

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Thursday, April 16, 2020

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Chairman McGovern Statement on Presentation to the Democratic Caucus Recommending Implementation of Temporary Remote Voting During this Pandemic

WASHINGTON, DC — Rules Committee Chairman James P. McGovern (D-MA) released this statement on his presentation to the Democratic Caucus today recommending rules changes that would temporarily implement remote voting during the coronavirus pandemic:

“Today, after much consultation with experts and fellow Members, I recommended a path forward to my colleagues that will allow Congress to do its job in an orderly and safe manner during this pandemic: temporary, low-tech remote voting. Under this plan, any Member unable to travel to Washington due to the pandemic could provide specific instructions for each vote to a fellow Member who has been authorized to cast those votes on their behalf. A Member casting a vote on behalf of another Member would be required to have exact direction from that Member on how to vote and would have to follow that direction. There would be no ability to give a general proxy. Members would have to direct each and every vote.

This system would enable Members to vote remotely in a secure way, without using the kind of technology that is susceptible to hacking or interference by foreign bad actors. And because it doesn't rely on some new technology being stood up and vigorously tested, it could give Members a say on important legislation much more quickly. Putting this remote voting plan in place would require the House to agree to a temporary rule change, which I hope all my colleagues would support. If not, Members would have to come back to Washington and vote to implement it in person.

I also discussed the need to get our committees working again, especially to provide oversight on the trillions of dollars being spent by the Trump administration to combat this pandemic. Making changes to the standing rules of the House and putting in place technology to allow for virtual hearings and markups is complicated and can't be done overnight. But in the meantime, committees can hold briefings and roundtables to continue their work as we continue to work with the Committee on House Administration on these issues.

We don't know how long this pandemic will threaten public health, or how long state stay at home orders will last. We all know, though, that Congress needs to be working, whether in person, remotely, or both. We should not wait for this pandemic to end to make changes to the rules that help us to do our jobs in such an unprecedented time. I hope my colleagues, Democratic and Republican, can work together to implement this temporary solution.”

Additional details on the Chairman's remote voting recommendation:

- The process would need to be put in place by a House resolution.
- The authority would be temporary and tied to the pandemic.
- Members could vote remotely through fellow Members who are able to be physically present in the House chamber and are willing to cast votes on their behalf.
- A Member remaining in their district would transmit (including electronically) a letter to the Clerk authorizing another Member to vote on their behalf and providing exact instruction, which must be followed, on how that Member should vote for each scheduled vote.

There would be a process for Members to update their instruction in the case of additional votes, including procedural votes.

A Member in the chamber who has been authorized to cast votes on behalf of another Member has no discretion in casting those votes. Without exact instruction on a vote, they could not cast that vote.

Remote votes through a proxy would count as normal in the vote tally, and count towards achieving a quorum.