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Office of the Clerk
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-6601

October 17, 2022

The Honorable Zoe Lofgren
Chairperson
Committee on House Administration
1309 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rodney Davis
Ranking Member
Committee on House Administration
1216 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairperson Lofgren and Ranking Member Davis,

Pursuant to Section 504 of House Resolution 756 from the 116th Congress, I am submitting this quarterly report about establishing and maintaining a database of votes taken in Committees. This report also discusses other Committee operations matters, including the creation of a tool that will assist with scheduling Committee meetings and activities to avoid conflicts and Member double-booking.

As the Committee is aware, my Office published two requests for information (RFIs) on January 27, 2022, to address requirements related to capturing and publishing Committee votes as data and evaluating technical solutions to Committee scheduling issues. We have completed our analysis of the responses and are prepared to make recommendations based on that analysis.

Request for Information: Committee Votes

For Committee voting, we have identified short-term options that will allow Committees to process and publish their tally sheets with vote data on a Clerk-managed website. These options largely preserve the existing workflows and processes Committees use today, including production of tally sheets for inclusion in Committee documents and posting on Committee websites and the Committee Repository.

To move towards implementation, we recommend the creation of a Committee portal system that would serve as a next generation platform to manage Committee work. In previous reports we have discussed the need for a comprehensive, holistic approach that addresses all systems used to

manage Committee work in conjunction with other modernization efforts, such as the Legislative Information Management System (LIMS).¹ For example, storing Committee vote data in the new LIMS would allow for efficient data exchange with other systems and organizations, such as the Committee Repository, Committee Calendar application, the Government Publishing Office (GPO), Congress.gov, and various House websites, as well as making the data publicly available.

The initial module or feature in this new portal would allow Committee staff to manage Committee votes and vote tally sheets while providing functionality to deliver the vote data and accompanying documents to Clerk-managed systems for public dissemination and, if agreed upon, exchange with legislative branch data partners.

The initial vote module would aim to

- facilitate the current tally process used by most Committees by adding a layer of technology to established workflows
- minimize disruption to Committee staff procedures
- standardize processes across Committees, where feasible
- capture vote information as data and integrate with existing Committee Repository publishing processes
- be the start of a centralized Committee portal that reduces the number of systems and applications currently in use

To carry out this work, I recommend that Clerk staff supervise the project and initial user engagement with most of the development efforts carried out by contractors to minimize the impact on existing projects. Additionally, the project should use Clerk-defined software processes to ensure alignment with Clerk systems and quality assurance practices and be designed to run on House cloud infrastructure for long-term support, maintenance, and operations.

Request for Information: Committee Scheduling

As the Committee is aware, scheduling processes require collaboration across multiple House organizations, including Committee clerks, Office of Official Reporters, House Recording Studio, Members and their staff, other Committees, and outside witnesses. Because of this collaboration and the dynamic and complex nature of Member's schedules and Committee commitments, we believe standard off-the-shelf scheduling tools are not sufficient to meet long-term Committee needs. However, we did see several ideas among the RFI responses that warrant more engagement and study. We recommend continued discussions with interested parties in collaboration with the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer's House Digital Service (HDS) to find solutions that can be integrated both with House enterprise systems and Clerk systems such as the Committee Repository.

As you may know, Chief Administrative Officer Catherine Szpindor testified at the September 14, 2022, hearing of the Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress. In her written statement, she indicated that the HDS is researching Member and Committee office needs

¹https://cha.house.gov/sites/democrats.cha.house.gov/files/InitialReport_HRes756_Section%20504_VotesTakenInCommittee.pdf;
<https://cha.house.gov/sites/democrats.cha.house.gov/files/Clerk-QR2-VotesTakenInCommittee-RELEASED.pdf>;
<https://cha.house.gov/sites/democrats.cha.house.gov/files/documents/Clerk-Com-Vote-Tools.pdf>.

including a common Committee scheduling tool to help reduce scheduling conflicts. To date, HDS has conducted preliminary research into scheduling data and potential challenges. More user research and analysis of the scheduling problem is needed to understand the workflows, requirements, and perspectives of the multiple stakeholders affected by Committee scheduling processes. My staff in Legislative Computer Systems will continue to work with HDS on this matter.

We look forward to continued engagement with this initiative to ensure that the needs of the House community, the Committees, the Clerk's Office, and the requirements of House Rules are met.

Finally, unless otherwise directed, the next report will be sent on or before January 15, 2023. If you or others on the Committee have questions about the contents of this report, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Cheryl L. Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Cheryl L. Johnson
Clerk of the House