



**OFFICE OF THE CLERK  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

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**THE HONORABLE KAREN L. HAAS  
CLERK OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**STATEMENT BEFORE THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH  
ON THE OFFICE OF THE CLERK, FY2014**

**MARCH 19, 2013**

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Chairman Alexander, Ranking Member Wasserman Schultz, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you about the operations of the Office of the Clerk and our fiscal year 2014 budget request. With the resources and direction provided by this Subcommittee, the Clerk's Office continues to carry out its duties and responsibilities for the legislative and institutional operations of the House of Representatives. I thank the Subcommittee for its support over the past year.

## **SUPPORT FOR THE LEGISLATIVE OPERATIONS OF THE HOUSE**

As the Subcommittee is aware, the Office of the Clerk oversees a broad range of services, including support for many of the core legislative functions of the House of Representatives. Our staff is directly involved in each step of the legislative process. Bill clerks handle the introduction of all bills and resolutions by Members of the House. Our official reporters cover all committee hearings and markups. We provide assistance and support to committee staff in preparing committee documents and reports in XML format to facilitate accessibility. On the House Floor, our official reporters transcribe House proceedings, gavel-to-gavel, for inclusion in the *Congressional Record*. Our tally clerks operate the Electronic Voting System, journal clerks prepare the constitutionally required *Journal of the House of Representatives*, and our enrolling clerks prepare legislation that has been considered by the House for transmittal to the Senate or to the White House for presentment to the President. At the very end of the legislative process, our archival staff preserve all noncurrent records of the House, including committee records, whether they are in electronic or paper format, and make those records available in accordance with House Rules. From the beginning to the end of the legislative process, the Office of the Clerk provides support to the House, Members, committees, and staff.

## **ENHANCING LEGISLATIVE TRANSPARENCY**

Given our unique involvement in each stage of the legislative process, the Office of the Clerk has taken on a leadership role in developing and deploying new technologies to improve the transparency of House committee and Floor proceedings.

### ***Expansion of docs.house.gov to Include Committee Records***

In the previous Congress, web developers in the Clerk's Office deployed a centralized web portal, docs.house.gov, that hosts the text of bills and resolutions that will be considered on the House Floor. The goal of this project was to make Floor proceedings more transparent and accessible to all citizens.



Building on the success of docs.house.gov, the Clerk's Office expanded the website to also include a centralized repository for committee documents. This expansion includes a centralized calendar of all committee hearings and meetings and access to a number of committee records, providing the public with a one-stop overview of the important work being conducted in House committees. I am very grateful for the cooperation we received from House committees as we developed and deployed this site, and we will continue to work with all committees transitioning to this centralized web portal in the 113th Congress.

### ***Assisting Committees in Making Their Records Available in Publicly Accessible Formats***

The Clerk's Office also continues its important work of assisting committees in making their reports available in XML, a globally used document format that enhances the usability of data. We have expanded the deployment of XMetaL, an XML-authoring tool, to committee offices, and we continue to collaborate with the Senate and the Government Printing Office on setting consistent standards for authoring in XML. Committee demand for our staff's expertise in this area continues to grow.

### ***Making Legislative Documents Available for Bulk Download***

I am also pleased to report that the Clerk's Office successfully coordinated an effort to make the text of all bills introduced in the House available to the public for bulk download, rather than requiring staff and researchers to download each bill individually. In the previous appropriations cycle, this Subcommittee called for the creation of a Bulk Data Task Force to look into the feasibility of providing such bulk data downloads. That Task Force, chaired by the Clerk's Office, brought together bipartisan leadership and committee staff, representatives from GPO and the Library of Congress, and other interested stakeholders who worked together in a collegial fashion to enable the bulk download of House bill text through GPO's website. The Task Force plans to continue its work this year to expand the availability of bulk downloads of House documents.

### ***Making House Legislative Data Available on THOMAS (Improving LIMS)***

Our technology staff is also in the midst of the third and final phase of a multi-year project to update the Legislative Information Management System (LIMS). This electronic system is used to process and track all legislation from its introduction on the House Floor to its signing by the President. It also provides the mechanism by which the minute-to-minute activity on the House Floor is compiled and made available to the public online. This modernization project began in 2000. This final phase of the LIMS project includes upgrades to the Legislative Activity Guide, a compilation of each Member's voting record;

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the Floor Action Reporting System; and the Legislative House Action Calendar System. These improvements will enhance our ability to manage legislative documents and make them publicly available through the Library of Congress' THOMAS system.

### ***Improving HouseLive.gov***

Also in the realm of legislative transparency, the Clerk's Office is in the process of making further improvements to HouseLive.gov, which delivers live-streaming video of House Floor proceedings to desktop computers and mobile devices. Later this year, we will improve the functionality of HouseLive to allow users to conduct searches for specific Members who have spoken on the Floor within archived webcasts of Floor proceedings. These searches will make use of the existing closed captioning associated with the webcast and will allow Member offices and committees to easily find pertinent sections from House Floor debate for research, review, and video clipping purposes.

### ***Making Floor Proceedings Available through Closed Captioning***

Finally, one of the top priorities for the Clerk's Office over the past year was recompeting the closed-captioning contract for the televised Floor proceedings of the House. After putting a contract out for bid under a fair and open process, we were able to ensure the continuation of high-quality and accurate closed-captioning services while reducing costs. We are very pleased that the Clerk's Office can continue to make House Floor proceedings accessible to the many Americans who rely on closed captioning.

## **INSTITUTIONAL SERVICES AND MEMBER SUPPORT**

In addition to our responsibilities for the legislative operations of the House, the Office of the Clerk continues to provide important institutional services and Member support. Our purpose in providing House-wide services is to achieve savings for Member offices that would otherwise be required to acquire these services individually.

### ***House Library***

The Clerk's Office continues to leverage the resources of the House Library to make digital and print subscription services with broad application available to all Members, committees, and legislative support offices, including the House Parliamentarians, Office of General Counsel, and Office of Legislative Counsel. Last year, the House Library made ProQuest Congressional—a powerful tool for legislative research—available to all House offices, including Member district offices. This year, we relocated the storefront of the House Library to a space off the rotunda of the Cannon Building, increasing the visibility and



accessibility of its services to House offices. At this Cannon location, Members and staff can take advantage of a number of additional online research tools without paying individual, office-by-office subscription fees. By making our Library's services more readily available to the entire House community, we have found an additional means to achieve cost savings for the House.

### ***House Employment Counsel***

The Office of House Employment Counsel (OHEC) provides House-wide employment law services to Members, committees, and other House employing offices. In addition to providing legal representation, OHEC provides training and advice to assist offices in complying with the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995. All contacts with OHEC are handled on a strictly confidential basis.

### ***House Telephone Directory***

Last year, our technology staff developed a web-based system for updating the House telephone directory, an essential resource for Members and staff. This system, now in place, will improve the process for compiling and updating the directory—both the printed and web-based versions—on an ongoing basis, saving time and money while increasing accuracy. As we continue the steady migration away from printing and toward the electronic distribution of House documents, we have also reduced the printing schedule for the House telephone directory from three times per Congress to twice per Congress, achieving additional cost savings.

### ***Records Management and Archival Services***

The Clerk's Office also provides Members with assistance in archiving their papers. Under House precedent, a Member's personal legislative records remain the property of the Member even after he or she leaves office. Our archival staff provide Members with consultations and guidance with deeding their papers to universities or other research facilities upon their departure from the House, should they choose to do so.

### ***Capitol Services***

Through our Capitol Services Group, the Clerk's Office supports the Members and Family Committee Room, the Lindy Claiborne Boggs Congressional Women's Reading Room, the Congressional Prayer Room, and attendant services for Floor operations. This past year our curatorial staff completed the restoration of the John Quincy Adams and Latrobe couches, two important historical pieces in the House Collection under the care of the Clerk's Office.



### ***Management of Vacant Member Offices***

When a Member office becomes vacant during a Congress because of a death or resignation, the Office of the Clerk supervises that office until a successor is elected. Administration of vacant offices is a statutory responsibility of the Clerk, requiring both time and resources. Since I last testified before the Subcommittee, the Clerk's Office managed ten vacant Member offices (Arizona 8th, New Jersey 10th, Washington 1st, Michigan 11th, Kentucky 4th, California 18th, Illinois 2nd, California 51st, South Carolina 1st, and Missouri 8th), three of which remain under our supervision.

### ***Contingency Planning***

The Clerk's Office works closely with the other House and Senate Officers to ensure we are prepared for any emergencies that may confront the Legislative Branch. We remain ever-mindful of the importance of continuous review and improvement of our emergency planning with all of our legislative partners to ensure continuity of operations.

### ***Sharing and Preserving the Heritage of the House***

The Clerk's Office continues to fulfill its responsibility to preserve the heritage of the House and make its history, art, and archives available to the American people. The official records of the House, under the Clerk's care since 1789, continue to grow in complexity and number as more and more records come to us in various digital formats. In the 112th Congress, the Clerk's Office received 3.1 million noncurrent House records, including committee records, for processing and archiving. We are continuing the process of allocating resources to meet the growing demand for electronic records management of photographs, DVDs, and video and audio recordings.

The Clerk's Office is also the custodian of all art and historical artifacts that compose the House Collection. Earlier this year, following extensive collaboration with the House Historian and his staff, we launched the History, Art & Archives website at [history.house.gov](http://history.house.gov). This new website is another key component of our transparency efforts. The website opens the House's treasury of primary resources to all Americans. The art, artifacts, historical information, primary documents, and research resources that we are now able to make available through this website will be invaluable to researchers and educators around the country.



## **PUBLIC DISCLOSURE SERVICES**

In addition to our efforts to make the House's legislative operations, history, art, and archives more open and accessible to the American people, the Office of the Clerk is charged with administering numerous additional transparency initiatives designed to increase public awareness of and confidence in the legislative process.

### ***Financial Disclosure: Implementation of the STOCK Act***

Over the past year, the Clerk's Office has taken numerous steps to enhance the public availability of financial disclosure reports filed by Members and candidates for Congress. As required by the STOCK Act of 2012, which was signed into law last April, the Clerk's Office made all Member and candidate financial disclosure forms filed in 2012 available on the Clerk's website last fall. These postings include the new Periodic Transaction Report filings mandated by the STOCK Act, which are now filed with the Clerk's Office on an ongoing basis. We will be prepared to meet the next statutory deadline to post employee financial disclosure filings online by April 15, 2013.

The next major requirement under the STOCK Act is for the Clerk's Office to develop and deploy an electronic filing and public disclosure system for all financial disclosure reports filed with the Clerk. That system must allow the public to search, sort, and download data contained in the reports. Our web development team in the Clerk's Office has been working closely with the House Ethics Committee over the past year to obtain substantive and technical requirements for this project, which must be completed this fall under the deadline set in the statute. We are also closely collaborating with our colleagues in the Senate and with the Office of Government Ethics, the office responsible for coordinating implementation of the STOCK Act for the Executive Branch.

### ***Lobbying Disclosure***

In addition to administering the House's financial disclosure system, the Clerk's Office is charged with maintaining an electronic filing and disclosure system for all lobbying registrations, quarterly lobbying activity reports, and semi-annual lobbying contribution reports required by the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995. Our staff administers this filing and public disclosure system on a continuing basis throughout the year. The Office processed nearly 100,000 unique lobby disclosure filings last year.





### ***Gift, Travel, and Additional Public Disclosure Services***

Finally, the Clerk's Office administers the public disclosure process for foreign travel reports and expenditures, gift and travel filings, post-employment notifications, and all other disclosures, as required by law or House Rules, through our Legislative Resource Center. These services aim to provide the American people with a greater insight into the internal operations of the House of Representatives and greater confidence in their elected officials.

### **FY 2014 BUDGET REQUEST**

To fulfill this wide range of responsibilities, the Office of the Clerk relies on our highly professional, diverse, and experienced staff. As we review all of our operations under a zero-based budgeting process, we continuously look for innovative ways to reduce costs without compromising quality. At the same time, we are aware that specific demands for our services will grow in the coming year. We will play a leading role in the ongoing efforts to make the legislative operations of the House more transparent, and we will fulfill our mandate under the STOCK Act to enhance the public accessibility of financial disclosure records. As we do so, we will continue to work diligently to contain costs and be wise stewards of taxpayer dollars. For FY 2014, we are requesting \$24,009,000 to carry out our operations. Assuming enactment of the funding levels in H.R. 933, this is \$2.1 million less than our current budget allocation, an 8.1 percent budget reduction from FY 2013.

I appreciate the opportunity to appear before the Subcommittee today. I am ready to assist you in any way throughout the development of the FY 2014 spending bill for the House, and will be more than happy to answer any questions you may have.

