

February 27, 2025

The Honorable David Valadao
Chair, Legislative Branch Appropriations Subcommittee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Adriano Espaillat
Ranking Member, Legislative Branch Appropriations Subcommittee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chair Valadao, Ranking Member Espaillat, and Members of the Legislative Branch Appropriations Subcommittee:

We respectfully request the House Legislative Branch Appropriations Subcommittee resume its longstanding bipartisan tradition of holding public witness days, when members of the public can request to testify in person before the committee.

Public witness hearings provide a vital opportunity for subcommittee members to hear new perspectives. These hearings, which often bundle member days and public witness testimony together, have inspired the subcommittee to direct further improvements in the operations of the Legislative branch or to inquire closely into particular aspects of its operations. It also provides the public an opportunity to express its support for the work of the subcommittee.

The COVID pandemic prompted the House to reduce the number of appropriations hearings. We urge you to return to the practice of opening up the process to in-person public feedback. The Interior Appropriations Subcommittee already invited public witness testimony at the end of February and we expect other subcommittees to follow suit.

Over the last 25 years, the public testified in person under Chairs Ryan, Yoder, Crenshaw, Wasserman-Schultz, Taylor, and Walsh.¹ We hope this will be part of your legacy as well.

Thank you for considering this request and for your commitment to ensuring that the voices of the public remain an integral part of the legislative process.

¹ Records from the Legislative Branch Appropriations Subcommittee hearings on GPO's website are incomplete. We can confirm that in-person public witness testimony occurred on the following schedule: FY 2021 (March 4, 2020, Chair Ryan); FY 2020 (April 2, 2019, Chair Ryan); FY 2019 (April 17, 2018, Chair Yoder); FY 2018 (May 3, 2017, Chair Yoder); FY 2012 (May 11, 2011, Rep. Crenshaw); FY 2011 (February 24, 2010, Rep. Wasserman-Schultz); FY 2010 (May 5, 2009, Rep. Wasserman-Schultz); FY 2009 (May 7, 2008, Rep. Wasserman-Schultz); FY 2001 (February 2, 2000, Rep. Taylor); FY 2000 (February 10, 1999, Rep. Taylor); FY 1999 (February 12, 1998, Rep. Walsh). There may have been additional instances during this period.

For more information or to discuss this further, please contact Daniel Schuman, executive director at the American Governance Institute, at daniel@americallabs.org, or Zach Graves, executive director at the Foundation for American Innovation, at zach@thefai.org.

Sincerely yours,

American Governance Institute
BPC Action
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW)
Essential Information
Foundation for American Innovation
Government Accountability Project
Government Information Watch
GovTrack.us
Jobs to Move America
Project On Government Oversight
R Street Institute
Technologists for the Public Good

Lorelei Kelly (Research Lead on Modernizing Congress, Georgetown University)
Derek Willis (University of Maryland)

Cc: The Honorable Nick LaLota
The Honorable Dale Strong
The Honorable Celeste Maloy
The Honorable Riley Moore, Vice Chair, Legislative Branch Appropriations
Subcommittee
The Honorable Steny Hoyer
The Honorable Mike Quigley
Tom Cole, Chair, House Appropriations Committee
Rosa DeLauro, Ranking Member, House Appropriations Committee