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One Hundred Nineteenth
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

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Ranking Member Joe Morelle
Opening Statement
March 18, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. ET
Full Committee Markup
H.R. 5891, the Withhold Member Pay During Shutdowns Act
H.R. 1329, the Smithsonian American Women's History Museum Act

“Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for convening us today.

“I’ll have a little bit more to say about the bills that we’re considering. First, I want to thank you for your consideration and taking off, at least for a short time, the conversation around the Library of Congress, appointments, etc. I do note that even when we had the conversation about one of the bills on the calendar today, withholding pay of legislators during shutdowns, that you were very helpful in pulling that. I think we were going to consider that several weeks ago, we pulled it down and now have a bipartisan agreement.

“I think wherever we can on issues that all of us care deeply about, come together in a bipartisan way and demonstrate that we can, in fact, move ahead on many issues that our Committee, the Congress, and more importantly, the American people care about. I’m really grateful to you for your continued indulgence, and hopefully we’ll have a product that I think we all can be supportive of, and that serves the needs of the Congress and of the American people.

“I did want to take a moment to talk about congressional capacity, because some of the issues that we’re talking about involve that. I think about this a lot. I appreciate the Modernization Subcommittee efforts led by Ms. Bice and our ranking member, Ms. Torres, because we’re in an era – particularly given the Supreme Court’s decision in *Loper Bright* to end *Chevron* deference – that the Court is really pushing us to offer more detailed and technically precise laws. We’re doing it without more legislative attorneys, without more subject matter experts, and being forced to do more with less. Someday, I’d like us to do more with more. I’ll continue making that advocacy here and in the Appropriations Committee.

“Using the various agencies we’re aligned with, whether it’s Library of Congress or Congressional Research Service, do allow us to have that expertise and access to information that maybe we can’t quite have right now given the financial constraints that we face. But it is going to become more important if we’re going to fulfill the mandate that the Supreme Court has given us, and avoid having every legislative decision determined ultimately in district and circuit courts, and ultimately by the Supreme Court. We need to be much more adept at utilizing outside resources when available, and hopefully, in some way, at some point, be able to give more resources to the Congress itself.

“A number of these bills touch on it, particularly the bill that we are going to try to come back to and see if we can get agreement on. But I think it is important. **Just looking at the big picture – this institution, the Congress, Article One, in which we bear such responsibility to the American people – we are closest to the people. Every other year, they get to make a decision on their representatives. We’re the closest thing to the people in this government.**

“While more is being asked of us, if we’re going to fulfill our obligations and our duties and our responsibilities, we’re going to need to make sure we have access to the best minds, the brightest minds, and we do it in a way that is entirely consistent with our mission.

“I appreciate the time and grateful again for your willingness to continue to work on these important issues, to reach compromise and make sure we end in bipartisan agreement.”

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