

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-3102**

April 1, 2022

The Honorable William J. Walker  
Sergeant at Arms  
Room H-124 United States Capitol

Dear Mr. Walker,

Since March 2020, Capitol tours led by Capitol Visitor Center (CVC) personnel and Members' staff have been restricted.<sup>1</sup> For far too long, the American public has been unable to tour and access the Capitol and House office buildings and enjoy the constituent services to which American taxpayers are entitled.

While we were encouraged by the limited resumption of tours beginning on March 28, 2022, there are still several concerning protocols in place. For example, during your recently announced first phase of reopening, one staff-led tour per office per week is only allowed during a four-hour window. Another two months from now, there is an arbitrary date where there would be an "anticipated limited reopening of the CVC, allowing a limited number of visitors." Conversely, Senate offices have been allowed to offer two staff-led tours per week since December 2021.

At this juncture, it is unfathomable that there are still capacity restrictions and that visitors who come to our nation's capital are still denied full access to tour their Capitol Building. While most indoor sports arenas, restaurants, bars, places of worship, and event spaces are operating at full capacity around the country and have been for many months, it is disconcerting that the United States Capitol cannot allow more visitors in a timelier manner.

Capitol tours have long been a staple for American citizens and tourists from around the world who come to learn about our government and legislative process. After being established in 1876, the Capitol Guide Service<sup>2</sup> was established to provide tours, information, and ushering services to everyone free of charge.

The CVC cost a shocking \$621 million according to Acting Architect Ayers and GAO Director Terrell G. Dorn, \$365 million dollars over its initial budget estimate.<sup>3</sup> It is a travesty that this facility is closed and not being used to serve the American people. Further, in Fiscal Year (FY) 2021, the CVC received \$24,751,000 in funding<sup>4</sup>, and received<sup>5</sup> \$26,094,000 for FY22, despite being closed off for tours for the American public. While the CVC itself is not responsible for the decision to keep the Capitol closed to the public, these highly

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<sup>1</sup> United States Capitol Police, [Building Access & Hours](#).

<sup>2</sup> Laws, [Understanding the United States Capitol Guide Service](#), December 23, 2019.

<sup>3</sup> Congressional Research Service, [The Capitol Visitor Center: History, Development, and Funding](#), March 8, 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Congressional Research Service, [Legislative Branch: FY2021 Appropriations](#), February 26, 2021.

<sup>5</sup> Congress.gov, [H.R. 4346- Legislative Branch Appropriations Act, 2022](#).

CC: Speaker Nancy Pelosi

knowledgeable and skilled docents are paid to lead approximately 3 million<sup>6</sup> people on tour per year through the U.S. Capitol yet have been unable to give tours to the public in the last two years.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions, there had also *never* been a system, protocol, or official visitor list requirement to be granted access into a House or Senate office building. Any member of the public could access these buildings without credentials or being on an official visitor list. For a full two years, these policies have run completely counter to our constitutional republic and should be of concern to all Americans.

While *all* masking and COVID-19 related restrictions were conveniently lifted the day before President Biden's 2022 State of the Union Address, Congressional offices must still submit visitor names to the House Appointment Desk system. Not only does this procedure make the process more laborious for Congressional offices to meet with constituents, but it is also not based on sound health concerns and erodes our tradition of a free and open government.

It is vital that the American people tour our Capitol, learn about our constitutional framework and values, meet with their representatives, attend in-person hearings, and be informed of the matters debated on and legislated by their elected Representatives.

Members are still allowed to vote by proxy pursuant to current House rules, under which members can vote for another member, and on behalf of the 700,000+ constituents they were elected to represent in Washington, D.C. This rule has allowed our colleagues in Congress to be elsewhere campaigning, fundraising, or participating in other activities rather debating and voting upon important legislation that affects the livelihoods of all Americans.

It is long past time for the People's House to return to normalcy and end policies that have prevented the American public from participating in our legislative process and entering our nation's Capitol for a full two years.

For these reasons, we urge you to respond to the following questions:

1. When will the House Appointments Desk visitor protocol be lifted? How will the names and information of visitors be archived?
2. Who currently has access to and will have access to the House Appointment Desk visitor lists?
3. On what scientific basis (or other reason) are only official business visitors allowed?
4. Of similar concern, why is the public still severely limited in scheduling a tour of the Capitol?

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Please respond by April 8, 2022.

Sincerely,

  
Yvette Herrell  
Member of Congress


  
Chuck Fleischmann  
Member of Congress

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<sup>6</sup> U.S. Capitol Visitor Center, "[Building Facts 'By the Numbers.'](#)"



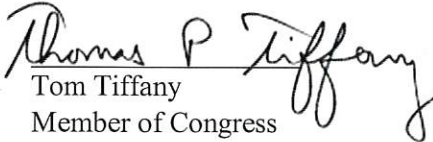
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Member of Congress



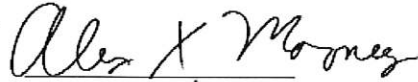
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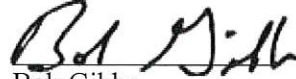
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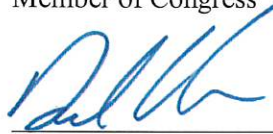
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Darrell Issa  
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Ralph Norman  
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David G. Valadao  
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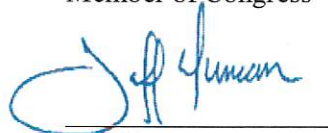
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Lauren Boebert  
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Daniel Webster  
Member of Congress



Jeff Duncan  
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Brian Babin, D.D.S.  
Member of Congress



Dusty Johnson  
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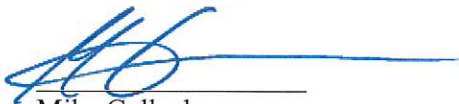
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Andrew S. Clyde  
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Debbie Lesko  
Member of Congress



Mike Gallagher  
Member of Congress



Pete Stauber  
Member of Congress



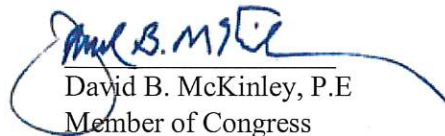
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