

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 12, 2018

The Honorable Doug Collins
Chairman
Subcommittee on Rules and
Organization of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable James P. McGovern
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Rules and
Organization of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Collins and Ranking Member McGovern,

The New Democrat Coalition is made up of 68 forward-thinking Democrats in the U.S. House of Representatives who are committed to pro-economic growth, pro-innovation, and fiscally responsible policies. New Democrats are a solutions-oriented coalition seeking to bridge the gap between left and right by challenging outmoded partisan approaches to governing. New Democrats believe the challenges ahead are too great for Members of Congress to refuse to cooperate purely out of partisanship. That is why many of our members welcome the Committee's focus on updating the House Rules for the 116th Congress.

Members of the New Democrat Coalition will likely submit several specific proposals for your consideration, either individually or through other organizations such as the Problem Solvers Caucus and Rebuild Congress Initiative. We encourage careful consideration of all these individual proposals, and particularly think the Rules Committee would be well served to focus on areas that restore power to committees and individual members, encourage more bipartisanship and consensus-based policy making, incentivize the House to set clear schedules and deadlines for major legislation, and work towards these goals in a transparent and collaborative way. We have included a few general principles here, which we believe should be the goal of any reform to House Rules.

Public policy enacted without bipartisan support becomes subject to endless re-litigation, creating a harmful atmosphere of uncertainty and unpredictability. Ideally, the legislative process should be driven by Chairs and Ranking Members, working together with their committee members towards shared goals, honestly trying to resolve good faith disagreements, and litigating differences of opinion through open debate and amendment. House Rules should make it easier for bills and amendments that have bipartisan support to move through the legislative

process and be considered on the floor. Furthermore, major legislation should never be written behind closed doors by party leaders. Representatives of both parties who will be voting on a bill should have a chance to see the bill — and offer amendments — throughout the Committee process.

Leaders should establish expedited procedures that allow bills with broad, bipartisan support the opportunity for an up or down vote in the House. That way, party leaders or narrow factions would not be able to override the will of the people and bottle up broadly supported legislation through parliamentary tactics or by plainly refusing to bring them up for a vote. It is one thing to have disagreements. It is another when Congress impedes the democratic process and refuses to move forward on issues Democrats and Republicans agree on. Whether this is accomplished through reforms to the discharge petition process or through some new procedure, when the majority of the House has demonstrated broad agreement it should be allowed to work its will.

Individual Members of Congress are elected by voters with the expectation that they will have an opportunity to shape public policy and give their constituents a voice in our Nation's Capital. In reality, most members have few opportunities to pass significant laws or even amendments. Members and those who elected them should have the opportunity to see their ideas and priorities debated and voted on. Committees should dedicate more time to marking up bills, and closed rules that offer no opportunity for amendment should be used sparingly.

Finally, we would urge you to remember that the House of Representatives is governed far more by norms, attitudes, and comity than it is by any Rules or procedures. While reforming and modernizing our rules and procedures is an admirable goal, true change is going to require a commitment from all of us – Democrats and Republicans, leadership and rank and file members – to come to consensus about what kind of institution we want to serve in and how we want it to work. If a majority of this body continues to prioritize partisanship over pragmatism, then the effort you are undertaking is destined for failure, and we will fail in our duty to serve those we represent. As a coalition we are committed to doing all we can to make Congress more functional and productive.

Sincerely,




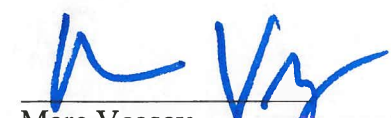
Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress

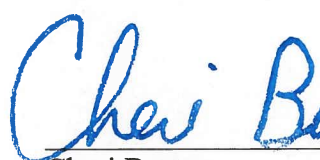



Jim Himes
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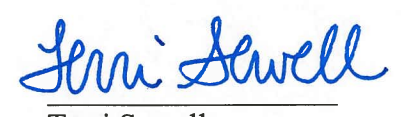

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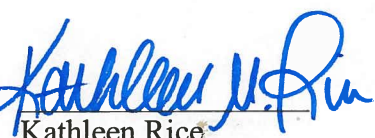

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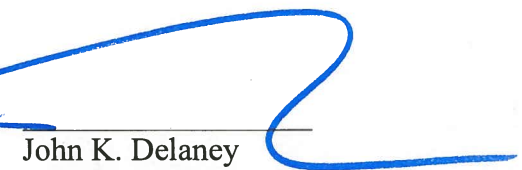

Ed Perlmutter
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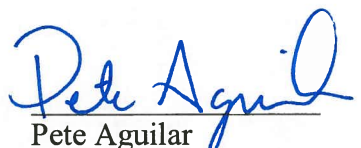

Colleen Hanabusa
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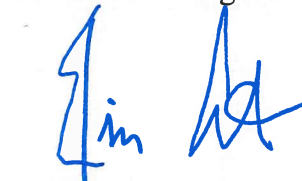

Elizabeth Esty
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Scott H. Peters
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Kurt Schrader
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John K. Delaney
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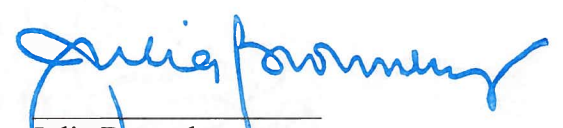

Pete Aguilar
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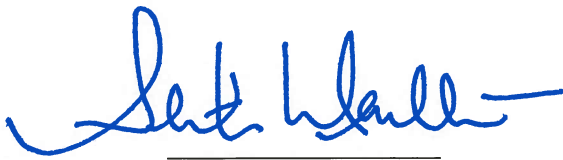

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Salud O. Carbajal
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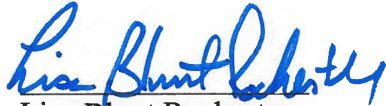
Seth Moulton
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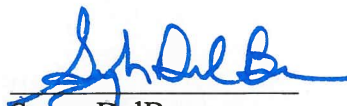
Bill Foster
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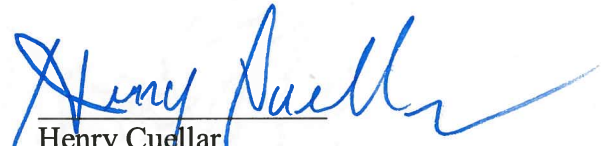
Vicente Gonzalez
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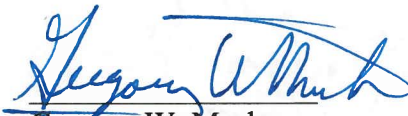
Stephanie Murphy
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Jim Cooper
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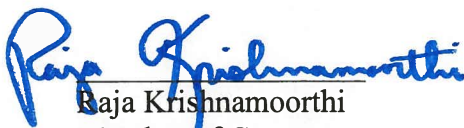
Sean Patrick Maloney
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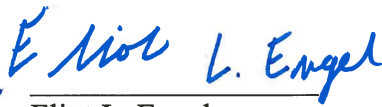
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Raja Krishnamoorthi
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