

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 15, 2020

The Honorable Steny Hoyer
Majority Leader
House of Representatives
H-107, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
House of Representatives
H-204, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable James McGovern
Chairman, Committee on Rules
House of Representatives
H-312, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Ranking Member, Committee on Rules
House of Representatives
H-152, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Majority Leader Hoyer, Minority Leader McCarthy, Chairman McGovern, and Ranking Member Cole,

We write concerning your continued work on the bipartisan task force to examine ways Congress may better adapt to emergencies like the coronavirus pandemic. We believe Leader McCarthy and Ranking Member Cole have offered a practical, reasonable plan to re-open the U.S. House of Representatives. However, we are concerned that the majority is racing to adopt unprecedented and ill-conceived changes to our institution.

One particularly concerning proposal is the change to the committee process within Sec. 4 of H. Res. 965. As you are aware, many House committees have continued good, bipartisan work over the last several months even while normal business has been suspended due to the coronavirus. Committee members have regularly participated in telephone and video briefings with Executive Branch agency officials working diligently on the front lines of this crisis.

However, it has come to our attention that some committees have begun to ostensibly use this briefing process as an indirect method to carry out hearings absent the normal protocols and rules. Briefings have featured opening statements, witness testimony, and Member questions, essentially functioning as official committee hearings in all but name. Most concerning, the minority has often been shut out of the witness selection process altogether and has not been provided written copies of witness testimony in advance of these meetings.

With the revelation that H. Res. 965 will further alter the traditional committee process, it is vital that the rights of the minority are preserved. As many committees continue to shift toward operating on a remote basis, both the letter and spirit of committee rules and procedures must be followed as closely as possible. Committee chairpersons should not use these unique circumstances to bypass minority member rights by holding “briefings” to circumvent the normal process.

During your important continued work on this task force, we ask for you to fully institute committee rules, process, and procedures that fully respect the long-standing rights of the minority. We thank you for your continued efforts to stress the importance of these issues during your deliberations as we eagerly move to return to the work of the People’s House.

Sincerely,



Jody Hice
Member of Congress

/s/ Kevin Brady

Kevin Brady
Member of Congress



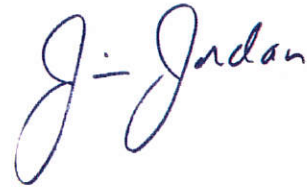
Andy Biggs
Member of Congress

/s/ Ted Budd

Ted Budd
Member of Congress

/s/ Ben Cline

Ben Cline
Member of Congress



Jim Jordan
Member of Congress

/s/ Jim Baird

Jim Baird
Member of Congress



Ken Buck
Member of Congress



Buddy Carter
Member of Congress



Michael Cloud
Member of Congress



Doug Collins
Member of Congress

/s/ James Comer

James Comer
Member of Congress



Warren Davidson
Member of Congress

/s/ Jeff Duncan

Jeff Duncan
Member of Congress



A. Drew Ferguson, IV
Member of Congress



Russ Fulcher
Member of Congress



Greg Gianforte
Member of Congress



Bob Gibbs
Member of Congress



Louie Gohmert
Member of Congress



Paul A. Gosar, D.D.S.
Member of Congress



Glenn Grothman
Member of Congress



Michael Guest
Member of Congress



Brett Guthrie
Member of Congress



Andy Harris
Member of Congress

/s/ Fred Keller

Fred Keller
Member of Congress



Blaine Luetkemeyer
Member of Congress



Carol D. Miller
Member of Congress



Alex X. Mooney
Member of Congress



Dan Newhouse
Member of Congress



Ralph Norman
Member of Congress



Pete Olson
Member of Congress



Guy Reschenthaler
Member of Congress



Chip Roy
Member of Congress



Greg Steube
Member of Congress

/s/ Randy K. Weber

Randy K. Weber
Member of Congress

/s/ Scott Perry

Scott Perry
Member of Congress



Denver Riggleman
Member of Congress



Austin Scott
Member of Congress



Scott Tipton
Member of Congress



Ron Wright
Member of Congress