

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4320

November 10, 2020

Dear Colleague,

It's an honor to continue serving with you in the House of Representatives. I am writing to respectfully request your support in my election to chair the House Foreign Affairs Committee (HFAC). I appreciate all the generous and insightful conversations that I've shared with many of you, and a few points have become clear. As Speaker Pelosi and President-Elect Biden have said, we have a mandate for action and must come together to achieve progress.

The 2020 elections demonstrate a robust democratic majority across the country, powered by both progressives and moderates, and we need leadership who will build bridges among the diverse perspectives within our Caucus. I have profound respect for each and every one of you, and nothing unites us like the important work ahead.

COMMITMENT TO THE HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

During my four terms in Congress, I have dedicated myself to doing the work. I have served at the nexus of U.S. foreign policy and national security on the House Intelligence, Armed Services, and Foreign Affairs committees, and I have a strong record and unique experience. When the Speaker selected me to serve on the Select Committee on Intelligence, I had a choice: take a leave of absence from either the Armed Services or the Foreign Affairs committee. I committed to foreign affairs and today **I am the only HFAC chair candidate currently working as subcommittee chairman**, leading the charge on oversight and investigations of the Trump administration's international failures. My record includes advancing our values as Democrats, while also finding common ground with Republicans on bipartisan legislation and oversight, including on cybersecurity, building democratic institutions, the erosion of democracy in Hong Kong, strengthening foreign assistance, and improving diversity at the State Department.

As I shared in [my announcement](#), [July dear colleague letter](#), and in [Foreign Affairs](#), I am seeking to lead the House Foreign Affairs Committee to rebuild America's infrastructure of diplomacy, reassert Congress' role in the most important national security decisions, and put diplomacy at the forefront of our foreign policy. From COVID-19 and climate change to disruptive technology and rising authoritarianism, our greatest global changes demand pro-active, multilateral diplomacy. After the incompetence and corruption of the Trump administration, we must offer a fresh start and write the next great chapter in our American story.

COMMITMENT TO MY DEMOCRATIC COLLEAGUES

If elected to lead the Foreign Affairs Committee, I intend to self-term limit and serve at most four terms. Our Democratic Caucus has extraordinary talent, but too often members do not have the opportunity to participate in committee leadership. I am not looking to impose term limits on anyone

or make a formal rule change. However, if elected I am committed to turning the committee over to new leadership after my tenure, ensuring other members with significant experience can also have the opportunity.

In addition, I believe our nation must demonstrate that we're back and will once more strive to be a North Star in the world. For generations, the United States has stood for freedom, democracy, opportunity, and rooting out corruption. President-Elect Biden gives us the chance to reclaim our leadership role in the world. **Congress must be a partner with the Biden administration in rebuilding our alliances and re-engaging with the world.** In my conversations with many of you, I have received interest from you in traveling abroad, letting our partners and allies know that America is back as a North Star. I hope to implement congressional delegations of various lengths and different topics so more members can participate. Long CODELS are often difficult to attend for members with young children or other family commitments, so I plan to expand the CODEL options to include shorter trips as well.

Another idea that you have brought up is a foundational briefing for HFAC members so that everyone is on the same page. Joining the Foreign Affairs committee often feels like jumping into the middle of a novel without know all the characters or storylines. As we sit on the dais, we are sometimes bombarded by information and it's difficult to place everything in context. I hope to create a system that gives overall context to foreign affairs issues and helps members succeed. In fact, I benefited immensely from this format as a member of the House Intelligence Committee. I want all committee members to be fully briefed on all our major challenges and strategic alliances so we can move forward together.


COMMITMENT TO TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Over the last few months, I have sought to conduct this chair race in the most transparent manner by conducting over a dozen virtual town halls. I have held countless opportunities for folks to ask questions and know exactly where I stand on the issues. I have listened to and collaborated with foreign policy advocates and experts who are passionate about America's role in the world and have an important perspective to contribute. At this moment in history, this additional level of transparency and accountability is necessary. After these dark days and a corrupt administration, United States must once again be a North Star on the issues of human rights, democracy, freedom, rooting our corruption, and equal justice. We must offer a clear contrast with the past and begin anew.

At its best, the United States is a beacon of hope. I am more optimistic than ever that by working together with the new Biden administration we can restore our nation's leadership role and marshal the world to overcome our greatest global challenges.

Please reach out anytime to discuss further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joaquin Castro". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Joaquin Castro
Vice Chair, House Foreign Affairs Committee