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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

May 19, 2020

The Honorable James E. Risch
Chairman
Senate Committee on Foreign Relation
423 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Chairman Risch,

We are writing to you because we are deeply concerned about your plans to only provide an audio stream of Thursday's Senate Foreign Relations Committee business meeting. We request that the business meeting be video streamed live.

The American public has the right to see and hear their Senators as we debate and vote on nominees and critical legislation. Live stream video is consistent with the Senate "sunshine" rules and with normal committee practice when the public is allowed into the Committee room in the Capitol to both see and hear their Senators. We know you share the importance of ensuring accountability, transparency, and freedom of the press as part of our regular committee practices.

We also remind the Chairman that the Senate Rules guidance from Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Klobuchar provided on April 30 emphasizes the importance of technology that allows the American people to view congressional proceedings. The guidance issued by the Rules Committee says that following discussions with the Parliamentarian, "a live stream would meet the requirements for a public hearing. We have directed the SAA to provide a solution to the Senate community...that will offer virtual hearings that can be easily **viewed by** the American public." We have checked with the Rules Committee and the Recording Studio and there are no technical or space issues that would prevent live video streaming. We note that other Senate committees which have held business meetings during the pandemic have also live video streamed their business meetings.

Thursday's business meeting agenda includes votes on important nominees and on more than 25 pieces of legislation; the American public should be able to see their Senators debate and vote on these critical issues. We urge you, therefore, to live stream video for Thursday's business meeting.

Sincerely,



Robert Menendez
Ranking Member



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Tom Udall
United States Senator



Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator