

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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### MEMORANDUM

April 17, 2026

**To: Democratic Members of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform**

**Fr: Democratic Staff**

**Re: Republicans' Loss of Operational Control of the Oversight Committee**

In a development with little precedent in modern Congressional history, Oversight Republicans have suspended the use of traditional committee hearings in favor of conducting informal, off-the-record “roundtables.” This decision is a direct reaction to Oversight Democrats successfully working with bipartisan majorities to force subpoenas advancing the Epstein investigation. Since Representative Garcia became Ranking Member in July 2025, the Committee has made **seven successful subpoena motions, issuing 18 subpoenas**—all with the support of a bipartisan majority of the Committee.<sup>1</sup> These motions and their resulting subpoenas have been opposed by Republican leadership. Oversight Republicans are avoiding hearings to block bipartisan subpoena motions they are losing. This shift doesn’t just affect Committee procedure—it limits Congress’s ability to uncover the truth and hold powerful actors accountable.

#### I. BACKGROUND

Unlike hearings, “roundtables” are informal sessions with no rules, no accountability, no protections for the minority, and no opportunity to consider motions to issue subpoenas. They are designed to look and feel like hearings, with Members seated at the Committee dais and witnesses testifying as they would for a hearing, though without the requirement of testifying under oath. By holding roundtables, Republicans are denying Members their basic rights as lawmakers. Most importantly, they are blocking motions to secure documents, testimony, and witnesses; even when those motions are supported by a bipartisan majority.<sup>2</sup> These informal events also deny Members of Congress the rights and protections of House rules, including guarantees that their time to question witnesses will be respected, the protected right to invite minority witnesses, or the protections provided by rules of decorum.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. House Rule XI clause 2(m).

<sup>3</sup> E.g. House Rule XVII and House Rule XI clause 2(j).

**Roundtables mean no rules, no accountability, and no official record.**

By avoiding hearings, Republicans are avoiding the only forum where Democrats can force votes, demand documents, and hold the majority accountable.

The use of roundtables in place of hearings is not a regular practice in other committees. The Ways & Means Committee has reported that Committee Republicans have begun holding roundtables instead of hearings when Administration witnesses testify. However, other committees have not experienced the large-scale replacement of official hearings with roundtables at this time. While there are no House or Committee rules that require official committee hearings to be held with a specific frequency, the use of roundtables by Chairman Comer could create House-wide precedent that would fundamentally undermine the rights of all Members. Chairman Comer’s refusal to convene official, full Committee and subcommittee hearings is a dangerous and undemocratic ploy to block legitimate bipartisan oversight efforts.<sup>4</sup>

**II. OVERSIGHT REPUBLICANS’ TRANSITION AWAY FROM HEARINGS**

**Running scared, Republicans are retreating from real hearings and hiding behind roundtables to avoid votes they are losing.**

The transition away from formal hearings to roundtables has progressed over the span of several months and initially began with the Committee’s subcommittees. So far, five subcommittee roundtables have been held in 2026:

- 4/16/2026 Economic Growth, Energy Policy and Regulatory Affairs and Military and Foreign Affairs Joint Roundtable, "Artificial Intelligence and American Power: Leadership, Security, and Prosperity"
- 4/15/2026 Delivering on Government Efficiency Roundtable, "The IRS Under Audit: A Review of Operations at the Nation's Tax Collector"
- 3/26/2026 Health Care and Financial Services Roundtable, "Examining Mental Health in the MAHA Age"
- 3/25/2026 Delivering on Government Efficiency RoundTable, “Doing More with Less: Deleting Duplicative Programs”

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<sup>4</sup> Rule XI, clause 2(b): Regular meeting days (b) Each standing committee shall establish regular meeting days for the conduct of its business, which shall be not less frequent than monthly. Each such committee shall meet for the consideration of a bill or resolution pending before the committee or the transaction of other committee business on all regular meeting days fixed by the committee if notice is given pursuant to paragraph (g)(3); Committee on Oversight and Government Reform Rule 2 — Meetings (a) Regular Meetings. The regular meetings of the Committee shall be held on the second Thursday of each month at 10 a.m., when the House is in session. The Chair of the Committee is authorized to dispense with a regular meeting or to change the date thereof when circumstances warrant.

1/22/2026      Cybersecurity, Information Technology, and Government Innovation Roundtable, "Bipartisan Roundtable: Crimes Against Children in the Digital Age"

In addition, several subcommittees appear to have abandoned hearings altogether. The Subcommittee on Military and Foreign Affairs has not held a hearing in nearly 10 months. The Subcommittee on Federal Law Enforcement and the Subcommittee on DOGE have not held hearings since September 2025.<sup>5</sup> Only the Subcommittee on Government Operations—the Committee’s most bipartisan subcommittee—seems to be continuing to hold traditional hearings.

The full Committee has not held a hearing since March 4, 2026. The Oversight Republicans’ refusal to hold official Committee hearings has escalated to the full committee level as former Attorney General Pam Bondi has refused to comply with the committee’s bipartisan subpoena for her testimony.

Earlier this week, Chairman Comer noticed a “Full Committee Member Roundtable” for April 21, 2026, as a method to avoid further action against Bondi or other motions. This is a drastic breach in protocol, and research by Committee staff indicates that **the Committee has not held a public, full Committee roundtable in at least the last two Congresses.**

In this respect, the Republican transition from official hearings is directly attributable to the use of subpoena motions offered by both Republican and Democratic Committee members, which have been debated, voted on, and passed by bipartisan committee majorities. Republicans have been explicit about this strategy. At a March 26, 2026, roundtable in the Health Care and Financial Services Subcommittee, Republican Subcommittee Chair Glenn Grothman said:

Under normal circumstances when this Committee gets together we have a formal hearing and you are all sworn in and there are rules like you can’t talk for more than five minutes. It’s no secret why we are not doing a formal hearing today. We’d like this hearing to be solely focused on the issue before you and **there is some concern that, both parties are guilty of this, that they make motions in the middle of the hearing and try to bring up unrelated topics.** And because I am used to a normal hearing, I am not thrilled, I was initially not thrilled that we are not doing a normal hearing.<sup>6</sup>

In other words, Republicans are avoiding hearings because they don’t want Democrats to force votes.

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<sup>5</sup> For a list of the most recent official hearing in each subcommittee see Appendix B.

<sup>6</sup> Subcommittee on Health Care and Financial Services, Opening Statement of Chairman Glenn Grothman, *Hearing on Examining Mental Health in the MAHA Age* (Mar. 26, 2026) (online at <https://oversight.house.gov/roundtable/examining-mental-health-in-the-maha-age/>).

**Oversight requires transparency, rules, and accountability. Republicans are abandoning all three. Instead of holding real hearings, they are choosing forums designed to avoid scrutiny—because they are losing when the facts are on the table.**

## **Appendix A: Successful Subpoena Motions and Subpoenas**

While Republicans retreat from hearings, Democrats have forced bipartisan subpoenas and driven the Committee's most significant investigation.

7/22/2025	Burchett Motion	Subpoena to Ghislaine Maxwell
7/23/2025	Lee Motion	Subpoena to DOJ for the Epstein Files
7/23/2025	Perry Motion	Subpoenas to Bill Clinton, Hillary Clinton, former Attorneys General and FBI Directors
1/23/2026	Garcia Amendment	Subpoenas to Darren Indyke & Richard Kahn
1/23/2026	Garcia Amendment	Subpoena to Les Wexner
3/4/2026	Mace Motion	Subpoena to Pam Bondi for Deposition Testimony
3/4/2026	Mace Motion	Subpoena to Office of Congressional Workplace Rights for misconduct records

## **Appendix B: Date of Last Hearing in Each Subcommittee**

4/15/2026	Government Operations Subcommittee
1/22/2026	Economic Growth, Energy Policy, and Regulatory Affairs
12/10/2025	Cybersecurity, Information Technology, and Government Innovation
12/10/2025	Joint Economic Growth, Energy Policy and Regulatory Affairs and Health Care and Financial Services
9/16/2025	Delivering on Government Efficiency
9/16/2025	Federal Law Enforcement
6/25/2025	Military and Foreign Affairs