressional websites are currently not accessible to people with disabilities. This lack of accessibility prevents some constituents from obtaining public information about Members, legislation, district-based issues, as well as job and internship openings. Websites can be made accessible through common programs used by people with disabilities. The CAO and HIR should develop a plan to (1) Scan and analyze all House websites and apps to first determine accessibility, and (2) Make all House websites and apps accessible. Prompt execution of such a plan will ensure that all constituents, regardless of ability, can access public information about their Representatives.

23. House proceedings, including committee hearings and mark-ups, are not automatically available in closed caption. Persons who are hard of hearing or otherwise rely upon closed caption to follow verbally-presented information must notify someone at least four days prior to a hearing or mark-up in order for closed caption service to be provided. This places the burden of accessibility on the individuals who need service. Furthermore, hearings and mark-ups are not always publicly noticed four days in advance as committees are sometimes confronted with last-minute scheduling changes. Automatically providing closed caption or another form of transcription service ensures that hearing impaired individuals can access hearings and mark-ups in real time.

24. The Capitol grounds should be accessible to all individuals, regardless of ability. A comprehensive review of the Capitol grounds is necessary to (1) Determine accessibility challenges, and (2) Develop and implement a comprehensive plan to ensure that persons with disabilities can access all buildings and spaces that comprise the Capitol grounds.

III. HEARINGS

The Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress held four hearings which helped shape these recommendations. The hearings included:

- “Improving Constituent Engagement” on June 5, 2019. The Select Committee received testimony from:
 - Brad Fitch, President & CEO, Congressional Management Foundation

- Marci Harris, Developer of Constituent Engagement Tools and Former Congressional Staffer
- Michael Neblo, Professor of Political Science, Ohio State University
- “Cultivating Diversity and Improving Retention Among Congressional Staff” on June 20, 2019. The Select Committee received testimony from:
 - Alexander Alonso, Chief Knowledge Officer, Society for Human Resource Management
 - Laura Liswood, Author, *The Loudest Duck; Moving Beyond Diversity While Embracing Differences to Achieve Success at Work*
 - Kwasi Mitchell, Principal and Chief Inclusion Officer, Deloitte Consulting
- “Fostering the Next Generation of Leaders: Setting Members up for Success” on July 11, 2019. The Select Committee received testimony from:
 - Stacy Householder, Director of Leaders’ Services and Legislative Training, National Conference of State Legislatures
 - Philip Kiko, Chief Administrative Officer, The U.S. House of Representatives
 - Richard Shapiro, Former Executive Director, Congressional Management Foundation
- “Modernizing Legislative Information Technologies: Lessons from the States” on July 24, 2019. The Select Committee received testimony from:
 - Diane Boyer-Vine, Legislative Counsel, California State Legislature
 - Nelson Moe, Chief Information Officer, Commonwealth of Virginia
 - Mike Rohrbach, Chief Information Officer & Director of Information Technology, Washington State Legislature

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Select Committee made the following 24 recommendations to address the problems identified (see **II. BACKGROUND AND NEED FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**) and have organized them into four categories. The Select Committee supports:

STREAMLINING AND REORGANIZING HOUSE HUMAN RESOURCES

Update policies and consolidate the multitude of offices that offer administrative support to Members and staff to provide a one-stop shop to aid Members and staff with recruitment, retention, diversity, legal counsel, training and benefits in their offices.

- (1) Recommendation: Create a one-stop shop Human Resources HUB dedicated to Member, committee, and leadership (MCL) staff. Led by an HR Deputy Director and comprised of existing offices and staff of the House, the office will be responsible for assisting MCL offices to improve the recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce, develop best practices that can be utilized by offices, and provide recommendations for competitive compensation and benefits to House staff.

Specifically . . . The HUB will be a physical (in a centralized location near Member offices) and virtual HUB structured as a board led by a new Deputy HR Director for Congressional Staff and comprised of representatives from the following:

- Office of Employee Advocacy
- Office of Congressional Workplace Rights
- Office of House Employment Counsel
- Office of Employee Assistance
- Congressional Staff Academy
- House Wellness Center

The Deputy HR Director for Congressional Staff will be overseen by the Chief Human Resources Officer for the Chief Administrative Officer of the House, and will guide and delegate efforts to recruit and retain a diverse staff including, but not limited to:

1. developing a tool kit for best practices for hiring, promoting, and managing a diverse staff;
2. improving diversity recruitment by implementing best practices for actively seeking out candidates of various backgrounds and compiling into the House resume portal (for example, outreach to HBCUs, community colleges, organizations for individuals with disabilities, etc.);
3. reevaluating current MCL office staff benefits (for example, capacity and costs of the House child care center, student loan benefits, etc.) and develop recommendations for new benefits to improve recruitment and retention (for example, telework, flex schedules, returnship programs, sabbaticals, etc.);
4. conducting the biennial staff survey as well as offering an optional exit survey to MCL offices;
5. transforming the existing House resume bank into a user-friendly, searchable portal where MCL offices can select a range of criteria to narrow down the candidate pool;
6. improve and manage the House Vacancy Announcement and Placement Service (HVAPS); and
7. providing Members-elect information on the full range of services offered to their staff in an easily understandable and organized format immediately following the certification of their election results.

When the various representatives to the HR HUB convene, representatives of the Majority and Minority of the Committee on House Administration must also be present to serve as advocates for MCL office staff. Additionally, the House Committee on Ethics should be consulted as appropriate to ensure staff benefits and best practices are abiding by Ethics rules. The Deputy HR Director for Congressional Staff will also deputize or hire a Deputy Director of Staff Outreach and Marketing responsible for advertising services effectively and creating a more outward facing HR HUB. Finally, the Committee on House Administration will evaluate the effectiveness of the HR HUB no later than three years after its establishment.

(2) Recommendation: Make permanent the Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

Specifically . . . In the rules package for the One Hundred Sixteenth Congress (H. Res. 6), the House established the Of-

Office of Diversity and Inclusion, however, the Office is only authorized to operate for this Congress alone. Making the Office permanent will enable Congress to better recruit and retain a diverse workforce. Additionally, when the Office is made permanent a representative must also serve on the HR HUB established in the first recommendation included in this report. The Committee on House Administration must evaluate the progress and mission of the Office at the end of the One Hundred and Sixteenth Congress, and no later than three years after it is made permanent.

(3) Recommendation: Examine the viability of updating the staff payroll system with the goal of transitioning from monthly to semimonthly pay.

Specifically . . . A review of the costs and logistics of changing the House payroll system from a monthly to semimonthly schedule must be conducted by the CAO. Following the review, the House should align with the rest of the federal government's payroll practices and bring financial relief to junior staff.

(4) Recommendation: Raise the cap on the number of permanent staff and additional staff allowed to work in Member offices.

Specifically . . . The current cap of 18 permanent staffers and four additional staffers will increase to 22 permanent staffers and six additional staffers. The current caps have been in place since 1975. Raising these caps will give Members more flexibility in meeting their staffing needs.

(5) Recommendation: Regularly survey staff on ways to improve pay, benefits, and quality of life.

Specifically . . . Congress must routinely collect this information in order to make data-based decisions to improve staff retention and publish the aggregated results of these surveys. Additionally, the new HR HUB should provide an optional exit survey for staff either leaving one office for another position in Congress or leaving Congress altogether. While a survey was sent to staff on these topics this year, regularly surveying staff is needed to help improve the institution. Including a section related to staff and Member surveys in the rules package for each Congress would ensure necessary surveys are executed.

OVERHAULING THE ONBOARDING PROCESS AND PROVIDING CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR MEMBERS

Going hand in hand with human resources reform, Members have identified a need to make onboarding a nonpartisan environment that also smooths the process of setting up their offices and spaces out training on a "just-in-time" basis so that the newly elected are not overwhelmed with more information than they can retain. Furthermore, returning Members should have continuing education to learn and/or refresh their training.

(6) Recommendation: Through the Office of the Clerk, newly-elected Members should have the option to hire and pay one transition staff member for the duration of the time between when they are elected and are sworn in.

Specifically . . . Bringing the House in line with Senate practice would provide a smoother transition in setting up new

Member offices, and encourage staff retention by paying transition staff for the period between Election Day and Members' swearing-in. Consideration should be given to hiring staff in the Clerk's office in a consultant or contractor role.

(7) Recommendation: Orientation courses and services should be available to all new Members (including those incoming from a special election) and presented in a nonpartisan way.

Specifically . . . The information should be video-recorded and made easily accessible year-round in an electronic format. This allows Members who miss orientation courses to access them at their convenience.

(8) Recommendation: Orientation should be reimagined and reorganized to offer a "just-in-time" approach where appropriate.

Specifically . . . A "just-in-time" approach allows for comprehensive training over time, rather than a congressional information overload in a Members' first weeks in office. The process should be methodical and spread out over time and continued well into Members' first term.

(9) Recommendation: Offer a course in the new Member orientation and ongoing education portal to instruct Members on the House Rules of Decorum and Debate, and other practices to promote civility and respect.

Specifically . . . New Member orientation should promote relationship building across the aisle in order to establish a more civil tone in Congress.

(10) Recommendation: Create a pilot Congressional Leadership Academy for Members which offers professional development and institutional training.

Specifically . . . Alongside in-person training opportunities, HouseNet should provide one-click access to seminars on the legislative process and procedural matters, such as how to chair a hearing, the budget and appropriations process, and rules of the House and committee procedures, and on professional development topics like managing an office and developing better negotiation and bargaining skills.

(11) Recommendation: Make cybersecurity training mandatory for Members.

Specifically . . . Advanced cyber-hygiene training and use of encrypted messaging and multi-factor authentication should be basic standards for both Members and staff. Cybersecurity training for Members should include training in cell phone security as well as guidance for traveling abroad.

MODERNIZING AND REVITALIZING HOUSE TECHNOLOGY

Modernize House technology resources to keep the institution on the cutting edge and emphasize quality IT services to reduce reliance on outside vendors, improve constituent engagement, leverage bulk purchasing power and save taxpayer dollars.

(12) Recommendation: Reestablish an improved Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) to study and recommend emerging technologies, provide nonpartisan information and policy analysis to Member offices, support legislative branch agencies in their examination of new technologies, focus on general

oversight and policy, and facilitate peer reviews of potential new technologies.

Specifically . . . The new OTA should be renamed the Congressional Technology and Innovation Lab and is intended to keep the House on the cutting edge of technology and should be structured in a way that maintains fresh and diverse perspectives among its staff. Experts, visiting professors, and graduate students from premiere companies, national labs, and institutions across the nation would be given the opportunity to rotate in and out. This would provide fresh, invigorated analysis and advice from an outside perspective, versus relying on long-time permanent staff that become part of the institution and do not have an opportunity for immersion in the outside tech community. While the Lab will be studying and testing new technologies, the CAO and HIR are responsible for sharing those tested technologies with Member, committee, and leadership offices.

(13) Recommendation: Reform House Information Resources (HIR) by partnering with outside entities to develop a roadmap for addressing the root cause of HIR's systemic inability to deliver enterprise programs and IT services in a timely manner that satisfies Member office needs.

Specifically . . . The House should partner with GAO, the new OTA, 18F, USDS, and other outside entities to develop this roadmap with the goal of significantly raising the quality of services offered, such as IT support and website design, so that Member offices are less inclined to immediately hire outside vendors for services that the House already provides. This will be achieved by a strategic realignment of the current HIR office and mission that will stem from partnering with the above agencies and outside groups. Many of these services are available at no charge to Member offices, and this would eliminate the all-too-common practice of double-spending on IT services across the House reducing duplicative spending. An entity outside of the House should be contracted to review the current operations of HIR and provide a roadmap to successful reforms.

Further recommendations for reforming HIR:

(14) Recommendation: Require HIR to, as soon as practicably possible, allow the following:

a. Video calls from Member and staff mobile devices or computers (for example, use applications such as Facetime or Skype).

b. In conjunction with the Clerk's office, allow secure e-signatures for letters, bills and constituent consent forms;

c. Set up a VPN on any device and develop relevant security guidelines;

d. Constituents to upload casework and requests digitally through a Member's website.

Specifically . . . These four simple changes streamline every day Member office and constituent engagement functions and responsibilities. Additionally, HIR will work with the Clerk on the development of the platform for facilitating e-signatures and the rules of the House should be changed to allow for e-signatures on letters and bills.

(15) Recommendation: Require HIR to create an approval process for outside vendors developing new technologies that is transparent, scheduled and timely.

Specifically . . . HIR should be more inviting to vendors who seek to offer innovative technology to the House and prevent a bureaucratic and confusing process that causes long, costly delays that turn vendors away.

(16) Recommendation: HIR should create a program that allows Member offices to opt-in to beta test new technologies.

Specifically . . . Member offices that wish to beta test new technologies should be able to easily identify and sign up for opportunities to do so. Member offices should also be responsible for risk of technology and not jeopardize the House enterprise.

(17) Recommendation: Creating one point of contact for each Member office within HIR who would be responsible for all technology points of contact, including technology, telecom, web, district office technologies, etc.

Specifically . . . This point of contact will either have a role similar to the CAO Customer Advocates or fall under their responsibilities as they serve as points of contact for Member offices. The HIR Customer Advocates would be responsible for all Member office technological needs.

(18) Recommendation: Create a customer satisfaction portal on HouseNet that allows Members and staff to rate and review outside vendors and HIR services.

Specifically . . . Improve the HIR customer service experience by (1) requiring the House Committee on Administration to develop a way for staff to review the services they receive from HIR; (2) requesting a formal annual survey to measure staff satisfaction with HIR in order to increase HIR accountability and to hold HIR to a high-quality baseline; (3) requesting a formal annual survey geared toward district-level staff and district-specific technology concerns; and, (4) requesting a survey of what technologies Members and staff would like to use but that HIR has not or will not approve.

(19) Recommendation: The CAO should leverage the bulk purchasing power of the House and provide a standard suite of quality, up-to-date devices and software, such as desktop and laptop computers, tablets, printers, mobile phones and desk phones at no cost to the Members' Representational Allowance (MRA).

Specifically . . . This removes commodity technology costs out of the MRA, without reducing the MRA budget, and reduces the amount of one-time purchases, thereby saving taxpayer dollars. Members should still be able to use their MRA to purchase technology if they wish to acquire a unique or above-standard device. The CAO must also distinguish and respond to the unique needs of new Members of Congress as well as ongoing operations for existing Members. For the purposes of this report, "commodity technology" is defined as a standard offering to each office of what technologies will be provided (for example, equipment, hardware, software, websites, and IT/Telecom support).

(20) Recommendation: The Congressional Research Service (CRS) should prioritize a “rapid response” program for non-partisan fact sheets on key issues and legislation under consideration in Congress.

Specifically . . . This should be a major element of the overall mission at CRS. The intent is to allow Members to quickly and easily provide quality, nonpartisan and factual information to constituents. This may also aid in elevating and improving debate in the House.

(21) Recommendation: Develop a nonpartisan constituent engagement and services best practices page on HouseNet.

Specifically . . . This will serve as an organized portal for HIR, outside vendors, and Member offices to showcase opportunities and how-to guides for the full range of methods for conducting constituent outreach, from digital communications to in-person events.

MAKING THE HOUSE ACCESSIBLE TO ALL AMERICANS

Proceedings and functions of the House, including all those online, must be accessible to Americans with disabilities.

(22) Recommendation: Scan and analyze all House websites and apps to determine the accessibility level of each congressional website, and provide resources and assistance to ensure all systems are compatible with common programs used by major disability groups.

Specifically . . . The CAO and HIR should execute this scan and develop a plan to promptly maximize website accessibility. Many congressional websites are not accessible to persons with disabilities, which limits access to Members and to all the information available on Member websites including job and internship applications.

(23) Recommendation: Require all House proceedings that are broadcast on TV or streamed on the internet to provide closed caption services, and provide a free captioning service for all web videos created by MCL offices.

Specifically . . . Direct the CAO to purchase closed caption service and provide it to all major events from MCL offices. Persons with disabilities often must alert someone at least four days in advance of a hearing or markup in order to attend. The burden of accessibility should not be placed on the individual. Automatically providing closed caption hearing and captions for web videos should be the default.

(24) Recommendation: Require a comprehensive review of the Capitol grounds to determine accessibility challenges for individuals with disabilities conducted by the Architect of the Capitol, Sergeant at Arms, and the Office of Congressional Workplace Rights and implement a remediation plan.

Specifically . . . The Architect of the Capitol, Sergeant at Arms, and the Office of Congressional Workplace Rights should ensure that persons with disabilities are able to easily access the Capitol grounds. A comprehensive review is a first-step toward determining areas that are not currently accessible in order to develop a plan for making accessibility modifications.

V. COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION AND VOTES

CONSIDERATION

On July 25, 2019, the Select Committee held a Business Meeting, a quorum being present, and reported favorably the recommendations herein contained in this report.

VOTES

In compliance with clause 3(b) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, there were no recorded votes taken on these recommendations. The recommendations herein contained in this report were adopted by voice vote, two-thirds being in the affirmative. A motion by Chair Derek Kilmer of Washington to report these recommendations to the House of Representatives was adopted by voice vote, two-thirds being in the affirmative.

