

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 22, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Madam Speaker:

We write to demand you immediately reopen the U.S. Capitol complex to the public. The U.S. Capitol is a shrine to the greatest republic in the history of the world, yet you continue to prevent easy access to the American people.

For well over a year and a half, “the U.S. Capitol Building and Congressional Office Buildings [have] remain[ed] closed to the public.”¹ Only Members, congressional staff, and invited, official business visitors are allowed in the Capitol and House Office Buildings.² The U.S. Capitol Visitor Center’s sole purpose is to accommodate visitors, but it also remains closed, and no tours are authorized.³ Official business visitors must be pre-arranged and met by House staff at the designated entrance, present their identification, and check-in at the Appointments Desk. It is not clear what is done with their information prior to or after their visit, nor is it apparent who has access to the visitor log database, the very existence of which has a potential chilling effect. They must be escorted throughout their visit by congressional staff or a Member of Congress, limiting their ability to freely enjoy the grounds. Ordinary Americans who wish to visit the People’s House – which their tax dollars maintain – are entirely shut out and may only view the buildings from afar. This is the People’s House, but the American people are not allowed to enter.

This extended closure has had real consequences on Americans’ most fundamental constitutional rights. Citizens who wish to visit the Capitol complex to exercise their First Amendment rights to freedom of speech, peaceably to assemble, or to petition the Government are prohibited from readily doing so.⁴ While the Constitution strictly prohibits Congress from passing a law infringing these rights, you appear to have usurped our founding document by prohibiting exercise of these rights through an authoritarian decree.

¹ U.S. Capitol Police: Building Access & Hours, *available at* <https://www.uscp.gov/visiting-capitol-hill/visitor-information/building-access-hours> (last accessed Nov. 18, 2021).

² The Senate now permits extremely limited tours, but each office is restricted to only six visitors twice per week for thirty minutes, and only with advance notice of those who will attend.

³ U.S. Capitol Visitor Center: Visitor Hours & Info, *available at* <https://www.visitthecapitol.gov/plan-visit/visitor-hours-info> (last accessed Nov. 18, 2021).

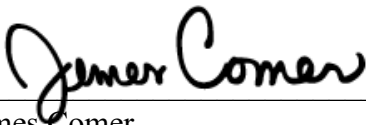
⁴ U.S. Const. amend. I.

Such a decree impacts the ability of individuals, advocacy groups, businesses, and others to lobby their representatives. The closure prevents the public from enjoying the Capitol complex's architectural wonders, art, statues, and other historical relics of our great nation, and it once again artificially separates the peoples' representatives from those whose interests they were sent here to champion.

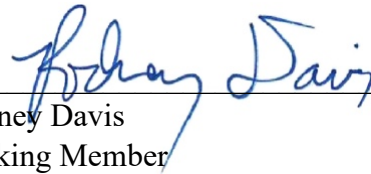
Though the visitor policy was initially restricted due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is now time to follow the lead of the rest of the country and reopen the People's House. Your closure has continued despite safe and effective vaccines, treatments, and testing being widely available to most of the population for almost a year. Indeed, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention tracks that 80.8 percent of people aged 12 and over have had at least one dose of a vaccine.⁵ The Smithsonian museums and other attractions on the National Mall are once again open to the public.⁶ Why are you unnecessarily keeping the People's House closed?

Unfortunately, COVID-19 has become the pretext by which Democrats attempt to assert control over every aspect of American life. Shuttering schools and small businesses was bad enough without also shuttering the people's access to their elected representatives. It is well past time to reopen the House of Representatives, and we urge you to open it immediately so all Americans may once again fully participate in our great democracy.

Sincerely,



James Comer
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Reform



Rodney Davis
Ranking Member
Committee on House Administration



Mike Bost
Ranking Member
Committee on Veterans' Affairs



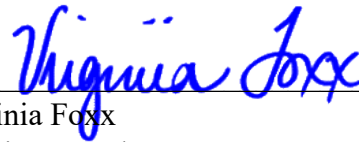
Kevin Brady
Ranking Member
Committee on Ways and Means

⁵ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: COVID Data Tracker, available at <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#datatracker-home> (last accessed Dec. 1, 2021).

⁶ Smithsonian: Hours and Admission, available at <https://www.si.edu/visit/hours> (last accessed Nov. 18, 2021).



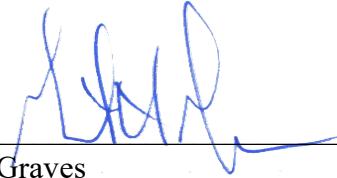
Tom Cole
Ranking Member
Committee on Rules



Virginia Foxx
Ranking Member
Committee on Education and Labor



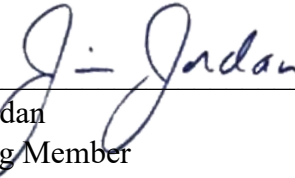
Kay Granger
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations



Garret Graves
Ranking Member
Select Committee on the Climate Crisis



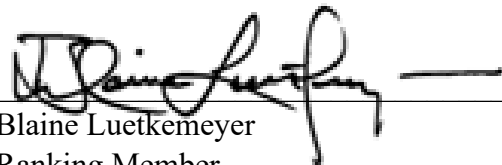
Sam Graves
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure



Jim Jordan
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary



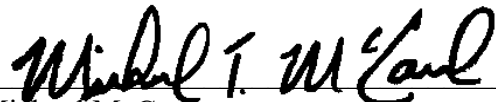
John Katko
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security



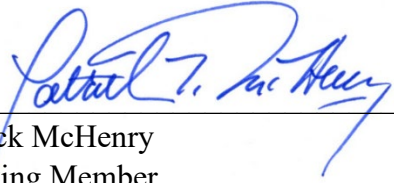
Blaine Luetkemeyer
Ranking Member
Committee on Small Business



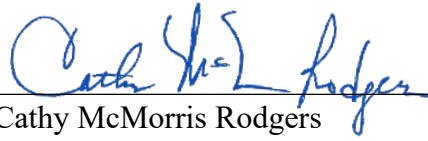
Frank Lucas
Ranking Member
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology



Michael McCaul
Ranking Member
Committee on Foreign Affairs



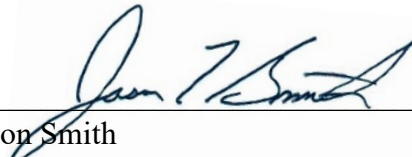
Patrick McHenry
Ranking Member
Committee on Financial Services



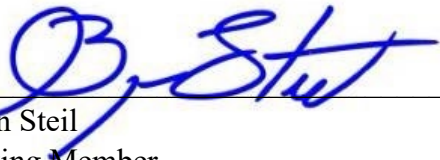
Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce



Mike Rogers
Ranking Member
House Armed Services Committee



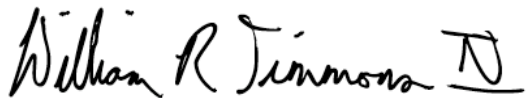
Jason Smith
Ranking Member
Committee on the Budget



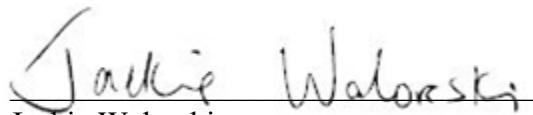
Bryan Steil
Ranking Member
Select Committee on Economic Disparity and
Fairness in Growth



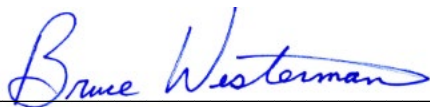
Glenn "GT" Thompson
Ranking Member
Committee on Agriculture



William Timmons
Ranking Member
Select Committee on the Modernization
of Congress



Jackie Walorski
Ranking Member
Committee on Ethics



Bruce Westerman
Ranking Member
Committee on Natural Resources

cc: The Honorable Carolyn Maloney, Chairwoman
Committee on Oversight and Reform

The Honorable Zoe Lofgren, Chairwoman
Committee on House Administration

The Honorable Mark Takano, Chairman
Committee on Veterans' Affairs

The Honorable Richard Neal, Chairman
Committee on Ways and Means

The Honorable James McGovern, Chairman
Committee on Rules

The Honorable Bobby Scott, Chairman
Committee on Education and Labor

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Chairwoman
Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Kathy Castor, Chairwoman
Select Committee on the Climate Crisis

The Honorable Peter DeFazio, Chairman
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

The Honorable Jerrold Nadler, Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary

The Honorable Bennie Thompson, Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security

The Honorable Nydia M. Velázquez, Chairwoman
Committee on Small Business

The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson, Chairwoman
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

The Honorable Gregory Meeks, Chairman
Committee on Foreign Affairs

The Honorable Maxine Waters, Chairwoman
Committee on Financial Services

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce

The Honorable Adam Smith, Chairman
House Armed Services Committee

The Honorable John Yarmuth, Chairman
Committee on the Budget

The Honorable Jim Himes, Chairman
Select Committee on Economic Disparity and Fairness in Growth

The Honorable David Scott, Chairman
Committee on Agriculture

The Honorable Derek Kilmer, Chairman
Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress

The Honorable Theodore Deutch, Chairman
Committee on Ethics

The Honorable Raúl Grijalva, Chairman
Committee on Natural Resources