

To: (address to Democratic leadership)

CC: Members of the Press, Democratic elected members of the 116th Congress.

RE: Letter for Change from the Class of 2019

On November 6, 2018, the people of the United States elected a historic class of Democrats. In an election with historic turnout, the American people placed their faith in each of us, with the expectation that we will restore normal order, deliver results, and work towards a more perfect union.

As a whole, more than sixty newly-elected Democratic Members comprise the most diverse class in our nation's history. We have the highest number of women elected to Congress ever, including our first Native American women Members, first Muslim women Members, the most LGBTQIA Members, and the largest incoming class of veterans in nearly a decade. More than two-thirds of our class was elected in Republican-held districts, demonstrating the importance of reaching across the aisle to secure the majority. This incoming class will make up more than a quarter of the entire Democratic Caucus, representing the largest Democratic gains in the House since Watergate.

We are a diverse group. Politically and ideologically, we have different views. But make no mistake, we are united in the belief that the Class of 2019 has a responsibility and mandate for change in the U.S. Congress. We are united in the belief that change means restoring a sense of integrity to the work of the US Congress. We are united in the belief that all people, regardless of background or circumstance, deserve a fair shake -- no more, but no less. We are united in the belief that whatever our differences with the Republicans, it is our solemn responsibility to debate and pass legislation that improves the lives of those who elected us. And despite how the media focuses on our differences, we are united in the belief that the diversity of our caucus makes us stronger, not weaker.

Given the mandate for change on which we were elected, and commensurate with our size, the Class of 2019 urges our leadership to adopt the following approaches as we begin the 116th Congress:

On the legislative agenda: While we have a duty to exercise oversight when the Administration crosses legal and moral lines, we must heed the call of our constituents and advance bills on topics such as reducing the costs of healthcare and prescription drugs, addressing our crumbling infrastructure, and providing a government that is truly accountable to the people. We may not always agree on how to approach these issues, but the Class of 2019 is united in the belief that we have a mandate to debate, draft, and work across the aisle to pass legislation. In order to ensure that the legislative priorities of our constituents are heard, even as the junior-most Members, we request monthly meetings with the Speaker, Majority Leader, and Whip on the legislative priorities of this incoming class.

On Committee Representation: We also request that members of this incoming class be assigned to the exclusive committees of Appropriations, Rules, Ways and Means, Energy and Commerce, and Financial Services. The voters have asked for our voices to be heard, and to do that, this class must be a driving force in drafting legislation with such far-reaching economic implications for the country. For the Steering and Policy Committee of the Democratic Caucus, which determines committee assignments and helps determine both the message and messengers of the Democratic Caucus, we request two elected first-term members, instead of just one. And in order to expand transparency for Congress' work to the American people, hold Committee and sub-committee hearings outside of Washington whenever possible. Citizens across the country should have the opportunity to attend hearings that impact their lives.

On Changing Internal Rules: In the spirit of transparency and common sense, bills should be available for 72 hours before they can proceed to a vote. Members on both sides of the aisle need adequate time to actually read what they will be voting on. In an effort to prevent continued legislative gridlock, rules should be amended to allow legislation to expeditiously come to the floor if a majority of Members support it. To expand those who can introduce legislation, committees should hold regular, scheduled hearings where all Members -- regardless of their tenure or position -- can publicly provide their legislative proposals in an open setting. And in order to help us quickly learn and navigate the legislative process, every Committee should designate a Member Services staff member to help new members increase our immediate effectiveness.

We also ask that Congressional schedules are established well in advance and adhered to. It is imperative that we be able to reliably travel home for planned events in our districts. Having a set calendar will facilitate the necessary balance between D.C., district, and personal obligations, enabling all members to be more effective lawmakers and representatives.

The Class of 2019 is united in our belief that our Party, our Congress, and the American people we were elected to represent will be better served by these changes. We look forward to discussing these requests with Leadership at the earliest possible date.

Signed:

Member-Elect, district number