CHERVENAK: Travis, thanks for joining us.

MOORE: My pleasure. Thanks for having me.

CHERVENAK: Why don't we start off with your background? Where'd you start off, the arc of your career so far, and what you're doing now.

MOORE: Yeah well, so [to] start at the earliest stages, I'm a child of the federal government. Dad worked in the United States Senate, mom worked for Medicare Medicaid, and so service was just sort of instilled in me from the beginning. And I went to college, studied business, and then somehow, you know, and ended up in politics. Had an internship in Congress with Representative Henry Waxman, who I stayed in touch with the team, went and worked on a Senate campaign in 2004 for the then-minority leader Tom Daschle, and we lost, and John Kerry lost, and all the Democrats lost and took a bit of a hiatus. Did a master's degree and then made my way back to Washington, ultimately landed on The Hill in 2009 and worked for Congressman Waxman again, who was the then-chair and then-ranking member of the Energy Commerce Committee and stayed with him for six years, ultimately was his legislative director towards the end. He retired in 2014 but wonderful, wonderful member of Congress. I would still probably be there if he hadn't retired but the, you know, devotion to the institution remains, and here we are.

CHERVENAK: So what did you do after you left Waxman's office?

MOORE: So I turned the key on the office, locking it up on January 2, 2020, excuse me 2015. And on January 3, I pulled out my laptop and started working on the concept note for TechCongress, so I've been running TechCongress literally since the day after I ended with representative Waxman.

CHERVENAK: Excellent. So what is Tech Congress? Can you introduce it, and how did it start off, and how has it evolved, and what is it now?

MOORE: Yeah, so in its simplest form we recruit and place computer scientists, engineers, and other technologists to serve as tech policy advisors to members of Congress and congressional committees. So this is everything from privacy and AI and disinformation to cyber security, open data, future transportation, and our goal is to be a pipeline for tech talent into Congress. Our express goal is to convert fellows into full-time staffing roles in order to fundamentally upskill the institution. Congress, when I left Congress, there were very few technologists, and I started TechCongress because I needed it. I found myself in 2012 and 2013 really underwater on a handful of tech issues. We were voting on cyber security bills, and I had to make a vote

recommendation to the congressman. It was, there were controversial bills and the vote recommendation hinged on whether we should be giving companies liability protection if they accidentally shared personally identifiable information on their users with the federal government when sharing that information. So in order to make it an informed vote recommendation, I had to understand what was PII and what did it mean to anonymize data, and what I found was there wasn't anyone in Congress that could answer those questions for me.

Now by contrast, some other sectors are pretty well-represented in Congress. When we wrote the Affordable Care Act, for example, in 2009 and 2010, on our Health subcommittee out of a staff of fifteen, three individuals have practiced medicine. So why is the health sector represented in Congress but the tech sector is not? It's in part through fellowship programs, so the Robert Johnson Foundation, which is our gold standard, has been bringing in medical professionals into Congress since 1974. And so I, seeing this gap, experiencing this gap, knowing that tech was only going to become more relevant over the years, decided to take on the RWJF Fellowship model but for tech, and you know our express goal, the good news about Congress is it's a tiny place and we can get into that a little bit more, but you know in order to upskill the institution we believe you should have a technologist touching an issue as it moves through the legislative process at each stage, and so our goal is to get enough technologists into Congress so that when a bill is being drafted, when a committee's being considering a bill, when it's being, you know, voted on the floor, there's a technologist that's sitting at the table that's part of that negotiations. So we think with 60, six-zero, technologists in Congress, that you can achieve that threshold, and so our goal is to be the pipeline for that number of technologies.

CHERVENAK: So when you send people to Congress, it's really as a policy advisory role or a policy role versus developing technology for Congress itself, is that right?

MOORE: Yeah, that's right, though there is an exception. We launched a kind of parallel program during COVID, which we can talk about, but yes they are by and large, they are, we're taking people, you know, that built product in the private sector, and we're having them take that expertise and say, okay you know, I was working at Twitch at the, on the live streaming platform, or you know I was working on Google on the ads team. What does that mean for how we should think about content moderation, for how we think about a federal data privacy standard. So they're taking their skills and they're applying them to the tech challenges of the day.

CHERVENAK: And typically is that through a member office, or is it through committee? Where do you see the impact of their expertise?

MOORE: Yeah, it's both. So the great thing about our fellowship program is that the fellows get to choose their placement, and so we spend the first six weeks of the program first training them but then shopping them around essentially, and it's really up to the fellow what they want to get out of the program. To date, about two-thirds have gone to member offices, what we call personal offices, and then a third have gone to committees. And for them it's really, do you

want to go, you know, narrow and deep, in which case you should go to a committee because the committee has a defined jurisdiction and a set of issues and jurisdictions really are well, well defined and constraining, or if you want to work on, you know, privacy and AI and census disinformation and the Boeing 737 Max crashes and, you know, maybe like a health policy bill because you need to pitch in on something, then you go to a member office. And it really depends on the fellow and the experience that they want to have.

CHERVENAK: So how long do they wind up staying there, and then what, if any, outcomes have you kind of measured or how do you measure success of their stint?

MOORE: Yeah, so we've had we've had sixty-five fellows to date, we've had fifty-five graduate the program and fourteen have stayed on, on The Hill in full-time roles, so our goal is to be converting fellows at between a one in four and a one in three rate, so to do the math we're slight above a one and four rate, though we're improving the model. We've moved towards an express model where we want them to, we want to find people that we think will want to stay in Congress. And I should say this is a this is a distinction between kind of the 1.0 of the gov-tech pipeline models, the Code for America, US Digital Service, 18F, where originally we were thinking about these, like the team that came in and saved healthcare.gov, as tours of duty.

The original thinking was, let's take technologists, let's bring them in and let's put them in on a hard problem and then they'll go back, and you know that's great. I think fellows get wonderful experiences through a tour of duty. Government does benefit, but the real impact happens, you know, in year two, year three, year four, once you've learned, you know, what's the motion to recommit, who's the junior senator from Idaho, these things that are really important to proficient and effective in the legislative process. So we really want fellows to stay on. For those that don't, the vast majority still stay in the in the broader public sector. A lot have gone to think tanks or non-profits working on tech policy. A lot have gone to the executive branch at the Department of Defense or Department of Homeland Security, election security work, a variety of aims.

And then some do go back to the private sector, but what we find is those that go back to the private sector they go back in explicitly or implicitly policy roles. And so they may be a product manager, but they're bringing that, you know, if you're a product manager on the Google Ads team, you're bringing that perspective of the regulatory process and this frame of reference that all tech companies frankly need to have, which is government's looking to regulate. These institutions are the are the infrastructure of our daily lives, and so companies need to be very mindful of how they're building their products both as it relates to potential regulation but also you know potential impacts, thinking longer term. So our fellows have that unique perspective that makes them really, really effective in the private sector when they go back as well.

CHERVENAK: And do you think they're having an impact on the policy itself? You know some, when you mentioned the healthcare example, you know, for me I'm a little bit skeptical of a doctor's ability to really add a lot of value into the policy process, and in some ways it could be counterproductive because they also represent a kind of special interest within the system. You

know, how do you address those kinds of issues, or is it more just helping people understand what they're even talking about?

MOORE: Yeah, so I would say it's one perspective, and so that tech perspective when a bill is getting, you know, if you've got twelve individuals, twelve stakeholders that are writing a bill, having that one tech perspective is really important both for a baseline knowledge to make sure what you are writing is functional, frankly. I mean, increasingly, you know, technology is the infrastructure of our daily lives, benefits at the federal state and local level are being delivered digitally, and so having an understanding of what that should look like is really, really important. We've seen, and we can talk about this, but you know there were a bunch of dropped balls during COVID relief by the government not thinking about deployment, about delivery, and so they are having an impact. And they are adding that perspective, being that gut check, being that filter.

I'll give one recent example of frankly a bill that moved where they came in too late, but there are fixes in the works. The bipartisan infrastructure bill included a provision regulating crypto, digital currencies, as a pay for, and it said all, you know, all of these all of these folks involved in in digital current currency, both, you know, brokers and traders, but also miners, stakers, node operators and developers, need to register with the SEC and register their trades. In decentralized finance and in on the blockchain, node operators, developers, miners, thinkers, the way that blockchain is designed, they do not have access to some knowledge about the trades, about the traders. So the what the SEC was hoping for and what some legislators put in that bill was actually technically unworkable because they were going to be requiring these individuals to register information that they didn't functionally have access to on the blockchain.

So we had it we had an alumni come in later. They offered an amendment. Through a political process, the amendment was ultimately withdrawn and now they're working on a fix, but it's a great example of a bill being signed into law with a massive technical failure because there wasn't a technologist at that stage when that provision was being written. So I could talk about a lot more of those examples, but that's why having that filter is so important.

CHERVENAK: Yeah I can see the, seeing the implementation challenges or even unintended consequences might be something that could be a lot of value brought by technologists in those kind of circumstances.

MOORE: Absolutely.

CHERVENAK: Well, let's move on a little bit to the concept of technology and Congress itself. This program is really about, on the one side I think it's square in the middle of what we're trying to look at is how to improve Congress's institutional performance, right, by bringing this kind of technology perspective, so I think what you're doing there is just phenomenal. On the other hand, there's, you know, Congress uses technology as itself, it's a consumer of technology, and some of those technologies are pretty specific to the to Congress. They have a

different process than a lot of companies do, so you can't just use a CRM off the shelf and use it for your business, et cetera. For Congress, quite different. They have a lot of custom-built technologies, or they don't have technologies where maybe they should have technologies. So I'm curious about your experience on The Hill as a person who's deeply into this space, you know, where, what's the state of the situation about, you know, technology in Congress? Where are the, kind of, the gaps, and do you have any activities or thoughts related to how those can be filled?

MOORE: Yeah, lots, lots of thoughts. So let me start with giving an example, which is when I worked for Congressman Waxman, and we were, you know I was legislative director, so I was in charge of managing the legislative process but also our constituent correspondence, our outreach to district leaders and district stakeholders. The platform that we used for sending and responding to constitutional correspondence, you couldn't segment a list, you couldn't include an image, you could not embed an image in a newsletter. It was incredibly and to this day remains at least a decade behind the latest software available in the private sector. So there are a couple challenges there.

First is yeah, Congress is unique. It is frankly not a customer that's large enough for a lot of private sector entities, and many of the private sector solutions have to be modified to meet the unique needs of, and constraints of, the institution both in terms of process and security, but the bigger challenge is that I think often security is used as a reason not for Congress to be able to have Zoom, have Slack, have Google Docs. There are important security concerns for the institution. I mean there's no ignoring that Russia is targeting, Russia has targeted members, Russia has targeted staff, but security is often used as a reason to prohibit bringing in modern tools that frankly staff are already using.

We were using Google Docs even though they weren't approved because if you're trying to manage an appropriations bill with five hundred amendments, you need a collaborative, you need a collaboration tool. Granted the Microsoft products have gotten a lot better since, but so what Congress needs, Congress needs more. One of the challenges is that within the institutional offices, even those don't have enough individuals that have lived within the tech community, that have built or written software and that can speak to and push back on. There's an imbalance, frankly.

The security teams and those managing cyber security for The Hill do have a very strong technical acumen, but it is very narrowly focused on security, and so the modernizers and the folks on the institutional teams that are pushing for new tools, new collaborative opportunities not having that technical acumen, not having those individuals means that security for security's sake always wins out, and in many cases the security arguments are thin or, you know, there are trade-offs, and, you know, having a Congress that can't know that, if you know, that if Matthew is writing in a dozen times about healthcare, that you care about healthcare and we want to be able to tell you what we're doing to promote healthcare reform. That's a problem, and so we need, you know, we need the software for the institution to effectively operate.

CHERVENAK: So you mentioned constituent service as an area. You mentioned this kind of markup amendment procedure, you know, as an area where technology can solve some challenges. What other areas, you know, either in member offices or in committee offices or even leadership where you feel like there's some opportunity for someone to come in and build something that would be game changing for the institution in terms of its effectiveness and performance?

MOORE: There are too many to count, frankly, but I'll name a couple that are exciting and that are opportunities and a couple where the Congress is making progress. The first is digital signatures, which you maybe wouldn't be surprised to know Congress is only now adopting. So fast forward about 26 months. On March tenth, eleventh, and twelfth, when the coronavirus was hitting and the NBA shutdown, members and staff were starting to test positive. This was also appropriation season, so this is the budget season. Members of Congress want to weigh in with the appropriators to say, you know, we should fund this transportation project or, you know, this water infrastructure project, and they get their colleagues to sign onto these letters.

But the offices were shutting down. Congress didn't have a digital signatures tool, and as a consequence you had literally hundreds of interns running, I mean there were these chats on all the group chats about, comically, about interns literally running to meet the deadline by the end of the week to get all these signatures before offices were going to shut down because COVID was spreading. In the meantime, nobody really thought about the fact that, you know, one of these interns could have been asymptomatic and probably like literally could have been the vector for bringing down half of the legislative branch.

Luckily that did not happen but as a consequence of that, Congress realized that the urgent need for digital signatures. The senate had a tool that was in beta, it's being rolled out. I mean I as an intern, I spent probably twenty percent of my internship walking around letters getting signatures. So these are things that seem very basic and frankly are very basic, but the Congress just hasn't, you know, figured out, and that's because there hadn't been a tool available to them that could work in the eyes of Congress. But digital signatures is one.

The amendment process. There was a, leader Hoyer and leader McCarthy held a congressional hackathon about six weeks ago, and one of the projects that we worked on, so this is an attempt to get people together, to brainstorm potential, you know, tech solutions. One of the things that we, the ideas we worked on, was a tool for managing the amendment process in committee. So right now the way that an amendment process is managed in committee is committee to committee. You start out a markup, which is the amending process, is the bill, and you know maybe the clerk that's running that has a document of amendments that they think are going to come. Maybe it's a spreadsheet. There's not a process for, a formalized process for intake, so it comes in, sometimes these come in email, sometimes they come in papers being dropped off, sometimes they come as a Word document, as an attachment, and a lot of times amendments come on the fly in the legislative process because there isn't a tool for managing intake of amendments. There's also not an opportunity to see real-time changes to a

bill, and so often, and there's also, you can, there's a process for amending an amendment, so you can understand the complexity what happens if someone brings a second-degree amendment. Having a having a platform for managing an amendment process would be very, very helpful.

Mistakes are also made. Let's be frank about this, and so in amendment process tool would also be very helpful. I could go on for hours. I'll stop there. Those are two of the sort of more exciting ones.

CHERVENAK: Well do you have any thoughts on the leadership side? Since you've mentioned member offices and you've mentioned now committees, any, what's your top pick or so for the leadership? I mean there's been discussion about a calendaring system, which would seem a no-brainer, that would, you know, maximize the productivity or the lack of, you know the smallest amount of overlap for all different kinds of meetings, but any thoughts there on the leadership side?

MOORE: Yeah, I mean I think calendaring is a huge, huge challenge. It is a, I think the statistic, I'm going to get the statistic wrong, but the average US senator is like double booked on her hearings, you know, a quarter of the time or a third of the time. That has real consequences. If your senator is skipping the hearing on unemployment insurance for independent contractors, they should be present at that and contributing at that because they have another hearing that they are chairing because they're, you know, the subcommittee chair of the, you know, Energy Pipeline Subcommittee. So calendaring is a huge one.

This may sound minor, but scheduling meeting rooms. Space is a massive, is at a serious premium in Congress. When we the last four years in Congressman Waxman's office, our meeting space was, you know, we had seven people in a, you can't see my room, but in a room about, you know, about the size of, you know, well a very small size like probably a double driveway, and then we had a table for meeting, but the table only set four people. So what happens if you have a lobby group that shows up or constituents that show up that have eight people?

The common meeting rooms are used actually as political tools, and they're frequently they're just sitting idle because you have to get to request a meeting room or request a hearing room when it's sitting idle. You need to get the approval of, you know, the staff director and then the clerk and then some other person. That means that people end up taking meetings and not having the right conversations they should be having with constituents. It may sound minor, but it's impactful. It's, it is your First Amendment ability to petition your government to be able to have a space where you can have a serious conversation about the challenges in your community or the challenges you're having with, you know, government benefit delivery. So meeting room space is another where tech could be an easy solution if it was deployed effectively.

CHERVENAK: Let's move on to the concept of data. You know, we talked about software sort of. That's kind of what we're getting at there, and it's an immediate data movement, but you've also done some work directly on information as it relates to Congress in particular. I think it's, maybe you can talk about that project is that the letters? Maybe can you explain what you did there and your general thoughts about the use of data in Congress and how that could be improved either outbound information to constituents or inbound from the outside into Congress's decision making.

MOORE: So let's start with outbound and just say that I mean anything that Congress is published should be published via an API, and right now it's not, so we can talk about salary data, which may, you know, may on its surface feel like, oh well you know, it's great to know what people are, what congressional staffers are making, but you know, why does that actually matter? Well salary data matters for a couple reasons. If you're able to, if you were able to map that across and compare across different offices, across different races and ethnicities, you can see much more clearly, and I'm virtually certain that the data would bear this out, that there is an inequity across racial and gender lines among staffers. Because salary data is published as a PDF that is not a thing that is easy for a civil society organization or university center to make sense of.

You also, in terms of retention, LegiStorm, which is a for-profit company and has proprietary systems around all of the data that they pull but that does publish the salary data, makes sense of the salary data that the Congress publishes, publishes an annual turnover list and ranks the offices that have the highest staff turnover. If you were to go to 2017 and look at the top ten offices with the highest turnover, come one year later, five of those offices, those members would have resigned or decided not to seek re-election because of sexual harassment or discrimination concerns. So that data, there is insight in that data. That is one small example. Any piece of data that Congress is publishing should be published via API so we could make sense of it.

I'm really passionate about letters. This is, everybody thinks about Congress and law making and thinks about legislation you know HR. H dot, R dot, bill number, S dot, bill number and thinks of that as the output of Congress when in truth the vast majority of the output of Congress especially in days as the institution has been more dysfunctional, a good, the oversight function of Congress, the bully pulpit of Congress getting other branches of government or private sector entities to change their policies via pressure, this is a huge portion of the output of Congress, and the form in which that takes is the letter.

So Congress still authors letters and publishes them and sends them to a variety of entities, and we have no system for capturing or tracking or making sense of all of this. This matters. So when I was packing up Congressman Waxman's office in 2014 we found a letter from 1982 to the Reagan administration asking for increased funding at the NIH and CDC for a mysterious illness that had killed several dozen of Congressman Waxman's constituents in West Hollywood, and the researchers at that time were calling it GRID, gay related immunodeficiency, and this was the first to our knowledge, the first action legislative action that Congress had taken on HIV

and AIDS. That letter is sitting in the basement of a UCLA library somewhere. And so this information matters. It would be wonderful to have a tool to capture and make sense of this information. Another place where having more data, having more data scientists, having a broader reform community with that expertise could do a lot of good.

CHERVENAK: So for that kind of data when you're thinking about that outbound data, like that's coming from Congress to the agencies, right, and it's a kind of, you could call it a congressional deliverable or just like you mentioned that the legislation itself is kind of an output or deliverable of Congress, and I totally agree that measuring that information output and understanding and analyzing it is an important way to kind of measure Congress's performance, right. What about data within Congress itself, you know, and even when you were working on The Hill, you know, what kind of data were you using, you know, when it came to either the constituency, right, number one, or sort of like on, you know, your own office's performance? Do you have any way to kind of measure yourself against the other offices out there? Are we doing a better job than you know house member X, et cetera?

MOORE: On performance. That's a really good question, and the only performance data that you will see is, you know, effectiveness of the legislator, which will be the numbers, the bills they get signed into law, which is a very, very overly simplistic definition of data. So how do you define, you know, moving the ball forward on an issue? I'll come back and give an example of Congressman Waxman in 1994 sharing a hearing with seven CEOs and then raising their right hands and proclaiming that their research and their view was that tobacco was non-addictive and didn't have health consequences. Hugely consequential hearing, hugely consequential in the public consciousness and for moving the ball on regulating tobacco and understanding tobacco for the ill that it is.

How do you define that? I don't know. But the only marker right now that people use is bills introduced. Bills may be marked up at the committee, though you don't even see that analysis typically. Bills signed into the law. So this is a massive opportunity. How did we judge our own performance? You know this gets to also another one of the challenge Congress, which is Congress is five hundred thirty-five small businesses. Our performance as staffers was judged by if the member of Congress was happy with us, which was generally judged by if they heard good things from the constituents or didn't hear good things from their constituents, and ultimately whether they got reelected or not.

So, but I will say even on the basics of constituent correspondence, letters come in, letters coming in, average wait time for response for form letters, for personal letters, the tools are very simplistic with that. And you can run reports to figure out your turnaround time for constituent letters. Are we able to benchmark that against other offices to understand what's the average? Who are the offices that are doing this well versus who's not? No. Because there's not any universal measure of tracking within the institution as well, and this is where a really good constituent correspondence tool, having a Zendesk for you know the veteran that's coming in and having problems with the VA. They should have a Zendesk-like dashboard to understand where their appeal is in a process when we're managing that. This is another

software solution that exists in the private sector that could exist in Congress if there were the right people within the institution to shepherd that through. Might not be Zendesk but, you know, there are lots of competitors in this space so.

CHERVENAK: So let's move on to this concept of strategic planning. I know you've done some of this work. I think I saw that strategic plan planning for member offices, really. Can you talk about what that means? You know, what is the member need and what's the kind of solution that you're providing in that case? What is strategic planning for a member?

MOORE: So what, the way that we manage these trainings, so I did this for about a dozen member offices, and this was a process, it was a it was a facilitation training, it was a training that I learned off The Hill through an organization I was part of, and offered it up to my team. It was incredibly helpful. And then started offering it up to any of the legislative directors in the California delegation and ended up doing it doing ten or twelve of them. This was a very basic training.

CHERVENAK: So is it legislative director-focused training for that staff member role?

MOORE: For offering to the legislative directors to give for their staffs.

CHERVENAK: Okay, so you're training the trainer.

MOORE: Yeah, training, well no, actually training the staffs, but in partnership with the legislative director office, so. We would sit down and ask basic questions like, you know, what is what does success in your portfolio look like in three months and one month and one year? How do we work backwards from that? You know, what are the core priorities of the district? Where are places that we're not, where are there opportunities for legislative action that nobody's working on in Congress that could be working on? Who are, from a personal development perspective, who are individuals within the institution that you would seek out as mentors? How do we you know design a process to reach out and ask for support and build relationships?

There were 90-minute trainings, fairly simplistic. I think what that spoke to was the need for a broader set of actors within Congress that could provide this kind of training and provide frameworks for a variety of functions. The good news is Congress is doing this now, or they're starting to do this, the Modernization Committee had a recommendation for a staff academy. It was a part modeled off of not this training but another training that I helped build with a colleague. And so they're starting to build these curriculum and I think that will go a long way in helping staffers and ultimately members think more strategically and prioritize and stop being so reactive because this is the challenge. Congress is reacting, reacting, reacting all day and so finding the space to be proactive is so important.

CHERVENAK: Yeah, so it sounds like a prioritization of goal setting across multiple different time frames, right, the short, medium, and the longer term. Longer term being I guess a two-year maximum.

MOORE: It is typically couched in two-year terms if, you know, for many members they're in safe districts, and members know they want to stick around, so you can have a longer time horizon. But the truth is some of your stakeholders, some of your partners, some of your committee assignments may change during that two-year period, so that is the typical window in which we're looking at.

CHERVENAK: And was the strategic planning, is this training you were running, is it focused on the legislative aspect or the oversight aspect or the constituent service aspect, or was it all of that together as a broad strategy versus just legislation?

MOORE: It was all of that together. And often what you find is that in offices there are different individuals that are the leads on each of those verticals, and so the training was with a broader kind of general set of questions to help think about, to reflect and then plan a strategy and typically in an office, you know, you've got the person that's the lead on constituent correspondence. So they're the ones that are going to be driving that train versus, you know, legislative work versus, you know, working with the district.

CHERVENAK: So let's talk a little bit more on another side of technology, which is this kind of digital communication, and you know I'm assuming that the people you're interacting with are very in tune with, you know, the various kinds of social media channels and other types of technologies that can be outbound from Congress or can be inbound from constituents or can be among constituents that the member has to listen in on. So what's your perspective on how these kind of media channels or these social media platforms have evolved since you've been in Congress, and you know what incentives are they really creating inside of, other than the obvious I want to get, you know, they want to get some notoriety or they want to get some attention? Where do you, how do you see it really affecting the day-to-day operation of Congress and what they're paying attention to?

MOORE: So on one hand the tools have opened up the institution, especially since COVID. You hear of, witnesses are able to testify remotely. By the way, I mean, Congress does not pay for witnesses to come and testify. If you want, if you are invited to testify, you have to take that time off of your work and as someone who's testified I can tell you, it, I mean this is a week of your life at least because you want to put your best, you want to show up in your best self. You have to take a week off from work. You have to travel. You have to pay your own way. You have to pay your own hotels. So, but remote testifying is now an auction which allows which has allowed and I hope will continue to allow members to reach and allow folks to testify that weren't already able to. Constituent meetings also, video has been, is commonplace on The Hill, and so I think that does enable easier constituent meetings. You don't have to fly to Washington to have a face-to-face. You know, it's behind the screen, but it's still it's better than

a phone call, which is what Congress was operating on prior to, and you know I do think that some of the live streaming of meetings can be helpful.

I think social media is not productive. I, you know, in the same way that social media doesn't feel very productive in other sectors or other arenas. I don't know that it's productive. I think you see members sniping at one another in a way that they just would not in person in the same way that, you know, we engage, all of us users may be inclined to post something that is a little bit more, that goes a little further than we would in a human-to-human in-person interaction. I think that happens with members of Congress as well. And from the tools perspective, Congress has not gotten to the point where it's doing an effective job of understanding what constituents are concerned about posting about, writing about on social. These sentiment analysis tools exist, I mean if you're Starbucks, or if you're Boeing, or if you're Alaska Airlines, or if you're, you know, even if you're a local restaurant chain, you know, there are sentiment analysis tools that you can use to understand how people are, what people are thinking about your brand. This is the kind of thing that Congress can pay for and make available to two members out of a, you know, out of out of a central pool.

As of yet, as yet Congress has not really evolved on how it manages social since I have left. I, members are using it much more than when I left. When I left it was probably maybe a third of members were really actually active on Twitter or very few on Instagram and now it's virtually 100 percent, but I don't know that that content is all that productive, sadly. But this is, you know, this is the this is the case with social media across society, I think, so Congress is not immune from that.

CHERVENAK: And the challenge also is this notion that the information they're getting from social medias is not representative, right, of the constituency, right. It can be distorted in so many ways and it's hard to sift through. There's not a normalization that happens anywhere that says, well this might be very loud, but it only represents a tiny portion of the of the constituency.

MOORE: Extraordinarily important point as well. And you know members of Congress are active. I mean they check these, they check their mentions. Most, many of them do, probably most of them do, so members of Congress see what is coming at them, and I think you make an important point that they are seeing a minority. You know, say what you will about the, you know, the Tea Party in 2010. That was in-person interaction. I remember that, I remember people coming to our office, and you felt it, but it took a lot, and I remember being in the district and being confronted takes a lot to, you know, get in your car and drive to a thing and show up, and it takes a lot to, you know, to raise your voice in person. It's a lot easier to, you know, hide behind the screen and do it, so I don't know how you solve for that, but.

CHERVENAK: So let's talk a little bit about the reform community. I know you have some opinions about that. You know it's a small group of people. We've talked to a lot of them on this program. We'll talk to more. You know, what's your thoughts about the reform community, the small group that's trying to figure out how to make Congress, you know, a better institutional

place over the long run? You know, what are your thoughts about where it is, where it's kind of come from, and where do you think it needs to go?

MOORE: So it's grown extra, I mean extraordinarily. It's still tiny, but when I started TechCongress, I mean there were there were a dozen people in the space and now it's probably 30 to 40. But that's 30 to 40 individuals that are working on, and that's not that's not hyperbole that is it. I, that is a, and you probably know the number a lot better because you have interviewed all of them. You know, 30 or 40 people that are working on reforming an entire branch of government that also happens to be the first branch, Article One, and designed as the as the originating branch by the framers, this is where the laws are authorized and where programs are paid for, and the Executive Branch implements, the Congress authorizes and cuts checks.

So 30 or 40 people working on an entire branch of government is nothing. 30 or 40 people is a tiny startup, you know, Facebook, Google, I mean, these are these are companies well over a hundred thousand people. They're large companies, but they dwarf the legislative branch. Legislate branch has about fourteen thousand employees in the, when we talk about like legislative functions, policy staffers, and others like in-member offices and committees. Not support staff, but you know fourteen thousand people is a whole branch of government. You know, that's, I don't know, that's probably the size of Pinterest or something. So the reform community is growing and that is great.

There needs to be, it needs to be much larger. It needs to be much larger and it also needs to, there need to be more opportunities for Hill staffers coming out of service in Congress to put their skills to use for improving the institution. You know I had to I had to bootstrap for eleven months to get TechCongress off the ground through a combination of unemployment insurance and some savings and a like very small IndieGoGo crowdfunding campaign. I made it work. Not a lot of people are able to do that, especially as I was lucky not to have a partner or kids. Not a lot of people are able to make that happen, and I'm a firm believer that a lot of the revolving door of Congress, of staffers going and going to work for, essentially going to work against the interests that they'd spent their time in Congress advocating for, really, I mean really flipping sides, frankly, that that is path dependency. This is not because they necessarily want to do this, but there are not opportunities for them to earn a decent living working on and improving the institution that they have devoted a good portion of their lives to.

When those opportunities do exist, people step up, and I can give you a good example of this, which is in October, late October and early November of 2017, the Harvey Weinstein allegations were raging and reporters were, it was an open secret there were members of Congress that were bad actors, that treated staff poorly, that treated other individuals poorly. And a group of former staffers that I was lucky enough to be involved with provided a space, started with a letter, and provided a space, ultimately started providing a space for staffers that had been victims and survivors of sexual harassment and abuse to come forward, to get trained on talking to the media, either on background or on the record, and you started to see story by

story, the levy broke. And within six months there were eight members of Congress that had resigned their seats or decided not to run for reelection.

There was there was an active space for staffers to come together and support one another and use the skills they had to coach one another, but also after the fact, frankly lobbying their former colleagues and their former bosses about the forms that needed to happen in the institution. And you saw, you know, there was a groundbreaking reform law signed into law at the end of 2018, and that was former staffers engaging in this space, and that that was because a couple other former staffers provided the space for them to engage.

So we need much more of that. A lot of this is depending on funding, and this is another challenge is that very few funders, I think because Congress is a tiny place. Fourteen thousand staff. You don't have alumni of the institution and the numbers that you do coming out of executive branches, and so you know there's a lack of experience and understanding with Congress, and so it's a harder place to fund because it's a more opaque place. So I, you know, there have been some funders that have stepped into the mix, some great public interest funders. Hewlett Foundation, principal among them, Democracy Fund has been funding great work in the space, but I think having a greater funding system can go a long way.

CHERVENAK: I think we have to move on now to the questions I ask all of our guests we can compare the answer to some point. You ready for the next phase?

MOORE: Yeah, let's do it.

CHERVENAK: All right, well the first question here is, you know, what do you think congressional representation should mean, and by this you know are you a Burkean, you know, the member needs to make judgments on behalf of their constituents, or are they just windows into the beliefs of their constituents, the current moment, and do they represent everybody in the district or just the primary voters, or the future, you know, who are they representing and how are they supposed to represent them?

MOORE: I do believe, I do believe that we are a representative government and that the representative needs to make decisions on behalf of constituents and then be judged on those decisions every two years, at least in the House. But they, and they need to represent the broad swath of the constituency, and this is where I think gerrymandering and these tiny sandwich districts where the true challenges in the primary are incredibly problematic because you have members that are not forced to listen to all of their constituency. I also think what it means to be representative is to employ a staff that is representative of your district, and that is something that is getting better, but the structures of Congress and the way that Congress hires privilege a very specific set of people, generally people that have relationships because they can, you know, get, have that have that conversation and get that first foot in the door through an internship, and it also can survive those first two years of just really, really low pay.

I mean we're talking, it can get as low as it's $28,000 a year. The starting has typically been $35,000 a year in a city where, you know, to live with roommates and to live with four roommates and share a bathroom cost you $1,500 a month in Washington, DC. I think this is also getting better. Speaker Pelosi just announced a $45,000 floor, which is helpful, but you know Congress does not represent the lived experience. What we are solving for with TechCongress is frankly not a tech problem, it's a pipeline problem, and that is that it is just extraordinarily hard for people to get their foot in the door unless they both a, start at the bottom rung and b, have relationships. And so a representative Congress means someone that employs people with the lived and relevant expertise to govern effectively, and that's at the end of the day personnel is policy, so.

CHERVENAK: Great, well next question is how would your ideal Congress allocate its time, and by this I mean constituent service versus legislation versus some of the oversight activities you described earlier, and should they be a hundred percent of the time in DC living here all year round with no vacations or should they spend ninety-nine percent of their time back in the home district? Where would you see the member break down their time?

MOORE: I think it's important for members to maintain a relationship to the home district, so I'm very much supportive, and Congressman Waxman did this. Speaker, I've sat on a number of flights with Speaker Pelosi going back to San Francisco, her sitting in a middle seat of economy class. I don't know how they do it, but they do it, and God bless them, but I think going back is really important.

So, but I do think that they need they should have residences in DC, building relationships among members. At the end of the day that's the, that's a critical, critical part of—

CHERVENAK: So what percentage of the time would you have them in DC versus a home district?

MOORE: Probably have them two thirds, one third, maybe seventy/thirty, seventy-five/a quarter.

CHERVENAK: How about dialing for dollars versus like work on legislative branch activities?

MOORE: So my belief on fundraising is the act of fundraising in and of itself is not problematic. I mean it's problematic in terms of time allocation, yes. I would not, that is not a good use of their time. The challenge is, we as human beings are a function of the people that we surround ourselves with. There is solid sociological research around this. And so if you spend your days dialing for dollars, your world view is the people that you are talking to dialing for dollars. And so a huge reason that I think our representatives are out of touch is because the world in which they occupy is contacting rich people and asking for their money. So my challenge with dialing for dollars, it's not the act in and of itself. It's the perversion of the worldview that they have because of the kinds of people that they think occupy the world. You know this is, in any case, so I'll step back.

CHERVENAK: You can make the same argument than we made earlier for the social media, right, if they're immersed constantly with a minority who are loud, then they become creatures of that world too.

MOORE: One hundred percent. One hundred percent. So how do, unfortunately it's also really difficult as a constituent to understand that you can't even engage with the member or the office. You know, civic education, understanding that members exist to represent you, we had an open-door policy. Anytime anybody asked for a meeting, we took it. But the number of times that people asked for a meeting that that came on their behalf, that did not come from a group organizing them, were extraordinarily rare. I mean I'd say less than two percent. And so there's an element of civic education of, you have an ability and a responsibility to communicate with your office and your member, so if I had to think about allocating time, I'd think about a third meaningfully engaging with constituents. And then you know a good proportion legislating, which would also you know, I would put legislating and oversight in the same function, but it's built around relationship building with other members so that, like that functional output I would put it two-thirds.

But that means frankly a redesign because you know the way to, there aren't opportunities, you know like members don't just show up, there's not a coordinated like, let's have a brainstorm and think about what we should do about you know principles of AI ethics, or it only happens when members decide that they're going to reach out to x up number other member to say like would you be a partner on this?

CHERVENAK: Well that brings up the next question I have, which is how should debate, deliberation, or dialogue occur or be structured in Congress? So you have this you know structured floor, right, where you have a kind of interaction between members. You have the committee where there's another kind of interaction. Then there's, you know, then there's informal interactions between members. Where do you think this concept of debate or discussion dialogue should happen, and should it be all public domain where everybody can read every word or watch everything that everybody says? Or should it be some private ways for members to communicate with each other and you know spitball some of the things you mentioned?

MOORE: So I think it should be both, but I would love to see more structured informal conversations, generative, brainstorm, off the record, closed, you know that that doesn't exist. I as a staffer, if I want to, you know, there are, the institution does not and does not organize or incentivize—

CHERVENAK: What about caucuses? Don't they form a little bit of that kind of role, or is that not a not a thing in your mind?

MOORE: Sort of, but caucuses are mostly a front. Caucuses are mostly, are mostly a way for a member to pretend like they're, frankly, to pretend like they're active on an issue. And they are

an organizational structure that could be improved and worked upon, but you don't actually see a lot of substance coming out of caucuses, unfortunately.

CHERVENAK: So you believe in a, some private interactions between members where they can have open discussion and in some public, I guess I'm assuming that's in committee or on the floor, kind of interaction?

MOORE: Correct. And I would also like to, I'd also like to think about a restructuring of the public side, to give it guard rails around, to allow for better actual conversation. Because a committee hearing right now is grandstanding. It's not a conversation, it's not a deliberation. And there are, this is where, you know, bringing in a design thinking community, bringing in a broader ecosystem to understand, what you know Amanda Ripley "High Conflict," right, like how do we design our engagement so that we can minimize the conflict and actually begin to begin to have a conversation. Because what's happening, these aren't conversations. They're not, and so we shouldn't, we should start with the presumption that we're not talking right now and think about how do we build a system that will allow people to actually?

CHERVENAK: Absolutely. Next question is, what fundamental institutional improvement should Congress make within a 50-year time frame?

MOORE: Within a 50-year timeframe? So I think the Modernization Committee is a great blueprint for Congress needs to think about it how it thinks. Congress needs more systems for studying itself, for taking seriously the act of legislating, and so I think process reform and setting up a system for iterative process reform, so this is not just a one and done, that it is a constant. And I don't know what that looks like, whether that looks like an institute on the inside or whether that looks like an entity that mirrors the institution on the outside, but what Congress, what is absolutely essential is a continual view and a continual reflection and a taking stock of how the institution is functioning or not. But that, you know, we need that level of honesty and accountability for the institution to improve itself.

CHERVENAK: All right, next question is what book or article most shaped your thinking with respect to congressional reform?

MOORE: So you know I think the, there's a New Yorker piece from 2010 called "As the World Burns," and it's about the ill fate of my boss's-then climate legislation, which they called Waxman-Markey and the attempt to get it done in the Senate. And I think what that, which was John Kerry and Joe Lieberman and Lindsey Graham, and I think what that piece really illustrates is that at the end of the day, things get done or they don't based on human beings, and that there are good legislators and there are okay legislators and there are mediocre legislators.

We talked about understanding effectiveness of the institution and the metrics that we have for effectiveness right now, and they are wholly inadequate, and I think frankly if you, I think frankly if you read that piece and you see both, I mean I think it's a wonderful view into the staffer perspective on how things work and how they don't. It's an excellent window into what

makes for and what doesn't make for a good a good legislator, and so I think that's required reading and it was although I lived it, it was extraordinarily reinforcing for me to understand why we didn't end up getting this done and that it was driven, and it was frankly a handful of individuals not doing a great job.

CHERVENAK: Last question is really about your plans. You know, what do you have in the hopper coming in the next few years and where do you want to focus your energy?

MOORE: Yes, well our goal I think as I said at the outset is to get sixty, six zero, technologists working in Congress in senior staffing roles and to build a pipeline and convert our fellows into those roles to upskill the institution. I think that as we, and we're on track to do that. We've had twenty fellows, we had sixteen fellows last year, twenty fellows this year. We'll have twenty-four next year and maintain that through 2026 to reach that level of sixty.

As we look ahead, I'm interested in two things. One is applying this model to other, principally the states, but other places that that need technical expertise, I think in states, state legislatures, and states attorneys generals are doing the bulk of the frankly the legislating when it comes to tech policy and are largely entirely absent of tech expertise, to be frank. I think the other piece that is so important is the process reform side and in particular, how do we engage staff coming out of Congress that understand the institution to build solutions to solving its problems? So in my view what makes tech successful is not tech. What has made the tech sector successful is not tech. It is the infrastructure in which they have built around the sector because the leaders in tech, whether they be, you know, Mark Andreessen or Peter Thiel or Elon Musk or Steve Jobs, you know, these folks came out of infrastructure and the institutions in which they involved fund infrastructure. There are accelerators and incubators and funding and mentorship, and that just does not, it doesn't exist at all in the congressional reform community, so bigger picture. We need to build that. And so that's where I hope that ultimately I can spend my time.

CHERVENAK: Awesome. Well, Travis, thank you so much for your time and really admire what you're doing and look forward to seeing what's coming.

MOORE: My pleasure. Thanks for having me, Matthew.

CHERVENAK: It's been a pleasure.