

Legislating in the House of Representatives During Coronavirus: Democrats' Efforts to Make Remote Work Resolution Bipartisan

House Democrats are committed to ensuring the House can legislate during this unprecedented crisis and worked to secure temporary changes to allow for remote voting and virtual committee proceedings on a bipartisan basis. For several weeks, Democrats worked in good faith to reach a bipartisan agreement. Here's a look at the timeline:

- March 23: After studying the issue and receiving input from Members, House Rules Committee Chairman McGovern releases a report on voting options during a pandemic.
- April 22: House Rules Committee Democrats release a resolution to implement temporary proxy voting and virtual committee proceedings after studying the issue. Hearing concerns from Republicans, Speaker Pelosi asks Majority Leader Hoyer and Minority Leader McCarthy to lead a bipartisan task force to further discuss the issue and see if a bipartisan agreement could be reached.
- April 23: The Virtual Congress Task Force meets for the first time in person.
- April 28: The Virtual Congress Task Force meets for the second time by videoconference.
- April 29: Leader Hoyer holds his weekly Committee Chairs meeting over videoconference for the first time and asks all Committee Chairs to hold roundtables using videoconference technology to further test the technology.
- May 4: Republican Members on the Task Force publish a Medium Post with their proposal, which only covered hearings and wouldn't enable fully-remote proceedings.
- May 5: Leader Hoyer, Chairperson Lofgren, and Chairman McGovern respond to the GOP proposal, calling for a rule change that ensures Congress can conduct oversight, hold hearings, mark up critical legislation, and take votes without endangering public health.
- May 8: The Virtual Congress Task Force meets for the third time by videoconference.
- May 13: After becoming apparent that a bipartisan agreement could not be reached, House Democrats introduce a resolution to allow for remote voting and virtual committee proceedings.

While the Virtual Congress Task Force was unable to reach agreement, House Democrats included several Republican suggestions in the resolution and in additional regulations that will be added to the record:

- Committees are required to use software platforms that have been certified by the Chief Administrative Officer.
- Committees will not be allowed to hold closed or executive sessions remotely, with the exception of the Committee on Ethics.
- Committees have the option to hold hybrid hearings and markups, with some Members in-person and some Members participating remotely, a provision both parties strongly supported in discussions.
- Committees are required to hold two virtual hearings, one of which may be at the subcommittee level, to allow Members to test the software platform before holding a virtual markup.
- Members must be given 24-hours' notice before any final passage votes during this period to give Members time to secure proxies if they haven't designated one yet.
- Chairs should respect disparate time zones of their Members when scheduling hearings.
- Committees are required to provide a list of individuals with participatory access on the virtual hearing platform to the Ranking Member 24 hours prior to the hearing, to the greatest extent practicable.
- The Rules Committee issued uniform regulations on enforcing decorum in a virtual setting.

Office of Majority Leader Steny H. Hoyer, 5/15/20