

Chairman Kilmer, Vice Chairman Graves, Members of the Select Committee:

I am pleased to join you this morning and to be here alongside Ranking Member Womack, who served with me as co-chair of the Joint Select Committee on Budget and Appropriations Process Reform in the 115th Congress.

While concerns over a partisan process for Senate consideration prevented that Committee from reporting out recommendations, House Democrats have used the first nine months of our new Majority to make important improvements to the budget and appropriations process.

I am pleased to say that one of the most important changes that I advocated for in the Joint Select Committee, raising unworkable budget caps, was achieved on a bipartisan basis in July.

Because of Speaker Pelosi's strong leadership, the Bipartisan Budget Act allows us to invest For The People and increase funding for education, health care, and human services.

In addition, the Bipartisan Budget Act suspended the debt ceiling – removing this source of uncertainty for families, businesses, and communities across the country.

However, as I recommended during the Joint Select Committee process, I would prefer to go further and completely repeal the debt ceiling.

It serves no useful purpose other than to create opportunities for brinksmanship that threaten our nation's credit and the health of our economy.

In addition to the Bipartisan Budget Act, we have also made important changes to House Rules.

When our Democratic Majority took office in January, we adopted a meaningful pay-as-you-go rule that shuts the door on reckless policies like the GOP tax scam.

As Chairwoman of the Appropriations Committee, I have restored the longstanding practice of adopting 302(b) allocations before reporting appropriations bills, an important step for transparency.

To build on these successes in charting a more effective and responsible course for the American people, there are two key legislative changes that I proposed making when I led the Joint Select Committee that would help improve the budget and appropriations process:

- Moving from an annual to a biennial budget resolution, requiring a resolution in the first year of each Congress and providing appropriations allocations for both the first and second years of the biennium; and

- Providing a mechanism to facilitate action on appropriations even if a budget resolution is not adopted, ideally by allowing for a concurrent resolution dealing with 302(a) allocations only.

Although these are outside the scope of this Select Committee, it is worth noting that I also favor two changes to Senate rules that would bolster fiscal responsibility in both chambers:

- Restoring the Conrad Rule, a Senate rule that prevented reconciliation legislation from increasing the deficit in the first ten years; and
- Adding a new 60-vote point of order in the Senate against reconciliation instructions in a budget resolution that call for a net deficit increase.

In addition, I support technical improvements to better handle cap adjustment items, change the process for calculating baseline projections of emergency spending, and expedite the administration's provision of full-year budgetary data to the CBO.

However, even with these changes, the most important element to a successful budget and appropriations process is political will.

I am proud that our Democratic Majority has shown that political will and taken our responsibilities seriously. That is why our chamber is far ahead of the Senate in processing appropriations bills this year.

Finally, I'd like to discuss the elephant in the room: Congressionally-directed spending.

This Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress is tasked with strengthening this institution. Nothing could strengthen the Article I branch of government more than restoring Congressionally-directed spending.

It is imperative that Congress exercise its Constitutional responsibility in determining how and where taxpayer dollars that we appropriate are spent.

The end of Congressionally-directed spending has led to diminished comity in the House and transferred our authority to the Executive Branch.

Returning to earmarking under a strong set of rules to ensure transparency and prevent abuse would be of immeasurable benefit to this House and to the American people. I hope that we can do so in the months ahead.

Thank you for inviting me to testify and best of luck with this Select Committee.