



February 9, 2023

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Richard Durbin
Majority Whip
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Amy Klobuchar
Chair
Senate Committee on Rules &
Administration
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
Chair
Senate Committee on Health, Education,
Labor & Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20515

Majority Leader Schumer, Majority Whip Durbin, Chair Klobuchar, and Chair Sanders,

We thank you for your outspoken support of American workers. As congressional workers, we fight every day for a better future for ourselves, our families, this institution, and the American people. However, Senate congressional staff currently lack the basic protections and legal processes to organize enjoyed by other federal workers and workers across this country. **As such, the Congressional Workers Union urges a Senate resolution to extend labor rights to Senate congressional staff be introduced and brought to the floor for a vote expeditiously.**

We are honored to serve the American people in the halls of Congress. We believe in the missions of our offices and take pride in advancing legislation and initiatives that we believe will better the country for generations to come. Many of us write and work tirelessly to advance the very laws that protect and promote every worker's right to organize. We deserve those same rights—the institution of Congress should not be above the very laws it creates.

When Congress passed the Congressional Accountability Act (CAA) in 1995, it did so on the premise that Congress would be subject to the same workplace laws it advances. Under the CAA, Congress extended 12 workplace laws to its own employees, but failed to approve the regulations that would grant us the legal protections and procedures to organize and bargain collectively for a better workplace. For 26 years, Congress failed to act, and workers suffered for

it. In a Harvard Legislation Review article published in 1997, U.S. Senator Chuck Grassley cited Congress's failings to fully enact the labor-management relations provisions of the Congressional Accountability Act, stating: "I believe that it is important that we finish what we started. It is only fair and just that we, in government, live under the same laws that we enact for the rest of the nation. We are not different. We are not special."¹

On May 10, 2022, the U.S. House of Representatives finally fulfilled its promise, passing a resolution to extend protected rights to organize and bargain collectively to congressional staff in the House. Since May, over 13 House offices have filed petitions for union elections with over 85 staff declaring their desire to form a union.

However, we fear our workplace safety and protections across Congress are now out of balance, with Senate staff continuing to be deprived of their protected rights. As the leaders of this institution responsible for protecting American democracy, you now have an opportunity to fulfill the promises of the CAA by extending Senate congressional workers these basic rights—protecting the freedom of association and fostering democracy in your own workplaces.

As congressional workers, we know intimately the process for bringing legislation to the floor for a vote, and we know Congress can do so rapidly, even under immense constraints. In fact, many of us have worked overtime, nights, and weekends to make it possible for Congress to pass major legislation on a fast track.

It has now been nearly a year since H.Res.915 was introduced in the House on February 9, 2022 by Congressman Andy Levin. Yet, the Senate has failed to act or even introduce a resolution to protect the rights of Senate workers.

We urge Senate Leadership to prioritize introducing a resolution in the Senate by February 28th, 2023.

Again, we appreciate your outspoken support of American workers and look forward to Congress fulfilling its promise to the workers that work within its halls. We urgently need the legal protections and procedures to organize and bargain collectively. If Senate Democrats are For the People, we are people too.

Sincerely,

Congressional Workers Union

¹Grassley, Senator Charles and Jennifer Shaw Schmidt. 1998. "Practicing What We Preach: A Legislative History of Congressional Accountability." *Harvard Journal on Legislation* 35(55).