



British Group Inter-Parliamentary Union

Honorable Patrick Leahy
President pro tempore
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510 USA

27 January 2021

Dear Mr President

Congratulations on your resumption of the office of President pro tempore of the Senate on 20 January 2021. Early in your new term, I wanted to register in my capacity as Chair of the British Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (BGIPU), the common desire expressed by our membership in both the House of Commons and the House of Lords to see the US Congress re-join the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). In difficult times facing us all, US participation and leadership in the world's premier interparliamentary body has never been quite so obvious in its absence.

As democracy, accountability and human rights face new and emerging threats worldwide, the IPU remains an influential and positive vehicle for promoting the importance of parliamentarianism, mutual dialogue and constructive engagement among all its 179 member parliaments. At a time of increasing challenges to global cooperation, including rising nationalism, a return of the US Congress to the IPU would be a significant vote of confidence in the vital importance of interparliamentary engagement. It would also be a clear signal of US re-engagement in international institutions.

As it has done for over 131 years, the IPU represents an alternative channel to promote bilateral and multilateral cooperation, including at the UN where it remains the only global parliamentary body with observer status. Shortly after the IPU was founded by British and French parliamentarians, the US Congress was one of the original nine nations which sent legislators to the first IPU meeting in Paris in 1889. Having left at the start of the twenty-first century, it would be a significant achievement for the IPU to see the US return to its rightful place as an original member. It would also boost the concerted efforts of the United States' closest friends and partners like the United Kingdom, at a time when so much needs to be done to defend the core democratic principles embedded in the IPU's vision and objectives.

In closing, BGIPU Executive Committee members from both Houses of the UK Parliament, have asked me to register our enduring solidarity with both Houses and staff of the US Congress in registering our deep distress at the unthinkable attack on the Capitol Building earlier this month and to send our deepest condolences to the families and friends of all those people who tragically lost their lives.

Sincerely,

Harriett Baldwin MP

Chair, BGIPU

CC: The Rt Hon the Lord Fowler, Lord Speaker