

RECOMMENDATIONS TO INCREASE STAFF CAPACITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION, STRENGTHEN CONGRESSIONAL INTERNSHIPS AND FELLOWSHIPS, AND EXPAND ACCESSIBILITY TO CONGRESS

OCTOBER 8, 2021.—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 (Select Committee) 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. During the 116th Congress, the Select Committee passed 97 recommendations to make Congress a more efficient and effective institution. These recommendations addressed many issues within the Select Committee's jurisdiction and were detailed in the Committee's Final Report for the 116th Congress.

The Select Committee met on July 29, 2021, to pass its sixth set of recommendations. These recommendations are the first set passed in the 117th Congress and reflect the work of the Select Committee's new roster of members. The recommendations are broadly focused on issues connected to congressional staff and focus on increasing staff capacity, diversity and inclusion, strengthening the congressional internship and fellowship experience, and expanding accessibility to Congress for staff as well as the general public. The recommendations address issues the Select Committee took up in public hearings, virtual discussions, member meetings, and in meetings with stakeholders.

II. BACKGROUND AND NEED FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Increasing staff capacity, diversity and inclusion, strengthening the congressional internship and fellowship experience, and expanding accessibility to Congress will improve the way Congress works on behalf of the American people. The Select Committee identified the following issues to be addressed with recommendations:

1. Congressional staff are often promoted based on their political or policy expertise more so than their management experience or potential. Moreover, many staff coming onto the Hill to serve as chiefs of staff or in other management positions sometimes lack management experience or prior training before taking leadership positions. Poor management in an office can lead to poor office culture, high turnover, less job satisfaction for employees, and decreased overall productivity.

2. Without access to the clearest, most accurate salary data, congressional hiring managers lack the information they need to offer competitive pay to employees and employees do not have important information they need to negotiate salaries. Existing congressional staff compensation surveys, while helpful, are done infrequently and are only snapshots in time. In addition, response rates tend to be low. For example, it is the Committee's understanding that past employee surveys captured information for only about half of the House's employees. The surveys can also be costly and time consuming to undertake.

3. Congress is an institution that relies on customs and procedures that can take time for a new staff member to learn. In addition to a lack of proper on-the-job training and helpful management, a lack of mentorship opportunities can make it more difficult for less experienced staff to quickly learn how the institution works and how to be effective at their jobs. Some staff associations run mentorship programs, but the programs, while valuable, are informal, inconsistent, and can be difficult to maintain on a volunteer basis.

4. If congressional offices are prohibited from paying for training that provides staff with a certification, staff may not be able to access training that could bolster their professional skills and capabilities.

5. The information provided to new congressional staff when they are hired often does not provide comprehensive information on available benefits and resources. Unless an office proactively provides the information through HouseNet or by other means, staff must search for it independently, with no knowledge of what they are looking for.

6. Current processes for recruiting and hiring new congressional staff are unorganized and inefficient. Additionally, the large number of applicants that generally apply to Hill positions can be overwhelming to hiring managers.

7. The current process for surveying congressional staff demographics is costly, time consuming, and provides only a snapshot in time. Moreover, participation rates tend to be low. Past employee surveys captured information for only about half of the House's employees. These challenges prevent Congress from effectively tracking progress on staff diversity across the House and efficiently using resources to improve staff diversity.

8. According to testimony received by the Committee, the average congressional internship stipend is insufficient to cover the monthly cost of living in the D.C. area. Moreover, information on the gap between the average stipend offered and the actual cost of living in D.C. is lacking, which makes it difficult

for hiring managers to set appropriate intern stipend rates and for applicants to financially plan for a potential internship.

9. The quality of congressional internships and fellowships varies from office to office. It is also difficult and time consuming for congressional offices to develop and maintain an effective internship and fellowship program.

10. Congressional fellows and detailees need access to computers and secure communications devices while working in congressional offices. The current rules limiting devices that offices can provide to fellows and detailees are confusing and may present challenges, especially to freshman offices that might not have extra equipment available.

11. Remote internships, which some congressional offices offered during the COVID-19 pandemic, may remain a permanent option in other sectors. If the House does not offer similar remote opportunities, it could negatively impact the institution's ability to recruit talented and diverse interns by limiting opportunities to those who can travel and live in Washington D.C. At the same time, before the House considers a policy change that would make remote interns a permanent fixture in the House, it makes sense to consider the lessons learned from the remote internship experience during the pandemic, and whether sufficient guardrails could be adopted to allow a permanent remote program to continue in a way that protects security and maintains the spirit of the educational component of internships required by House rules.

12. Currently, there is no designated ADA drop-off point for House office buildings. For visitors with mobility impairments, finding a safe location on Capitol Hill to deploy a ramp or transfer from a vehicle into a wheelchair is unnecessarily difficult and a barrier to accessing House offices.

13. For Capitol Hill visitors with disabilities, an unexpected and invasive security screen is uninviting. Lack of public information about the security process can cause disabled visitors to experience anxiety and to feel like the Hill's security processes treat them differently. This may discourage visitors with disabilities from coming to Capitol Hill.

14. Testimony received by the Committee indicated that inaccessible doorways are one of the top physical barriers that limit access around the Capitol complex to persons with disabilities.

15. At the time Committee staff was briefed, more than 250 existing member and committee web sites did not meet accessibility compliance standards (as set forth in Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act). Although Congress is not currently required to comply with Section 508, the CAO is in the process of bringing member, committee, and leadership websites into compliance as a proactive measure. CAO ensured all new member websites in the 117th Congress began in compliance. However, once the sites meet compliance standards, staff maintaining and updating the sites must know and understand how to post content appropriately to maintain accessibility standards. Staff that publish web content often do not follow these standards, which makes maintaining Section 508 compliance difficult.

16. According to staff surveys, inadequate opportunities for professional development is among the top reasons congressional staff leave their current job or current office. The Student Loan Repayment Program (SLRP) only pays for qualifying education loans already incurred and in repayment status but does not cover tuition and other expenses for staff attending an ongoing educational program. However, such tuition assistance programs are widely available in the private sector and in federal agencies.

17. According to the 2019 House Compensation and Diversity study, staff in member offices have been in their positions for 2.5 years on average while staff in committee and leadership offices average 2.7 years in their positions. When staff turnover is high, the House loses valuable expertise. More experienced staff with the institutional knowledge to properly advise members on policy and constituent issues can help strengthen the institution. While staff depart their positions for a variety of reasons, comparatively low compensation (including benefits) is often cited as one of the major drivers of turnover, especially for the mid-career staff who might not be as interested in the retirement programs Congress offers.

18. The CAO does not currently require contractors to offer employee assistance programs comparable to those provided to congressional employees. The Office of Employee Assistance (OEA) has indicated that some contractors do provide some services, but these services are not universally available for contract employees. Because contract workers are considered part of the Capitol community, they should be able to access mental health services just as congressional staff do.

19. Working on Capitol Hill can be challenging, and mental health issues can lead to decreased productivity and job satisfaction, as well as to more serious issues. While the OEA provides important services to House staff, there is insufficient awareness among staff about the resources and support available. Additionally, OEA needs a diverse workforce that can provide bilingual services and offer trauma services that meet the needs of the diverse community it serves.

20. As the House transitions to offering internship stipends, committees may be disincentivized from bringing on interns because the funding to cover stipends comes out of their committee budgets and counts against their capped allocation of staff slots. Providing committees with a separate fund from which they can offer internship stipends will make it easier for committees to offer internships just as other House offices do.

III. HEARINGS

The COVID-19 pandemic compelled changes in committee operations and procedures, beginning in March 2020. Because members were unable to meet in person, many committees, including the Select Committee, continued to meet by videoconference. The Select Committee held one virtual listening session with members of the Fix Congress Cohort and five virtual hearings early in the 117th Congress which helped shape these recommendations. The hearings included:

- “Member Hearing Day,” on April 15, 2021.

- “Professionalizing and Enriching the Congressional Internship and Fellowship Experience,” on April 29, 2021. The Select Committee received testimony from:
 - Dr. James R. Jones, Assistant Professor at Rutgers University-Newark on behalf of themselves
 - Carlos Vera, Co-Founder and Executive Director of Pay Our Interns
 - Audrey Henson, CEO and Founder of College to Congress
 - Travis Moore, Founder and Director of TechCongress
 - Emily Hashimoto, Director of Career Content at Idealist.org
 - Amiko Matsumoto, Senior Executive Coach and Facilitator at the Partnership for Public Service
 - Rod Adams, US and Mexico Talent Acquisition and Onboarding Leader at PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC)
- “Congressional Staff Capacity: Improving Staff Professional Development, Increasing Retention and Competing for Top Talent,” on May 6, 2021. The Select Committee received testimony from:
 - Catherine Szpindor, Chief Administrative Officer at House of Representatives
 - Brad Fitch, President and CEO of Congressional Management Foundation (CMF)
 - Aaron Jones, Director of Congressional Relations at the Wilson Center
 - Lynnel Ruckert, Former Chief of Staff to Minority Whip Steve Scalise (R-LA)
 - Greta Engle, The Society for Human Resource Management
 - Dao Nguyen, Former Executive Director of the Congressional Future Forum Caucus
 - Fran Peace, Former District Director for Congressman Wally Herger (R-CA)
- “Recruiting, Empowering and Retaining a Diverse Congressional Staff,” on May 13, 2021. The Select Committee received testimony from:
 - Kemba Hendrix, Director of the House Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI)
 - Keenan Austin Reed, Former Chief of Staff to Congressman Donald McEachin (D-VA) and Co-Founder of the Black Women’s Congressional Alliance (BWCA)
 - Gregg Orton, National Director of the National Council of Asian Pacific Americans and former Chief of Staff of Congressman Al Green (D-TX)
 - Maria Meier, Former Director of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and Senate Democratic Diversity Initiative
- “Making the House More Accessible to the Disability Community,” on May 27, 2021. The Select Committee received testimony from:
 - Congressman Jim Langevin (D-RI), Co-Chair of the Bipartisan Disability Caucus
 - Phoebe Ball, Disability Counsel for the House Committee on Education and Labor on behalf of themselves

- Heather Ansley, Associate Executive Director at Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA)
- Judy Brewer, Director of Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) at the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C)
- John Uelmen, General Counsel of the Office of Congressional Workplace Rights

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Select Committee made the following 20 recommendations to address the problems identified above (**see II. BACKGROUND AND NEED FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**):

(1) Recommendation: Supervisors should receive formal, personalized management training that includes, but is not limited to, management skills, strategic planning, cultural competency, and how to support an inclusive work environment. Training offerings should also include opportunities for supervisors to receive ongoing, one-on-one skills coaching.

Specifically . . . Improved management will improve office culture, increase staff satisfaction and retention, and improve overall office productivity. While the Congressional Staff Academy (CSA) recently began offering leadership training courses, there currently are no formal training programs for managing a congressional office, mid-level managers, or intern management. The CAO and other offices have identified the need for this kind of training and some programs are already in development. For example, the CSA is on a path to providing one-on-one job coaching for every position; the Office of Workplace Rights mandates a supervisory training; and the Office of Employee Assistance offers leadership coaching. The recommendation also envisions and supports CSA partnering with universities to expand management program offerings.

(2) Recommendation: The House should create a searchable database of anonymized average staff compensation information, by position, using available information on staff salaries and payroll data.

Specifically . . . A database of staff salary information would provide timely information that would help hiring managers set staff salaries (and potentially benefits, if the system is crafted to track that as well), create transparency for employers and internal job seekers, and provide current salary data at a lower cost than surveying staff. Current congressional employees could also use the information when they are considering a new job or requesting a raise. The database would be viewable and collated in a way that is most beneficial to managers and staff, and include comparisons by region and state delegation, as well as differentiation between freshman and more senior offices.

For the last few years, the Senate has operated a voluntary, “live” database of staff compensation. The Committee understands that, based on information received shortly before this report was completed, the database was used by approximately 42 offices – 30 personal offices and 12 committees.

(3) Recommendation: The House should initiate and facilitate a formal mentorship program for matching more experienced staff open to serving as mentors with less experienced staff seeking mentors.

Specifically . . . Mentorships are an inexpensive and effective way to share traditions and impart knowledge to more junior staff, especially those who began their careers on Capitol Hill without established networks to tap into. While some mentorships happen informally, a formal program could help increase mentorship opportunities and the quality of mentorships, thereby improving training, institutional knowledge, professional development, office culture, and staff retention. A formal House mentorship program should support and utilize best practices already developed by staff association mentorship programs.

This new program could be run by a variety of entities within the CAO's office. The CAO's office, or another appropriate office, could also determine how to best fund and implement the new program.

(4) Recommendation: The House should allow member, committee, and leadership offices to pay for certain professional development opportunities for staff that include a certification.

Specifically . . . Staff should have more flexibility to participate in relevant professional training opportunities, specifically those that directly relate to the employee's job duties and/or otherwise benefit the office. Examples of relevant certifications include, but are not limited to, Adobe Certified Expert, Leadership Essentials, Project Management Certifications, Budget and Public Finance Certificate, and Cybersecurity Risk Management. Additional certification opportunities may evolve organically.

Note: According to the Office of Personnel Management, federal agencies can pay for training that includes professional certifications.

(5) Recommendation: The Chief Administrative Officer should provide offices with an expanded standard onboarding packet that includes comprehensive information on available resources and benefits for staff.

Specifically . . . A standard and comprehensive onboarding packet is an effective and inexpensive way to ensure new employees understand all the resources and benefits available to them as House employees. The information could be presented in various formats, including through a supplementary educational video, and at different stages of onboarding—either in the initial payroll packet or shortly after an employee has been registered in the system.

(6) Recommendation: The Chief Administrative Officer should provide access to industry-leading talent acquisition software to assist House offices in managing their recruitment and hiring process.

Specifically . . . By providing offices with tools to methodically track, sort, and score candidates, offices will create greater efficiency and realize better hiring outcomes. The Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) will work with the CAO to ensure that any software offered does not introduce algorithmic bias into the hiring process.

Note: The CAO has received feedback from chiefs of staff that they would like tools to assist their hiring processes. The CAO is thus looking into making commercial, off-the-shelf talent acquisition software available. The Office of Diversity and Inclusion has also expressed support for offices to begin using talent acquisition software to professionalize the recruitment and hiring process to improve diversity.

(7) Recommendation: The Chief Administrative Officer should work with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion to improve the collection of anonymized demographic data through an optional form at staff onboarding that requests a broad range of data including, but not limited to race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, veteran status, geography and disability for House staff and interns.

Specifically . . . By collecting data during the onboarding process, the House can increase the amount of information gathered, reduce costs, and provide more accurate and up-to-date demographic information, which will in turn help the institution more efficiently target efforts to diversify the workforce and ensure it is broadly representative of the American people. The data collection form should be developed in conjunction with the ODI, or use already available information and forms, and gathered during the employee onboarding process. Consistent with previous compensation and diversity reports produced by the CAO, all data collected through the form will remain strictly confidential and anonymized. Data is not to be used to identify or evaluate individuals or specific offices and should not be reported by party or office. All data will be aggregated for reporting purposes.

Note: The FY2022 Legislative Branch Appropriations report directs the Office of Payroll and Benefits to work with ODI to identify the best method for inserting a voluntary question on demographic diversity to employee onboarding paperwork for all employees. The report directs implementation by January 2022.

(8) Recommendation: The Chief Administrative Officer should provide information to congressional offices on the cost of living for interns to help inform intern stipend levels.

Specifically . . . Internships are on-the-job training that can provide a pathway to a full-time position on the Hill. With more data, managers will be able to better align stipend levels for interns with the cost of living in the D.C. area, thereby allowing Congress to recruit the most talented and diverse applicants. In gathering cost of living information, the CAO might also consider evaluating other similar internship programs in the D.C. area as a helpful reference point for living costs and comparative compensation levels.

Member offices are currently provided a separate allotment of \$25,000 annually to compensate interns, and there is a monthly cap of \$1,800 per intern. By House rules, internships are primarily of educational benefit and interns may not be employed by the member for more than 120 calendar days. Intern compensation is intended to help interns cover the cost of living while residing temporarily in the D.C. area during their internship. Assessing the cost of living for an internship is different than assessing the cost of living for a full-time employee, and any cost analysis should cover those differences (for example, short term versus long term housing costs).

Note: The FY2022 Legislative Branch Appropriations bill would increase the member office allocation to \$35,000 but would not change the monthly cap of \$1,800 per intern.

(9) Recommendation: The House should establish an Intern and Fellowship Program Office or Coordinator that helps with onboarding, training individual office internship and fellowship

coordinators, developing educational curriculum, and providing professional development opportunities for interns and fellows.

Specifically . . . This office or coordinator would help professionalize and standardize congressional internship and fellowship programs, alleviate some of the burden on offices, and ensure a more consistent and high-quality educational experience for interns and fellows. The onboarding and management of interns and fellows is currently the responsibility of the individual employing office. While many offices offer robust programs, very little guidance or additional resources are provided by the House to assist offices with their programs, including orientation, onboarding, and educational programming.

Note: Language in the FY2022 Legislative Branch Appropriations report directs the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, working in coordination with the Chief Administrative Officer, to conduct a study on the feasibility of creating a centralized House internship and fellowship office to provide support services to congressional interns as well as act as a resource hub for standing committees, leadership offices, and House member offices.

(10) Recommendation: Congress should clarify rules and regulations to allow fellows and detailees to receive the same resources (phones, laptops, etc.) as professional staff.

Specifically . . . This would align House rules regarding fellows and detailees with office needs and ensure they are using devices that are secure and up to date.

Current rules in the Members' Congressional Handbook state that fellows are only able to use "existing office resources" that were already purchased and used by another staffer. Rules clarifying the use of House resources by fellows and detailees should tie resource access to a bona fide agreement to provide formality and additional details, as well as other precautions to ensure that House security protocols are being followed.

(11) Recommendation: The House should study the feasibility of permanently allowing remote internships. This study should include recommendations for meeting internship educational requirements (including through robust online programming), procedures for maintaining an inventory of equipment, and ensuring proper cybersecurity protocols.

Specifically . . . Allowing interns to telework could expand opportunities for individuals who cannot travel to and live in Washington, D.C. A study will provide information on whether the House should make remote internships a permanent option by addressing the following concerns: (1) Ensuring the educational requirements of House internships are being met, which may be more challenging in a remote situation; (2) Oversight of program participants; and (3) Providing, tracking, and accounting for House resources and equipment, and ensuring security and confidentiality, including network security.

Note: In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Committee on House Administration temporarily authorized all compensated House interns to be eligible to telework in the event of a disaster, pandemic or other emergency. This authorization allows offices to lend House resources (laptops, phones) to compensated interns who telework.

(12) Recommendation: As part of ongoing security and accessibility studies, the House should designate a drop-off and pick-up zone near an accessible entrance for members of the public with mobility impairments and develop a well-understood process for accessing and utilizing the new drop-off point.

Specifically . . . Providing a designated drop-off or pick-up zone near an accessible entrance, and a well-understood process for utilizing it, would help to mitigate this barrier to entry and help people with disabilities more easily plan their visits to the Capitol.

The House is currently engaged in separate studies, including an ongoing “Transportation and Mobility Study” as well as a security study, which should prioritize the establishment of an ADA drop-off and pick-up zone that balances and incorporates security and other transportation needs. The zone must be accessible to the public and allow for vehicles to park long enough to transfer passengers into and out of a vehicle. In addition, a process should be developed for how the public can access and utilize the new drop-off point, including information on whom to call with questions or requests for additional information. The Office of Accessibility Services should be consulted as various options for the drop-off zone itself, and the process for accessing it, are considered.

(13) Recommendation: Visitors and staff with disabilities should have access to information on the standard security screening techniques they will encounter upon entering the Capitol complex.

Specifically . . . Providing more information about the security screening techniques that visitors and staff with disabilities can expect when entering the Capitol complex would increase public awareness, ensure visitors are informed and prepared, and potentially improve consistency in visitors’ experiences.

(14) Recommendation: The House should improve accessibility around the Capitol complex by prioritizing the installation of additional automatic or power-assisted doors and replace door hardware that cannot be grasped easily with one hand or that requires tight grasping, pinching, or twisting of the wrist to operate.

Specifically . . . Prioritizing door improvements to ensure accessibility will allow members, staff, and visitors with disabilities to easily access and move more freely around House offices and the Capitol complex without assistance.

A joint accessibility report from November 2020 identified a number of doors for remediation where “existing door hardware cannot be grasped easily with one hand or requires tight grasping, pinching, or twisting of the wrist to operate.” For example, the round historic knobs require users to ‘grasp and twist’ to open the door, which does not comply with accessibility codes and standards. The report also identified doors that have insufficient clear width for a wheelchair. Further, some doors are designed for fire protection and therefore inordinately heavy and completely inaccessible to individuals in wheelchairs. While each door requires an individual solution, some of these doors may be made accessible with an automatic door operator.

(15) Recommendation: The House should promote awareness of accessibility requirements for member and committee

websites and provide training and tools for staff to help them properly maintain and update those sites.

Specifically . . . CAO identified a need for office content managers to have a greater understanding of compliance issues and best practices for how to ensure the websites they manage are accessible.

If staff are knowledgeable about website access standards and tools are put into place to encourage compliance, House websites are more likely to remain accessible as staff learn to follow and implement compliance best practices when updating the websites they are responsible for maintaining. Staff should also be made aware of training at the time they are granted authority to publish to a House website.

(16) Recommendation: The House should expand the Student Loan Repayment Program (SLRP) to include a Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) that assists House employees in paying for higher education programs. Participation in a House TAP should include a retention requirement set by the participant's employing office.

Specifically . . . The program should be modeled after the House's SLRP which has a service commitment built into the agreement and requires payments to be recouped if the employee is terminated or involuntarily separates before the end of the term. However, that provision can be waived at the discretion of the office. Existing SLRP annual (\$10,000) and lifetime (\$80,000) caps would apply to the TAP. Most private sector TAP programs are capped at \$5,250 per year because an amount over this threshold is considered taxable income. Staff should be fully informed about the annual income tax implications of receiving benefits above a certain level.

(17) Recommendation: The House should establish and maintain a "Task Force on the House Workforce," led by the Chief Administrative Officer and comprised of the Office of House Employment Counsel, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, the Office of Employee Assistance, the House Wellness Center, and any other House office as may be necessary to make ongoing policy recommendations on updating staff benefits for the purpose of increasing staff retention.

Specifically . . . Providing benefits that are more competitive with the private sector and executive branch can be a cost-effective way to encourage mid-career, highly qualified, and more experienced staff to remain in Congress. With less turnover, particularly at the mid-career level, Congress will see an increase in policy specialization and institutional knowledge. Diversity in senior staff positions will also increase. Fundamentally, a more highly skilled, experienced, and diverse staff will make Congress a stronger institution, better positioned to fulfill its Article I responsibilities and more effectively serve the American people.

With a broad representation of House offices responsible for various workforce benefits and other issues important for staff retention, the Task Force can approach the issue of staff benefits holistically, examine surveys and studies already done or in progress, and make specific, actionable policy recommendations each Congress. In addition to considering updates and improvements to better align House staff benefits with the workforce prac-

tices in the Senate, executive branch, and private sector, the Task Force should also consider the advantages of providing individual offices greater flexibility in determining specific benefit offerings.

Note: The FY2022 Legislative Branch Appropriations report contains language that similarly directs the establishment a Task Force on a Diverse and Talented House Workforce to regularly study and make policy recommendations that improve human resources management practices throughout the House.

(18) Recommendation: Where feasible, the House should work with contractors to ensure they provide Capitol campus employees with services comparable to those offered by the House through the Office of Employee Assistance.

Specifically . . . Ensuring the health and well-being of everyone who works on the Capitol campus, including contractors, will make for a better working environment. Contract workers are part of the Capitol community and should be able to access the same mental health services available to congressional staff.

(19) Recommendation: The Office of Employee Assistance (OEA) should seek to retain a diverse workforce, offer access to bilingual services, and retain staff capable of providing various forms of trauma services. The OEA should be allocated additional resources to provide outreach and awareness of services.

Specifically . . . A diverse OEA workforce that can provide bilingual services and offer trauma services that meet the needs of all staff is better positioned to serve a diverse community with various mental health needs. In addition, providing increased resources to improve awareness will help staff know and better understand the OEA and the services it offers, thereby improving utilization. Taken together, this will improve mental health, create a more resilient Capitol Hill community, and improve overall staff productivity and retention.

The OEA provides confidential assistance to members, employees, and their family members for personal and work-related problems. The OEA's caseload more than doubled in the first half of 2020, largely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Upon request, the OEA is currently able to connect employees to bilingual support services but the office currently does not have in house capacity to do this.

(20) Recommendation: Committees should be provided a program allowance, separate from their budgets, for compensation of interns.

Specifically . . . Unlike personal and leadership offices, committees currently have no separate fund for providing internship stipends, and interns count against their capped allocation of staff slots. Committees are thus disincentivized from bringing on interns. This fund would be separate from committee budgets and will provide additional slots for committee interns.

Note: The FY 2022 Legislative Branch Appropriations bill allocates \$2.3 million to compensate up to 106 committee interns.

V. COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION AND VOTES

CONSIDERATION

On July 29, 2021, 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.

