

The Honorable Paul Ryan
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Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
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Strengthening Congressional Oversight of the Intelligence Community

We write to express our concerns about congressional oversight of intelligence activities. Congress is responsible for authorizing and overseeing these programs. In recent years, experts and policymakers have expressed concern that congressional oversight efforts are falling short. Experts have put forth reform proposals, but there has been no systematic evaluation of whether reforms adopted heretofore have met the mark.

We believe Congress must renew its commitment to provide a meaningful check on the executive branch and reform how it conducts oversight over intelligence matters. The time for modernization is now. When the House convenes for the 115th Congress in January 2017 and adopts its rules, the House should update them to enhance opportunities for oversight by House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (“HPSCI”) members; members of other committees of jurisdiction; and all other representatives. The House also should establish a select committee to review how it engages in oversight.

HPSCI Modernization

1. Provide staff designees for HPSCI members. Each HPSCI member must be able to designate a staffer to represent his or her interests on the committee, as their Senate counterparts do.
2. Improve HPSCI operations and transparency. HPSCI must improve transparency while protecting classified information. We recommend:
 - a. For HPSCI members. Regularly review whether HPSCI receives all requested information and reports from the executive branch. Retain an information specialist to track all requests made by and reports received by HPSCI from the intelligence community.
 - b. For the House of Representatives. Abide by the same requirements placed on standing committees with respect to providing notice to Congress and the general public. Provide appropriate notice to all members about HPSCI’s work and support an informed conversation about intelligence oversight.
 - c. For the general public. Establish a process to declassify, review and process intelligence information.

3. Improve responsiveness to House membership. HPSCI must quickly and transparently respond to member requests for information or for meetings, with a process to engage the full chamber. Information in HPSCI's custody must be available to House members and cleared staff upon request, unless restricted by statute.
4. Make available annual unclassified intelligence reports. The annual, unclassified intelligence reports that HPSCI receives must be made public with minimal delay.
5. Modernize HPSCI membership. The current structure of HPSCI must be further aligned with the interests of the House. The Speaker and the Minority Leaders should continue to designate the chair and ranking member. Chairs and ranking members of other committees with intelligence jurisdiction—Appropriations, Armed Services, Foreign Affairs, Homeland Security, Oversight and Government Reform, and Judiciary—should each select a designee on HPSCI. For the remaining committee members, each party conference should have an inclusive process to choose them (four for the majority, three for the minority).

Empower all members of Congress

jurisdiction will create new secure, classified intake systems for whistleblowers to contact Congress directly.

Review of Intelligence Community oversight

In addition to the above reforms, we urge yo

OpenTheGovernment.org
Participatory Politics Foundation
Principled Action in Government
Progressive Change Campaign Committee
Project on Government Oversight
Public Citizen
R Street Institute
Restore the Fourth
Rhode Island Coalition to Defend Human and Civil Rights
RootsAction.org
Sunlight Foundation
World Privacy Forum
X-Lab