

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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Dear Colleague:

Later this month, I will cast my vote for Nancy Pelosi to become our party's nominee for Speaker of the House, and I urge you to do the same. Here is why.

On Election Day, House Democrats won a historic victory, with the largest increase in Democratic seats in three decades since Watergate. We achieved this victory despite years of Republican efforts to gerrymander congressional districts and suppress the rights of American citizens to vote.

We also achieved this landmark feat despite relentless efforts by Republicans to vilify our leader, Nancy Pelosi. Republicans ran more than 100,000 ads against Leader Pelosi and tried to make her a central issue in their campaigns around the country.

Since the election, Leader Pelosi has amassed overwhelming support to become our next Speaker. Unfortunately, despite these monumental and hard-fought gains, a small group of House Democrats is still trying to generate opposition.

For two years, they asserted that with Nancy Pelosi as our leader, Democrats could never win back the House. They claimed that these relentless Republican attacks made Leader Pelosi appear too divisive, and they argued that she should step aside for the good of the party.

But then last Tuesday happened. And the American people obliterated the theory that Nancy Pelosi could not lead House Democrats to victory.

The single most persuasive issue that Democrats had in this election was health care, and no House Democrat is more identified with this issue than Leader Pelosi. There would not be an Affordable Care Act without her, and no one has battled more effectively to defend it. That is just one of many examples of how she has made lives better for millions of Americans.

Some have suggested that Nancy Pelosi has been our leader for too long. But most House Democrats have never served in the majority, and only a handful have ever chaired a full committee. At this moment, we need her experience and effectiveness more than ever. In addition, she has indicated publicly that she intends to serve as a transition figure and as a bridge to an impressive new generation of Democratic leaders.

Leader Pelosi had the best election night of the four congressional leaders by far. She delivered historic gains driven by women voters and women candidates in districts manipulated to try to elect Republicans. For these reasons and many more, I proudly support Leader Pelosi and believe she is the best person to lead our caucus and our nation into this next challenge.

I understand that some of our newly elected members said during their campaigns they would oppose Leader Pelosi. Later this month, they will have the opportunity to vote their conscience when our Democratic caucus gathers to vote on our candidate for Speaker. I know there will be vigorous debate, and all members should present their views persuasively.

Then we will cast our votes.

After Democrats choose our candidate, we must unite behind that person. We come from all parts of the country, from rural districts to cities, from wealthy districts to low-income ones. We are different in many ways, but there is more that unites us than that divides us.

After we as Democrats make our selection, our new members should not be pressured into voting against our party's nominee on the House floor in January—when the choice will be between the Democratic candidate and the Republican candidate. That will only play into the hands of House Republicans and President Trump.

Our new members promised their constituents to bring stability and common-sense to a dysfunctional Washington—not to be drawn into an effort to throw the House into chaos. Our new members promised to get results on the issues their constituents care about—not to delay these efforts while they are dragged into a self-destructive leadership battle.

Democrats have less than eight weeks until we take control of the House. We have an ambitious legislative agenda. We also have a solemn responsibility under the Constitution to conduct robust, credible, and independent oversight of a President who has threatened a “warlike” posture with a co-equal branch of government.

We should be focused directly on these challenges. When the new Congress is sworn in on January 3, I urge Democrats to unite behind the candidate we select later this month to represent our values and to demonstrate to the nation that we can govern.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Elijah E. Cummings". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "E" and a flourish at the end.

Rep. Elijah E. Cummings
Ranking Member