

Statement of
The Honorable Will Plaster
Chief Administrative Officer
United States House of Representatives
Before the
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Legislative Branch
March 2, 2016

Chairman Graves, Ranking Member Wasserman Schultz and Members of the Subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today on behalf of the entire team of women and men who serve the House in the office of the Chief Administrative Officer.

This is the first time that I have appeared before the Committee and I am quite honored to be here today alongside Clerk of the House Karen Haas and Sergeant at Arms Paul Irving. The close working relationship that the three House officers have fostered in recent years among themselves and with our fellow service providers has been vital in ensuring that the institution is supported effectively and efficiently. I look forward to collaborating with the Committee on this budget request in order to tackle the many issues and challenges facing us in fiscal year 2017, particularly our work to improve the delivery of services to the House community—an effort that is increasingly coordinated across the House officers—and our comprehensive program to protect House IT systems from a persistent and evolving threat.

The FY17 budget request for the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer is \$117,165,000, which is flat with the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2016. This request will support the CAO priorities in information technology and in improving CAO core services such as financial management, acquisitions management, logistics, human resources, and other support services. Within these core services are activities supporting cybersecurity, payroll and payments, mail delivery, food services, broadcasting, human capital, furniture and furnishings.

Although our request is flat, the CAO does anticipate increases for FY17 in personnel, annual maintenance and licensing, house-wide subscriptions and key projects, such as knowledge management. However, we also anticipate savings due to decreases in contractor support, modular furniture installations (the Cannon Renewal Project budget will fund furniture for the renewal project), and project initiatives that will be transitioning from implementation to operational status. As in prior years, this budget request was derived using zero-based budgeting principles. We are confident that by utilizing available funds efficiently and working in concert with our House partners we will be able to meet and exceed the expectations of House Members and staff.

ANNUAL FINANCIAL AUDIT

Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to report that shortly after last year's subcommittee hearing the House received its 17th consecutive clean audit opinion on its financial accounts for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2014. While clean audit opinions won't ever be front page news, they are the result of a tremendous amount of work that involves almost everyone within the CAO. Clean audits confirm that the finances of the House are properly managed in accordance with established standards and guidelines and each year we gain valuable insight from these audits to help us continuously improve our financial management practices.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Cyber Security

The CAO's Information Security Office, in coordination with this Committee and the Committee on House Administration (CHA), will continue to evaluate cyber security threats and risks to the House enterprise network. As part of that effort, we have implemented the following changes in order to increase the overall security posture for the House:

- Approved a new policy to identify and restrict the use of privileged access accounts. This policy reduces risks associated with users with elevated system privileges by requiring them to create separate user accounts and receive targeted training.
- Updated the House's mandatory information security awareness training. The on-line training provides more useful material available in short video segments. The segments allow staff to retain more relevant material when they take the 35-minute course. Member and staff awareness of information security threats and safe IT practices will likely become increasingly important to our overall information security posture in the coming years. We will continue to evaluate our user training in light of evolving threats to maximize the effectiveness of that aspect of our security program.
- Implemented a threat detection system as part of our effort to evolve our secure configuration management program (SCMP). SCMP ensures all systems are maintained in a manner consistent with security best practices. The threat detection system, Tripwire, improves our ability to monitor the operating status of all devices attached to the House network. Further, we are developing House-wide encryption strategies that will reduce risks associated with securing sensitive House data on laptops and portable devices.
- Initiated a bi-annual self-assessment program utilizing a structured set of criteria so the House can empirically measure the effectiveness of our Information Security program. The results from the initial assessment established FY16 House Security Program benchmarks and will serve as the basis for strategy development and prioritization for achieving enterprise information security goals.

- Deployed the National Institute of Standards and Technology Risk Management Framework to provide a structure which comprehensively manages the lifecycle of risks for critical House information systems. This framework focuses on the programmatic, CAO-wide information security requirements that are essential for information security governance across the organization.
- Applied Active Directory Federated Services (ADFS) to allow staff to use their House authentication to access external sites. Currently, ADFS is being used with the 2016 security awareness training, providing secure access to an external website that hosts the training content while using single sign-on to authenticate House staff to the House of Representatives network.

Our cyber security posture evolves and becomes more sophisticated as threats do. At the core is a layered defense and in-depth strategy to alert us of attempts and actual intrusions on the network.

This comprehensive strategy positions the House effectively against advanced threats, but continuous review of technologies, policies, and systems is necessary to ensure our defenses keep up with the ever changing threat environment.

House Technology Task Force

At the direction of the Committee in last year's Legislative Branch Bill, the CAO has taken initial steps toward establishing a House Technology Task Force modeled after the Bulk Data Task Force.

Representatives of the House Officers and Inspector General met on February 17th and are currently developing a charter for the Task Force. The Task Force will identify and report on opportunities to enhance coordination of information technology efforts in the House. Based on the directive established by the Committee, initial meetings with representatives from the House Officers and other offices will be held to formulate the Task Force's short-term and strategic goals and evaluate technical initiatives to accomplish them. The Task Force will report to the Committee every six months, or more frequently if needed.

New Data Center

After years of preparation and close coordination with this Committee, the CAO awarded a contract in 2015 to lease new data center space. Studies supported a new data center outside of the National Capital Region (NCR) instead of renovating the existing facility to enhance security and improve efficiency. It also eliminates the expense to upgrade the existing facility. The state-of-the-art center will be operational in October 2016 and be able to support the House and all other legislative organizations.

Innovation Project

This is a new technology project for FY16 providing funding for emergent innovation projects submitted through the Innovation Center of Excellence. Project business cases will be submitted and evaluated based on established criteria such as efficiencies, cost savings, technological advantages, and customer value.

Identity Access Management

During FY15, we completed a planning initiative on the methodology for implementing an Identity Access Management (IAM) program. This planning initiative was in response to recommendations from both the House Inspector General and the outside auditor that the CAO tighten controls over its privileged or shared accounts related to financial systems. Implementing this type of technology will significantly enhance our security controls around identity management and user access and will close the outstanding audit findings related to privileged users. Future years will leverage the lessons learned from the FY15 planning initiative by establishing an IAM program office and governance framework. Additionally, the CAO will formalize the IAM technology roadmap and evaluate additional technology solutions for implementation.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Budget Planning and Execution

Hyperion Budget and Planning was rolled out to CAO's Office of Budget, Policy and Planning in October 2015. This system will be opened up to all offices who budget on a fiscal year for FY16 execution and FY18 formulation. Preparations are already underway for Phase 2 of the project. Phase 2 will involve a tiered roll-out to an initial pilot group in January 2017 with the intent of ultimately providing Hyperion Budget and Planning to all Member, Committee, and Leadership offices. The long term goal of the project is to replace the need for the Congressional Accounting and Personnel System (CAPS) and to be a central repository for all budget execution and formulation data, creating efficiencies and eliminating the maintenance of external files.

Voucher Processing

In October 2015, the Committee on House Administration (CHA) adopted changes to regulations governing Member spending. Since then, the CAO's Office of Financial Counseling has retired the Travel Subsistence budget object class (BOC) and is coding travel expenses to the specific BOC code. Future improvements include providing the 2016 first quarter Statement of Disbursements (SOD) in a searchable and sortable format available for public download on House.gov.

Asset Management

Proper management of the House's finances requires the accurate accounting of our physical assets from the time they are received to the time they are disposed of. At the recommendation of our auditors, the CAO initiated a comprehensive program in 2015 to implement new processes and procedures for tracking our assets. This program has been realigned within our Logistics and Support division and will be responsible for all aspects of managing the assets of the House, including developing processes and procedures, receiving all assets for the House, managing the assets in our asset-tracking system and then properly disposing of those assets. After the program has been fully implemented within the CAO, we will expand this service to the other House Officers and then ultimately to all House offices.

ACQUISITIONS MANAGEMENT

Food Services

Last August, Sodexo Government Services assumed responsibility for all House food services, including cafeterias, carry outs, in-house catering, and vending.

CAO Acquisitions Management led a two-year competitive procurement process which featured customer surveys, focus groups and site visits to facilities operated by a number of the bidders. For the first time, the panel reviewing and evaluating the proposals included several individuals from outside of the CAO, including a representative from a Member office, to broaden the range of perspectives in the competitive bidding deliberations.

Sodexo has already implemented several changes in our food service locations, including opening a new Subway Cafe in Rayburn. This spring a Dunkin' Donuts/Baskin-Robbins will open in the Longworth House Office Building. Additionally, Sodexo has hired a full-time ambassador to serve as a liaison between the customers of House food services and Sodexo.

LOGISTICS

Transition/New Member Orientation

Preparations for the 115th Congressional Transition are well underway. Nearly all CAO staffers contribute to this effort by preparing and producing online and printed materials and holding briefings for both departing and new Members and their staffs, facilitating Member office moves for returning Members and initiating outreach by the Office of Employee Assistance to departing staffers.

Cannon Renewal/O'Neill Occupancy

The CAO has now moved more than 900 committee and support staff from offices in the Cannon, Longworth, Rayburn, and Ford House Office Buildings because of the Cannon Renewal Project. Of these moves, over 300 staff have moved into the O'Neill Building. Another 500 or more staffers will also move from Cannon in 2016 and 2017.

House Floor Seat Reupholstering Project

Following a tightly-orchestrated schedule around the House's legislative calendar, the CAO continues the rebuilding and reupholstering of more than 400 seats on the floor of the House Chamber. This project will be complete by November 2016.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Privacy Program

At the recommendation of the House Inspector General, the CAO has created an Office of Privacy to ensure the protection of Personally Identifiable Information (PII) in our custody. This office continuously monitors all offices within the CAO to ensure that policies and procedures are appropriately followed to protect the PII of Members, staff and contractors.

During the second half of 2015, the office monitored and coordinated the dissemination of information about the cyber breaches at the Office of Personnel Management, which affected thousands of current and former Members and House staff.

The Office of Privacy will release Privacy Policy and Privacy Statements for internal and external customers in early 2016 and will incorporate privacy statements each time we collect PII. Additionally, we will continue to integrate privacy guidelines throughout the organization, transition to a web-based PII inventory system, provide specialized privacy training in the CAO and work with Acquisitions Management to incorporate PII protections into standard contract clauses.

Office of Employee Assistance

The Office of Employee Assistance (OEA) in collaboration with House Information Resources implemented a new records management solution, Medcom Premier. This replaces their legacy software database Episoft. The new system will enable the OEA to encrypt and secure confidential records of staff utilizing their services.

CLOSING REMARKS

Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Wasserman Schultz, thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. Please be assured that our entire CAO team remains committed to providing House Members and staff with the tools and resources they need to work efficiently, effectively, and securely.

I look forward to working with the Committee and would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.