

117TH CONGRESS }
2d Session

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

{ REPORT
117-658

**RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE CONSTITUENT
ENGAGEMENT AND CONSTITUENT SERVICES,
BOLSTER HOUSE TECHNOLOGY, AND SUPPORT
CONGRESSIONAL OPERATIONS**

R E P O R T

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



DECEMBER 21, 2022.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House
on the State of the Union and ordered to be printed

U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

39-006

WASHINGTON : 2022

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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE MODERNIZATION OF CONGRESS,
Washington, DC, December 21, 2022.

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

DEAR MS. JOHNSON: I present herewith the Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress' report of recommendations to improve constituent engagement and constituent services, bolster house technology, and support congressional operations.

Sincerely,

DEREK KILMER,
Chair.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE CONSTITUENT ENGAGEMENT AND
CONSTITUENT SERVICES, BOLSTER HOUSE TECHNOLOGY, AND SUP-
PORT CONGRESSIONAL OPERATIONS

DECEMBER 21, 2022.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State
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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 or 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 Committees jurisdiction and were detailed in the Committee's Final Report for the 116th Congress (H. Rept. 116-562).

On July 29, 2021, the Select Committee met and issued its sixth set of recommendations focused on increasing staff capacity, diversity, and inclusion, and expanding accessibility to Congress for staff as well as the public. On December 8, 2021, the Select Committee met and issued its seventh set of recommendations focused on enhancing civility and collaboration, bolstering the effectiveness of the congressional support agencies, and promoting the collection and use of impartial data and analysis in the policymaking process. On July 19, 2022, the Select Committee met and issued its eighth set of recommendations focused on congressional oversight capacity, district operations, congressional office operations, the legislative process, and congressional continuity.

The Select Committee met on September 29, 2022, to pass its ninth package of recommendations. The recommendations broadly focus on constituent engagement, constituent services, House technology, and congressional operations. The recommendations address issues the Select Committee took up in public hearings, member meetings, and discussions with stakeholders.

II. BACKGROUND AND NEED FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Improving constituent engagement and constituent services, bolstering House technology, and supporting congressional operations will improve the way Congress works on behalf of the American people. The Select Committee identified the following specific issues to be addressed with recommendations:

1. Constituent casework data and trends are currently only captured by individual offices, which provides no insight into wider trends that might be occurring in casework services provided across House offices.

2. Congressional offices may not be aware of and may find it difficult to access and utilize new and innovative outreach best practices and methods that could help them respond to and more effectively engage with their constituents. Individual member offices sometimes work with and utilize information from civic organizations that model those practices, but knowledge sharing is often limited, and proper impact assessments and expert guidance on the latest methods and practices would aid more widespread adoption.

3. Currently, the only way for the public to provide feedback and input through official House websites is through a private email to their member of Congress or a committee, which ideally, and commonly, results in an email response. While messages can be sent via social media as well, many constituents use official websites to voice concerns or ask for assistance. To meet the modern expectation of customer service platforms, constituents may expect more dynamic ways to voice their opinion, provide input, and receive information.

4. Member offices receive a high volume of calls, emails, social media messages, and letters from constituents. While offices do the best they can to respond in a timely manner, the technology available to assist staff and members with that process has not kept pace with other state-of-the-art tools utilized in the private sector for customer service and response.

5. There is no standardized or easy process available for individual committees that may wish to solicit public comment and evidence on topics that might be coming before the committee.

6. Congressional offices manage constituent tour requests across many federal agencies, each with different processes. Some agencies require constituent information to be submitted via a spreadsheet, leading to situations where constituents are emailing their sensitive personal information to congressional staff, a process that is not as secure as it could be. The process of managing requests for multiple agencies on different days for hundreds of constituents also requires an inordinate amount of staff time and attention.

7. The process through which congressional offices request and obtain a flag flown over the U.S. Capitol for constituents who request them is cumbersome and not transparent enough. Specifically, after a flag request is submitted, a constituent may contact the congressional office to follow up on their request, but staff have no insight into where the flag is in the process and therefore no way to provide their constituents with an update on the progress. This regularly results in a poor cus-

customer service experience for constituents. Additionally, flags are delivered to the House office that made the request when in some cases it would be more efficient to send the flag directly to the constituent.

8. Soliciting customer feedback and satisfaction through surveys or questionnaires is considered a standard practice in most customer-facing businesses. While some House offices have deployed similar surveys to receive feedback and gauge levels of satisfaction with the constituent services the offices provide, there is no standard tool or process provided by the House to help offices that might also wish to do so. Moreover, there is no data available from other offices against which members could evaluate and measure their own office's level of performance on constituent service satisfaction.

9. When the public visits the Capitol, they learn a lot about the history, structure, and operations of Congress, but not always as much about who represents them, facts about their district, and the various policy positions of their representative.

10. The Congressional Hackathon, as well as other technology and innovation initiatives, are currently member-sponsored events and might not continue if the members and/or staff who led the initiative depart the institution over time. Additionally, the current iteration of the Hackathon is more of an "idea-a-thon" rather than a traditional hackathon where technical experts work on technology solutions at the event. Technical experts should work with congressional leaders as well as other participants.

11. Systems that are widely used or mission critical could suddenly become unavailable or unusable in the event of House or committee staff turnover or a change in leadership, or if a small vendor decides it's not worth the time or investment of resources to continue to maintain a tool. When that occurs, the House either loses functionality or it must allocate new funds to rebuild that functionality.

12. House-developed digital applications are not open-source by default. Without developing digital tools in an open-source environment, the institution limits the ability of other departments inside the legislative branch, agencies in state and local government, and outside civic groups and developers from building tools that might expand functionality of the House tool. Additionally, tools not developed in an open-source environment often are difficult to maintain if it was built by a vendor who either goes out of business or who the House no longer has a maintenance agreement with.

13. While the House and Senate might have different customer needs and requirements for some tools, creating entirely different processes for procuring, approving, and onboarding technologies across chambers creates unnecessary procurement and functionality inefficiencies.

14. Potential vendors, especially small ones, often find the approval process intimidating and difficult to navigate. There is currently very little information posted about the process and what potential technology vendors can expect. Once approved, there is no clear liaison to help with onboarding. All

of this contributes to making the House a less attractive option for vendors, and especially small vendors, interested in developing civic tools for use in the House.

15. Developing digital tools for House offices can be difficult and expensive for outside technology vendors, due in part to the unique rules and requirements for doing business with the House. As a result, there are fewer software developers looking to work with House offices, which can impede or delay offices that are looking to develop and access new digital tools. As an example, this was a common problem with the development of House websites until the institution lowered development barriers for a group of design firms willing to learn the House's unique processes and policies.

16. It is common practice for technology developers to use pre-written, open-source code to speed the technology development process. If the code focuses specifically on technology needs of Congress, then in some instances the House Ethics Committee may view it as an attempt to encourage favoritism for the creators. The operations of Congress are of general public interest and "civic tech" organizations are creating and publishing open-source code that could be used for technology development inside Congress. Current policies could be unnecessarily preventing Congress from using pre-written code, something that is common practice in technology development. Gift and in-kind rules are designed to prevent the improper use and acceptance of outside resources, but there should be opportunities to allow organizations to participate in the development of civic technology tools that can improve the legislative process.

17. Institutional offices in the legislative branch have been able to collaborate successfully through the Congressional Data Task Force and other bicameral working groups but have not always been as successful in setting agreed upon priorities for the development of digital infrastructure outside of their offices.

18. The House Digital Service does not currently have a mechanism for receiving input on how they prioritize projects and needs for their services in a way that is responsive to stakeholders.

19. The Capitol switchboard, which is currently operated by the Senate Sergeant at Arms, doesn't allow call information, like the phone number, to be passed through during the switch from the call center to a House office. Committee staff understands that Senate offices, however, do receive the caller's full phone number because the call is being transferred internally. This makes it difficult for House offices to block or avoid repeated abusive or threatening callers. It also makes it more difficult to report threatening callers to Capitol Police. Frustration with this issue has been reported by numerous offices as a drain on office time and an emotional tax on staff who answer calls in an office.

20. The current process for generating hearing records has many manual components, is time-consuming, and requires uploading the same information into multiple systems. The cumbersome process may discourage committees from submitting a record for printing. Without a printed official hearing

record, there is no written government source for the committee's proceeding beyond what may exist online or in the repository.

21. While technological advancements have been made, many committees still rely on paper-based processes for their hearings and markups. Paper might still be necessary in some cases, but in some instances a digital solution could be just as effective and practical, if not more.

22. The demands for legislative drafting services have increased, and the House has, in turn, focused on bolstering capacity at the House Office of Legislative Counsel (HOLC). When congressional staff, especially new staff, do not fully understand how the HOLC process works and/or how to best present and frame policy ideas to begin the drafting process, it can create time inefficiencies for both the member office and HOLC and exacerbate the capacity challenges. The issue may be even more acute at the beginning of a new Congress which may see an influx of new and/or inexperienced legislative staff, including staff in roles new to them.

23. While virtual information sessions are available, there are few opportunities for members and staff to meet the people working behind the scenes in the House of Representatives. Members meet with leadership of these offices at orientation, but the sessions are short and do not leave much time for making important connections or learning about valuable services.

24. Members may contribute substantially to the development and drafting of legislation but not receive credit (other than through a press release or other public acknowledgement). Additionally, it can be hard to track how much meaningful work members do across the aisle.

III. HEARINGS

The Select Committee has continued to use its unique roundtable format for the conduct of its formal hearings. In addition to the formal hearings, the Select Committee held a listening session with members of the Fix Congress Cohort which helped further inform these recommendations. The hearings included:

- “Congress & Technology: Modernizing the Innovation Cycle”, on June 23rd, 2022. The Select Committee received testimony from:
 - Ms. Melissa Dargan, Co-Founder & CEO, TourTrackr
 - Mr. Stephen Dwyer, Senior Advisor, House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer
 - Mr. Reynold Schweickhardt, Senior Advisor, Lincoln Network
- “Constituent Services: Building a More Customer-Friendly Congress”, on July 14, 2022. The Select Committee received testimony from:
 - Mr. Matt Lira, Partner, Hangar Capital
 - Ms. Anne Meeker, Director of Strategic Initiatives, POPVOX Foundation
 - Ms. Nina Olson, Executive Director, Center for Taxpayer Rights

- “What’s the Big Idea? Innovative Approaches to Fixing Congress”, on July 28, 2022. The Select Committee received testimony from:
 - Dr. Danielle Allen, James Bryant Conant University Professor, Harvard University
 - Dr. Lee Drutman, Senior Fellow, New America
 - Dr. Kevin Kosar, Senior Fellow, American Enterprise Institute
 - Congressman John Larson (D–CT)

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Select Committee made the following 24 recommendations to address the problems identified above, adding to the Committee’s 171 prior recommendations made since the beginning of the 116th Congress (see **II. BACKGROUND AND NEED FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**):

IMPROVING CONSTITUENT ENGAGEMENT AND CONSTITUENT SERVICES

(1) Recommendation: The House should develop an optional system to allow offices to share anonymized constituent casework data and aggregate that information to identify trends and systemic issues to better serve constituents.

Specifically. . . To provide data that is trackable and comparable, the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) should first develop a system of standardized casework categories and tracking standards—developed and refined in collaboration with caseworkers—and establish-House-wide unified analytics to identify casework trends and potential problem areas. Anonymized data could be collected and shared through an application programming interface (API) developed by the CAO. The CAO could then aggregate this data to produce a comprehensive dashboard or report that is made available to offices. The system should be optional and available on an opt-in basis for offices that wish to share and receive casework data. By aggregating data and utilizing unified analytics to identify casework trends and potential problem areas and making that information available to House offices and committees, the House could view a wider landscape of constituent concerns, better anticipate potential problem areas and backlogs, and identify issues that may need to be addressed through a policy change or other federal intervention.

(2) Recommendation: The House should provide offices with information related to outside organizations and resources available to assist members and committees that wish to enhance outreach efforts or utilize new tools for constituent communication and engagement.

Specifically . . . At a May 2022 roundtable on civic engagement, the Committee heard from various organizations and researchers about best practices and new tools for fostering and improving constituent engagement. These tools and methods for engagement could help members better understand issues faced by constituents, the range of different views and concerns, and potential solutions. For example, outside organizations could assist members and committees with hosting deliberative town halls with a statistically

representative group of constituents. Information on organizations that can provide assistance and support could be available through the Congressional Member Leadership Development Program. Guardrails should be established for the information provided to ensure there is no undue influence by outside organizations. In addition, outside organizations must be vetted and approved by the Committee on House Administration and information must be provided in accordance with House Ethics guidelines.

(3) Recommendation: The House should study and present options for developing a public-facing interactive platform for constituents to offer their opinions and feedback on pending legislation.

Specifically . . . To provide more of an opportunity for public engagement and input, Congress should evaluate the feasibility and practicality of developing of a new public-facing constituent engagement interactive platform, and present potential options. Options could include but not be limited to making Congress.gov more interactive and establishing a separate public-facing site to allow users to submit opinions that will be publicly visible on pending legislation or offer ideas for new legislation. Interactivity could include upvoting and downvoting, dynamic and collaborative bill drafting tools, the ability to link comments to more context written by LoC staff, among others. This would not supplant current communication methods, such as emails and webforms, but rather would be an additional option for comments that would be made public. The interface could point to Congress.gov's background information about proposals and legislation, further enabling constituents to formulate and communicate their views to Congress. A platform could also allow the public to sign up for automatic email alerts when issues they care about are acted upon.

(4) Recommendation: The House Digital Service should evaluate and onboard industry leading correspondence technology tools and platforms to enable offices to improve the quality and substance of constituent correspondence.

Specifically . . . Technology is available that can assist offices in improving the quality and substance of constituent correspondence. By adopting new intelligent tools, House offices can enhance the process of sorting and tagging constituent letters, improve the quality of responses by utilizing AI, more efficiently process and reply to comments that arrive through social media, and track constituents' satisfaction with the responses they receive. Improved constituent correspondence technology and tools can help offices respond to constituents more quickly and efficiently, and in potentially new ways. In addition, automating the repetitive aspects of correspondence can also free up staff to spend more time on other projects.

(5) Recommendation: The House should study and present options for developing a platform for committees that want to solicit public comment and evidence on topics that might be coming before the committee.

Specifically . . . With committee buy-in, the House could establish a website that allows all committees to solicit public comment before upcoming hearings and markups, or it could develop a plugin for committees to use on their existing website. Committees could selectively solicit public comments based on the topic or busi-

ness before the committee. Like an executive agency comment period, the site could allow for comments and uploading documentation relevant to the committee's interest. Depending on the committees' preferences, Committees could keep comments private, or they could be presented publicly and made part of the record as is done for agency comments. A study will address the feasibility and practicality of developing a platform and ensure there is committee buy-in to develop and use such a platform.

(6) Recommendation: The House should develop an efficient and secure tool for coordinating constituent tour requests.

Specifically . . . The House should develop a portal and/or plug-in for tour requests that allows constituents to securely submit their personal identifiable information (PII) and allow staffers to easily track and manage constituent requests for tours of the Capitol, White House, and other federal entities open for public tours. The CAO should assess industry standard technology tools or develop new digital solutions to standardize the tour request process.

(7) Recommendation: The House should develop a more efficient process for tracking and managing constituent flag requests.

Specifically . . . The House should develop a portal for flag requests that allows users to see where a flag is in the process, encompassing all stages within the Architect of the Capitol's Flag Office, House Mailing Services, and the House Office Supply Store. By creating a system like an online "pizza tracker," House staffers would be able to see where the flag is in the current process. House Mailing Services should also provide the option to either mail flags directly or send them back to personal offices, an option that the Committee understands currently exists only for Senate offices.

(8) Recommendation: The House should develop and provide offices with optional tools for surveying and tracking their constituent's 'customer service' experience.

Specifically . . . The House should offer a standard Customer Experience (CX) package for offices to utilize where at the end of an interaction between a member office and a constituent, there is an opportunity for constituents to provide feedback about their overall experience. In developing tools for tracking satisfaction, the House should look to the private sector for best practices. The tool should be optional for offices and provide customized options for offices to measure various aspects of the customer/constituent service experience. Offices could also opt in to allow their customer service response data to be aggregated into an anonymized report to enable them to compare their own office's performance with other offices, and with a House-wide performance "base-line" on customer service. The report could be supplemented with survey data obtained through Congressional Staff Academy courses related to constituent services. Collecting information on the constituent service experience can help offices gain a better understanding of how to meet constituent expectations and to identify areas in which to make improvements in service delivery.

(9) Recommendation: Future upgrades to the Capitol Visitor Center should allow for a more personalized and interactive tour that allows constituents to better understand who their representatives are and how their opinions are reflected in House votes.

Specifically . . . For example, an electronic device assigned to a visitor could allow them to learn specifically about their member and district by simply tapping their device on the display. In addition, it could enable them to participate in live polls (without voting repeatedly) and see how their vote matches up with how the House voted on an issue and how every other visitor to the center voted on the issue. Another example would be to create a Member Wall like the one in the European Parliament Parliamentarium that would pull up basic facts about each member, their committee assignments (potentially with live information about committee hearings), and member positions on key issues. Implementation of this recommendation would require an in-depth examination of how to address possible privacy and IT security concerns and a feasibility assessment of infrastructure and staffing requirements.

BOLSTERING HOUSE TECHNOLOGY

(10) Recommendation: Congress should institutionalize and expand technology education and innovation initiatives such as the Congressional Hackathon.

Specifically . . . The Congressional Hackathon and other technology and innovation-related events and initiatives in the House would benefit from being institutionalized and be expanded to bring together technical staff from throughout the legislative branch to brainstorm and work on technical solutions collaboratively. Additionally, institutional support would encourage more of the legislative branch agencies, like CRS/CBO/GAO, to participate.

(11) Recommendation: The House should develop an onboarding process to institutionalize congressional technology that has reached a mature development stage, is widely used, or is considered mission critical.

Specifically . . . Systems like the Dome Watch app, DemCom intranet, GOP Cloakroom amendment / vote tracker as well as committee amendment systems are widely used or considered mission critical. These systems were developed by Leadership or committee offices and are “owned” by those individual offices. As such, they could become unavailable or unusable as staff departs and offices change. House Information Resources (HIR) and House Digital Service, after consultation with other institutional offices, should develop standard criteria for mature technology and a standard process for onboarding them with the appropriate institutional office. There should also be a process in place, with appropriate oversight, for “off-ramping” technologies that may have become obsolete or are no longer utilized or effective. Additionally, custom software tools are often built by software developers that numerous offices use but fall out of favor because the developer doesn’t have an incentive to continue to maintain or upgrade that tool. The House could benefit by having a process for procuring the source code and building on top of the base tool, rather than building a similar mission critical tool from scratch.

(12) Recommendation: House-developed digital applications should be made open source by default.

Specifically . . . Technology developed with House resources should, by default and when appropriate, have code that is published publicly under a structured open-source license. Open-source

software is computer software that is released under a license in which the copyright holder (in this case the House) grants users the rights to view, use, study, change, and distribute the software and its source code for usage and further development by other entities. Open-source licensing can be structured in ways that are beneficial to the House, and, if necessary, be revoked. A sample agreement would require that the House also be able to use free of cost any tools developed to expand functionality for the underlying digital tool. An open-source system will make it easier to improve functionally and maintain House-built tools in addition to preventing vendor lock-in.

(13) Recommendation: The House and Senate should work to align more of their technology standards and processes.

Specifically . . . Through a bicameral working group, the House and Senate should seek to align technology standards and processes, where feasible. Enterprise-wide systems used by both chambers (for example, Microsoft Office Suite) should be aligned to facilitate collaboration between the chambers. Currently, House and Senate offices are not able to communicate over MS Teams. Ideally, approval by one chamber should allow for expedited, or even immediate, approval by the other chamber. Both chambers should use one system of Communicating with Congress (CWC), the tool that processes constituent mail, which would be easier and cheaper for both chambers and for the advocacy organizations. Aligning more technology standards and processes, including procurement and onboarding processes, will save money, allow offices to work more efficiently, make it easier for outside groups and vendors working with Congress, and improve collaboration across the chambers.

(14) Recommendation: The House should provide more public information to potential technology vendors and streamline the vendor approval and onboarding process.

Specifically . . . The House should publish a page on their website for potential developers of digital tools similar to the “Steps to Becoming a Web Vendor” that exists on the House’s website. While the House has a process for working specifically with vendors, it should continue to improve the process and establish a clear liaison or point of contact that works with outside vendors once they are approved. In addition, the vendor application should be posted publicly along with information explaining the application and approval process, recommended best practices, and FAQs. Any streamlining of the vendor approval process should ensure a competitive process that secures the best quality products and services at the best possible price. Providing more information publicly about the process and helping small vendors navigate it could attract more technology startups and encourage the development of new tools that innovate and improve House operations.

(15) Recommendation: The CAO should develop an Established Delivery Partners program for digital solution vendors that regularly work with the House.

Specifically . . . By creating an “Established Delivery Partners” (EDP) process and list, the House can make it easier and quicker for experienced vendors to clear administrative hurdles to deliver digital tools to House clients. Vendors included in this process would understand House Rules and possess a proven track record of developing tools successfully and meeting the House’s security

protocols. As the CAO develops and utilizes EDPs, it should be careful to ensure it remains a competitive process that is continually open to new entrants and does not, through institutional inertia, become an exclusive group and thus a potential obstacle to accepting new vendors and technologies. The intention is to ease administrative and approval burdens when a vendor has demonstrated repeatedly that they understand and follow House Rules and protocols. Having an established list of approved software developers will ensure that House offices are able to better scope potential projects, receive more accurate costs estimates, and develop and receive tools in a timelier manner.

(16) Recommendation: The House should review current policies and, where appropriate, allow opportunities for congressional use of software and its underlying code that is developed by outside civic technology organizations.

Specifically . . . The House Committee on Ethics and the Committee on House Administration should review and provide public-facing, written guidance on Congress's potential use and publishing of open-source technology. The guidance should address whether offices can communicate publicly about the development of a website, whether congressional offices can use open-source software published in a public repository, whether congressional offices can publish open-source code developed internally using official resources, and whether congressional offices can provide comments and feature requests to open-source projects developed by others concerning ideas for further improving the software. Clear guidelines could enable civic tech organizations to develop and make improvements to code that the House might use and should ensure opportunities for technology sharing and collaboration remain competitive and remain available to all otherwise qualified civic tech entities. The Ethics Committee and other committees of jurisdiction should review and update gift rules to allow appropriate collaboration between congressional offices and civic tech organizations and allow for collaborative technology prize competitions. The House could publish data standards and common identifiers (for example, member unique ID) as well as more API information to allow civic tech organizations and academics to, in a standard fashion, work with the data Congress produces. Reviewing and updating rules and policies and/or providing additional clarity, where appropriate, can help Congress better utilize and share open-source civic technology to improve the public's access to and understanding of Congress.

(17) Recommendation: The House should establish a high-level working group to prioritize and coordinate the maintenance and development of House digital infrastructure.

Specifically . . . The House should establish a coordinated working group comprised of leadership offices, relevant committees, support offices, and outside advisors to discuss, coordinate, and prioritize major technology projects in the House and implementation of the Select Committee's recommendations. The working group should represent both the majority and minority parties in the House. The working group should be charged with bringing together members and relevant staffers from member offices, committees, and support agencies to identify pain points in congressional technology and plan out what areas need attention. This working

group can identify and evaluate technology that can support law-making, oversight, constituent engagement and overall operations for the institution and serve as a central clearinghouse for information and expertise about technology. The House Technology Working Group should consult widely, gathering input from relevant stakeholders and experts and using data to assess technology for the chamber. By bringing together staff from across the institution, and from the outside, the working group provides a new—and needed—forum for identifying shared technology challenges and assessing new tools. The working group should make clear and actionable recommendations that would advance congressional technology.

(18) Recommendation: The House should create a Digital Service Advisory Board to help plan and prioritize the work of the House Digital Service.

Specifically . . . The Board should include a wide variety of senior congressional administrative staff representing various departments and with technical knowledge. A board will help ensure that the HDS has broad buy-in to their objectives and is prioritizing systems that customers identify. The HDS should develop a transparent but nimble process for selecting projects. This could be modeled on the Digital Strategy Board that helps govern the UK's Parliamentary Digital Service.

(19) Recommendation: The Capitol switchboard should be updated to allow call information to be passed through to House offices.

Specifically . . . The Capitol switchboard should allow call information, like the phone number, to be passed through during the switch from the call center to a House office. The House has made improvements and offices can now identify when a call is coming in through the switchboard, which can be helpful for a Capitol Police investigation but is not helpful for blocking disruptive and threatening callers.

(20) Recommendation: The GPO should create and offer a standard process for automating committee hearing records.

Specifically . . . The GPO, working with the Clerk, should establish a standard but optional process that automatically generates and compiles a draft hearing record using documents uploaded into the committee repository (e.g., testimony, transcript, votes, and other documents). This process will require compatibility between document formats used by committees and the format used at GPO. For years GPO has been working on this compatibility and has developed XPUB to modernize the process. To ensure all hearing records are accounted for, the committee clerk must mark the hearing record 'closed' before GPO begins to compile the record. Automating the process for compiling and submitting hearing records to GPO will reduce time and cost burdens and encourage the printing of committee hearing records. An official printed record lasts in perpetuity and enhances transparency and public availability of hearing information.

(21) Recommendation: The House should work with committees to develop optional tools that allow them to continue to migrate away from the use of paper documents during committee meetings.

Specifically . . . The Committee on House Administration could develop procedures and make resources available to members and committees to ensure that all future committee business is “digital by default.” Members or committees that still wish to operate based on paper could still opt-in to the paper-based system. The costs of digital tools necessary for committee business would be borne by committees.

SUPPORTING CONGRESSIONAL OPERATIONS

(22) Recommendation: The House should provide resources to support HOLC’s continuing efforts to expand education and proactive outreach to members and staff.

Specifically . . . The House should provide HOLC with resources to add a Director of Outreach and Education or assign additional non-attorney staff to an outreach and education team at HOLC that would be solely focused on proactive outreach to member and committee offices, serve as the office’s “eyes and ears” to answer questions and identify possible concerns, and to focus on ways to continually improve the office’s educational and informational materials and offerings to ensure staff, in particular new staff, are fully informed on the HOLC’s role and processes. The Committee understands the focus of the OLC is on legislative drafting services and would not want this effort to take away from the resources that should be geared toward improving that core drafting function. This person could have office space in the Capitol that is welcoming to staff, and the space could be used for legislative drafting collaboration between members, staff, and attorneys at HOLC.

The HOLC attorneys interact daily and directly with members and committee offices and staff to provide the legislative drafting support and assistance they need. Therefore, customer service is an integral part of what HOLC attorneys do, and each attorney in the office, by definition, plays an important and much needed customer-facing role. Over the past several years, HOLC has expanded its educational and informational outreach to provide members and staff with the resources necessary to work most effectively and efficiently with offices to turn members’ policy ideas into effective legislative text. For example, in collaboration with the Congressional Staff Academy (CSA), the Office is currently offering a Legislative Counsel 101 (Leg Counsel and You) and a Legislative Counsel 201 (Working with Legislative Text) course. The Committee also understands the HOLC plans to establish open house opportunities for House staff to meet with the Office to share questions, goals, ideas for improvement, and concerns. Finally, the CAO Coach Program in April 2022 hired a Legislative Coach specializing in mentoring legislative staff and has partnered with HOLC to offer legislative staff tips and tricks. The Committee strongly supports these efforts, because when legislative staff is fully informed on the HOLC drafting process and understands how they can provide a workable policy idea to begin the drafting process, workflow and efficiency improve.

(23) Recommendation: At the beginning of a new Congress, House business support offices and agencies should hold an “Open-House” to provide members and staff the opportunity to personally meet with institutional offices and staff and learn about the services they offer.

Specifically . . . An in-person “Open-House” would raise the awareness of these offices and what they do. It could also improve the working relationships with member offices by providing a personal touch and the opportunity to meet the people they may otherwise only interact with over the phone, via email, or virtually. Many offices already hold an open House or information session, but these are not coordinated with each other.

(24) Recommendation: The House should permit legislation to have two members of Congress serve as first sponsors, provided that members are affiliated with different political parties.

Specifically . . . A second primary sponsor designation for a member of a different party would incentivize bipartisanship by giving a member who substantively helps in the crafting and passage more credit than a co-sponsor designation, which often only reflects support for the legislation. This recommendation does not call for a change to the standing rules of the House but rather envisions a special order to pilot the idea for a single Congress. There is some precedent for having more than one member be the sponsor of a bill. The 104th Congress adopted a special rule to allow the first 20 bills introduced in the House (H.R. 1 through H.R. 20) to have more than one member listed as a first sponsor. The committee understands that operational challenges may arise if implementation diverges from the precedent of the 104th Congress.

V. COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION AND VOTES

CONSIDERATION

On September 29, 2022, 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.