

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, D.C. 20515**

November X, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-232, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Steny H. Hoyer  
Majority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-107, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader Hoyer:

On November 5, 2021, the House of Representatives held a vote open for 7 hours, 6 minutes – the longest amount of time a vote has remained open in modern history. This vote, a motion for the House to adjourn, was initially called at 8:12 AM and members were instructed that the vote was to last for 15 minutes. The vote closed at 3:18 PM.

While votes are often held open for a period that exceeds the initial time pronouncement due to logistics and varying circumstances needed to enable all available members to reach the House floor and cast their votes, the reasons for keeping this November 5 vote open for an indefinite amount of time were exceptionally unclear and unreasonable. This is not how the People’s House should operate.

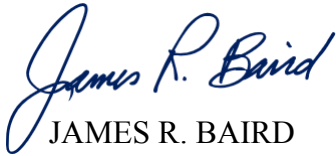
The purpose behind holding any vote is to reach a consensus among members. It was clear early on in this vote, after an overwhelming majority of members participated, that the motion was going to fail. For many hours, the vote held at 207-217. Even if the remaining members who had not voted eventually cast their votes in favor of this motion, it was still mathematically impossible for it to pass. A consensus had been reached several hours before the vote ultimately closed.

Members on both sides of the aisle have several obligations throughout any given day in order to effectively serve and represent their constituents. When Congress is in session, voting is the most important duty that any member has. That, however, should not embolden Leadership to effectively freeze members’ time for undetermined periods by creating uncertainty over how long a particular vote time is going to last or whether Congress is even going to call for more votes on the same day. While flexibility is necessary and appreciated from time to time, the practice of keeping the entire House of Representatives indefinitely delayed is not necessary, nor appreciated. Unfortunately, this practice has become all too commonplace in the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress.

With the many changes to congressional procedure that have been imposed since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is especially important for Leadership to be clear in conveying accurate information to members. Earlier in this Congress, Leader Hoyer even informed members that strict enforcement of new rules regarding voting time were going to be paramount. That is difficult to take seriously when Leadership arbitrarily disregards its own rules to suit political priorities.

We implore you to rectify this untenable situation immediately. A vote should only remain open for the period of time proscribed to it when it is initially called. This is a fair process, and it must be followed in order to respect the time of members and the people they serve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "James R. Baird". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

JAMES R. BAIRD  
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Kevin McCarthy, Minority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives  
The Honorable Steve Scalise, Minority Whip, U.S. House of Representatives