



**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-6502**  
December 19, 2014

The Honorable Pete Sessions  
Chairman, House Committee on Rules  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-312, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Sessions:

I am writing to urge you and the rest of the House Republican leadership to recommend extending voting privileges to House Delegates and the Resident Commissioner in the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union when the House considers its rules package for the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress.

As you will recall, early in the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress, the House adopted a rules provision granting House Delegates representing the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, and American Samoa, as well as the Resident Commissioner of Puerto Rico, the privilege to cast a vote in the Committee of the Whole. This provision carried over into the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress and included the new House Delegate representing the Northern Mariana Islands.

I was the lead sponsor of the House resolution adopted on January 24, 2007, permitting Delegates and the Resident Commissioner to cast votes in the Committee of the Whole. The provision was identical to the one that existed in the 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress, which the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia ruled in 1994 was constitutional.

To ensure that the provision complies with Article I of the U.S. Constitution, in the event that a matter before the Committee of the Whole is decided by the margin of the votes cast by the Delegates and the Resident Commissioner, the provision requires an automatic re-vote in the full House in which Delegates and the Resident Commissioner may not participate.

Two reasons justify granting House Delegates and the Resident Commissioner the privilege to vote in the Committee of the Whole and should persuade even those among our House colleagues who staunchly maintain that, without exception, Delegates and the Resident Commissioner should not be granted the privilege to vote on questions before the House. First, the Committee of the Whole is the functional equivalent of a regular House committee. In both instances, the function of these committees is to expedite consideration of bills and amendments while ensuring that debate is fair to both sides of the aisle. Since House Delegates and the Resident Commissioner have had the right to vote in House committees since 1971, it stands to reason that they should also have the right to cast votes in the Committee of the Whole. Second, House Delegates and the Resident Commissioner are elected by the American citizens they represent, just as

**DEMOCRATIC WHIP OFFICE:**

H-148, THE CAPITOL  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515  
(202) 225-3130  
(202) 226-0663 (FAX)  
<http://democraticwhip.house.gov>

**WASHINGTON, DC OFFICE:**

1705 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515  
(202) 225-4131  
(202) 225-4300 (FAX)  
<http://www.hoyer.house.gov>

**GREENBELT DISTRICT OFFICE:**

U.S. DISTRICT COURT HOUSE  
6500 CHERRYWOOD LANE, SUITE 310  
GREENBELT, MD 20770  
(301) 474-0119  
(301) 474-4697 (FAX)

**WALDORF DISTRICT OFFICE:**

401 POST OFFICE ROAD, #202  
WALDORF, MD 20602  
(301) 843-1577  
(301) 843-1331 (FAX)

all House Members are, and collectively represent almost 5 million Americans. Furnishing Delegates and the Resident Commissioner the opportunity to express, for the record, their positions on issues of significance that are before the Committee of the Whole strengthens the ability of the electorates in the District of Columbia and the U.S. territories and possessions to hold their representatives to account at election time.

As you begin the process of drafting House rules for the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress, I strongly urge you, in your capacity as Chairman of the House Rules Committee, to include a provision restoring the privilege of Delegate and Resident Commissioner voting in the Committee of the Whole.

As you know, we treat House Delegates and the Resident Commissioner as we treat all other Members for almost all purposes. The extension of the right to vote in the Committee of the Whole shows them a respect for their status and for the millions of Americans they represent. I believe this action is worthy of our great democracy and required by our commitment to representative government. Delegate voting is not only constitutional; it improves the legislative process and the degree to which the House of Representatives accurately reflects the 310 million Americans who are subject to the laws it passes. In that sense, every American benefits.

Thank you for your attention and with kindest regards, I am

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Steny H. Hoyer". The signature is stylized with a large loop on the left and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

STENY H. HOYER

c.c. Hon. John Boehner, Speaker of the House  
Hon. Nancy Pelosi, House Democratic Leader  
Hon. Kevin McCarthy, House Majority Leader  
Hon. Louise Slaughter, Ranking Democrat, House Committee on Rules  
Hon. Eleanor Holmes Norton, Delegate, District of Columbia  
Hon. Stacey Plaskett, Delegate, U.S. Virgin Islands  
Hon. Madeleine Z. Bordallo, Delegate, Guam  
Hon. Pedro Pierluisi, Resident Commissioner, Commonwealth of Puerto Rico  
Hon. Gregorio Sablan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands  
Aumua Amata Radewagen, Delegate-elect, American Samoa