



MODERNIZATION COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

The House Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress (SCMC) has been in operation for two years now and has compiled lists of bipartisan recommendations to improve Congress, including with respect to oversight.¹ The SCMC website also tracks implementation of its recommendations.² The key SCMC recommendations on oversight are listed below, many of which require additional Member and staff support to achieve full implementation.

From 97 Recommendations Compiled During the 116th Congress

4. One-click access to a list of agencies and programs that have expired and need Congressional attention.
17. Reestablishing and restructuring an improved Office of Technology Assessment.
25. Prioritizing a “rapid response” program at the Congressional Research Service for nonpartisan fact sheets on key issues.
32. Update committee policies to increase bipartisan learning opportunities for staff.
48. Establish regular maintenance plans for office technology, so the equipment and technology needed during remote operations and telework is functional.
51. The House should prioritize the approval of platforms that staff need for effective telework, and each individual staff member should have licensed access to the approved technology. [Implemented re Office 365, Teams, Cisco, WebEx, and Zoom.]
52. Committees should establish telework policies on a bipartisan basis.
53. The House should make permanent the option to electronically submit committee reports. [Implemented.]
54. Expand the use of digital signatures for a majority of House business, including constituent communications. [Partially implemented.]
55. Committees should develop bipartisan plans on how technology and innovative platforms can be best incorporated into daily work.
58. Establish specific committee-only meeting times when Congress is in session.
59. Create a common committee calendar portal to help with scheduling and reduce conflicts.
60. Establish specific days – or weeks – where committee work takes priority.
63. Offer staff certifications, in additions to trainings, through the nonpartisan Congressional Staff Academy. [Partially implemented. Note: No CSA classes on oversight are offered yet, but could be added in the future.]
73. Incentivize committees to experiment with alternative hearing formats to encourage more bipartisan participation.
74. Committees should hire bipartisan staff approved by both the Chair and Ranking Member to promote strong institutional knowledge, evidence-based policy making, and a less partisan oversight agenda.
75. Committees should hold bipartisan pre-hearing committee meetings.

¹ See <https://modernizecongress.house.gov/116th-recommendations>; <https://modernizecongress.house.gov/117th-recommendations>.

² See <https://modernizecongress.house.gov/implementation>.

- 76. Encourage subcommittees to pilot rules changes that could have a positive effect committee-wide.
- 78. Establish committee-based domestic policy CODELs.
- 81. Identify how increased regulatory and legal resources could help strengthen the role of the legislative branch. [Partially implemented. Note: SCMC letter to GAO requests study of a congressional counterpart to DOJ's Office of Legal Counsel to address oversight among other issues and of another congressional office to address regulatory matters.]
- 82. Facilitate a true system of checks and balances by ensuring the legislative branch is sufficiently represented in the courts. [See 81.]
- 84. Increase capacity for policy staff, especially for Committees, policy support organizations and a restored Office of Technology Assessment.
- 86. Require an annual Fiscal State of the Nation.
- 96. Make permanent the Bulk Data Task Force and rename it the Congressional Data Task Force.

From 46 Recommendations Compiled To Date During the 117th Congress

- 4. Mentorship Match Program: The House should initiate and facilitate a formal mentorship program for matching more experienced staff with less experienced staff.
- 5. Professional Certifications: The House should allow Member, committee, and leadership offices to pay for certain professional development opportunities for staff that include a certification.
- 13. Intern & Fellowship Program Office or Coordinator: The House should establish an Intern and Fellowship Program Office or Coordinator that helps with onboarding, developing educational curriculum, professional development, and training for office coordinators.
- 14. Fellows & Detailees Use of Equipment: Congress should clarify rules to allow fellows and detailees to receive the same resources as professional staff.
- 15. Remote Internships: The House should study the feasibility of permanently allowing remote internships.
- 16. Committee Internship Stipends: Committees should be provided a program allowance, separate from their budget, for compensation of interns.
- 5. Bipartisan committee events: Committees should have flexibility to host occasional events to foster collaboration and further develop working relationships among committee members.
- 6. Learning from state best practices: The House should survey and examine best practices from state legislatures.
- 7. Bipartisan group events: The Library of Congress is encouraged to expand its regular, bipartisan events to include events specifically focused on promoting relationship building and collaboration among members.
- 8. Ongoing institutional support to facilitate civility and collaboration: An institutional office of the House should provide best practices and facilitate workshops that encourage bipartisan collaboration.
- 9. Technology tools to enable collaboration: The House should offer technology tools to facilitate member collaboration on legislation and issues of mutual interest.
- 11. Bipartisan committee websites: Committees should have a bipartisan, public-facing website with basic, nonpartisan information about the committee and its operations.
- 12. Voluntary resources to help committees develop civility norms: The House should provide resources and guidance to committees seeking to create tailored civility norms.

13. Co-working spaces for staff: The House should explore bipartisan co-working spaces for staff.
3. Bolster legislative support agency access to federal data and experts: Support agencies should report on challenges and potential solutions for accessing federal data.
4. Enhancing the customer experience at CRS: CRS should ensure that its products and services are designed to adapt and meet the needs of an evolving Congress.
5. Enhancing the customer experience at GAO: GAO should boost initiatives to meet Congress' information needs and assess member and staff awareness of and satisfaction with its products and services.
6. GAO annual report on unimplemented recommendations: GAO should report annually on the estimated cost savings of its unimplemented recommendations.
8. Enhance CBO outreach to Congress: CBO should expand its congressional outreach to provide additional information and assistance to members of Congress and staff.
9. Legislative and support agency staff directory: Congress and congressional support agencies should establish a shared staff directory to enhance the exchange of information and improve collaboration.
10. Modernize the congressional support agencies: The committees of jurisdiction should examine support agency authorities and determine if they need to be updated.
11. Authorize STAA and make it a permanent part of GAO: The Science, Technology Assessment, and Analytics program at GAO should be authorized and made permanent by Congress.
1. Congressional Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking: Congress should establish a bipartisan, bicameral Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking to encourage and facilitate better use of data in the legislative process.