



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

**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, FY2018**

MAY 17, 2017

Chairman Yoder and Ranking Member Ryan, Members of the Subcommittee: Thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding the operations of the Office of the Clerk.

HOUSE OPERATIONS

The Clerk’s Office provides the procedural assistance and support necessary for the orderly conduct of the official business of the House of Representatives, its Members, and Committees. We work to ensure the integrity of the legislative process while continually seeking to improve public access to House and Committee proceedings.

Support for Legislative Proceedings

The Clerk’s Office supports the legislative process from introduction to engrossment and presentment. The bill clerks process all bills and resolutions when they are introduced. The tally clerks record all Floor votes cast through the Electronic Voting System and manually in the Well of the House, maintain the *House Calendar*, and process all Committee reports filed with the House. The journal clerks produce the constitutionally mandated *Journal of the House of Representatives* and handle all Presidential Messages. When bills and resolutions pass the House, the enrolling clerks prepare the official text for transmission to the Senate or the White House. Along with their more visible duties of announcing pending business on the Floor, the reading clerks deliver bills and messages to the Senate. Our staff is hard at work whenever the House is in session—day or night—supporting the work of the House of Representatives.

In addition to supporting the House’s Floor operations, the Clerk’s Office is responsible for making the proceedings of the House easily accessible by the public and Members alike. The Clerk’s Office hosts the publicly available website, *Bills to be Considered*, at docs.house.gov. This site is the central source for all legislation scheduled to be considered on the Floor each week.

Our staff maintains and updates the online summary of Floor proceedings, including information on pending legislation and votes taken, on our website at clerk.house.gov. The Clerk’s Office also maintains live and archived video of all House Floor proceedings at HouseLive.gov and provides closed-captioning services to ensure that House proceedings are accessible to all. Our official reporters transcribe Floor debate from gavel to gavel. We provide these transcripts along with other legislative data to the Government Publishing Office, which makes them available the next day online and in print in the *Congressional Record*. The Clerk’s Office also makes daily updates to the bill summary information hosted by the Library of Congress at Congress.gov.

Support for Committee Operations

In addition to supporting the legislative work of the House on the Floor, the Clerk’s Office supports the work of House Committees. The official reporters provide reporting services for all Committee markups, hearings, and depositions as well as many investigative interviews. Whereas only one Committee in the 113th Congress was authorized to take depositions, all standing Committees in the 115th Congress are authorized to take depositions. This expanded deposition authority may create additional demand for reporting services.



The House Library provides research services for Committee and Member offices to assist legislative staff with their research needs. Last year the Library launched an electronic portal to provide comprehensive guides to legislative research topics. The portal offers a chat feature that allows D.C. and district office staff to communicate with House librarians during business hours. Our librarians also offer regular training through our partners in the House Learning Center.

Over the past two years, the Clerk's Office has made significant improvements to *Reports Due to Congress*, a document required to be published at the beginning of each session of Congress. This document lists all of the reports that any government agency is required by law to submit to Congress. We have added a new section listing reports with sunset provisions. The improved report will help Committees and Members comply with the Majority Leader's Floor protocols related to reporting requirements. We now link reports received to their corresponding statutory requirements, an enhancement that will greatly improve the Executive Communication search function on LIS.gov. We are working with our partners at the Library of Congress to move this search function from LIS.gov to Congress.gov in the fall with an improved interface and search capability.

The Clerk's Office develops and maintains the Committee Repository website at docs.house.gov. This centralized online portal enables the public to track hearing and markup schedules along with meeting notices, testimony, truth-in-testimony disclosures, opening statements, legislative text and amendments, and recorded votes. The House has made great progress in increasing the transparency of Committee proceedings and the Clerk's Office is proud to support that effort.

Support for Members

The Capitol Service Groups maintain the Lindy Claiborne Boggs Congressional Women's Reading Room, the Members and Family Committee Room, and the Congressional Prayer Room, which are near the House Chamber and provide Members and their families with spaces for rest and reflection.

The Office of House Employment Counsel provides House employing offices with legal counsel and training on employment matters, including family and medical leave, disabilities law, labor standards, workplace safety, and other matters arising under the Congressional Accountability Act.

Operation of Vacant Offices

Under the Rules of the House of Representatives, the Clerk becomes the employing and certifying authority when a vacancy occurs. The Clerk's Office has operated five vacant offices to date this Congress. When a vacancy occurs, we work with the remaining staff to continue the office's operations, carry out constituent services, ensure the integrity of the office's finances and assets, and arrange for the proper disposition of the office's papers. In addition, we immediately review the office's operations to identify costs and services that can be eliminated or curtailed.



ARCHIVES, ART, AND HISTORY OF THE HOUSE

The Office of Art and Archives within the Clerk's Office curates the House Collection of fine art and artifacts, processes House and Committee records and oversees their eventual safe transfer to the National Archives, advises Members on their congressional papers, and provides informational services concerning House's records, art, and history.

Archives

The Clerk's Office is responsible for preserving the House's archived records. Our professional archivists help Committees comply with their archival obligation and help Committees research and retrieve records in their archives. Last Congress we archived more than 2 million new records along with over a terabyte (1,144.5 gigabytes) of electronic records. In addition, archives staff retrieved 385,500 records from the legislative archives for Committees.

In 2016, the Clerk's Office launched a new Records Search feature on our History, Art & Archives website at history.house.gov. The feature showcases a selection of official House records that illustrate the institution's work, its responses to issues of the day, and its relationship with the public and other branches of government. We feature documents from all 50 states, as well as the District of Columbia and the territories, petitions and memorials, correspondence with Members, certificates of election, hearing transcripts, and maps and charts. We pair each record with a brief description that provides context and links to related material.

Art and History

The curatorial staff of the Clerk's Office are responsible for preserving the historical art and artifacts in the House collection and making the collection accessible to the public. A wealth of information is available about the House through our History, Art & Archives website. With sections on the Institution, People, Exhibitions, Collections, Oral History, Education, and Research, the website is a tremendous resource for the general public and educators.

Last month, thanks to the support of this Subcommittee, we opened an exhibition on the first floor of the Capitol marking the centennial of Jeannette Rankin's arrival as the first woman in Congress. To mark this milestone, the History, Art & Archives website includes significant entries on the history of women in Congress.

The Cannon renovations have required our curatorial staff to relocate many works of art from the Cannon building, including the largest painting in the House Collection and several busts that have not been moved in half a century. Our partners with the Architect of the Capitol and the Chief Administrative Office have been very supportive of our efforts to preserve, relocate, and store the artwork by providing staff, equipment, and funds in a timely manner.



PUBLIC DISCLOSURE SERVICES

By statute and the Rules of the House of Representatives, the Clerk's Office is charged with providing public disclosure information that helps preserve the integrity and increase the transparency of the legislative process. Our Legislative Resource Center manages the filing and retention of this information and responds to public inquiries regarding the legislative activities of the current Congress.

Financial Disclosure

The Clerk's Office administers the filing and public publishing of all financial disclosure forms and periodic transaction reports submitted by House Members, Officers, candidates, and senior House staff as well as disclosures filed by employees of the Capitol Police, Library of Congress, Government Publishing Office, Botanic Gardens, and Congressional Budget Office. We maintain the online filing system for these reports and work closely with the Ethics Committee to continue to improve both the filing system and public access to the records on our website.

Lobbying Disclosure

The Clerk's Office continues to enhance the lobbying disclosure filing system in coordination with the Secretary of the Senate, who shares responsibility for administering the filing requirements of the Lobbying Disclosure Act. We make these filings available online in a searchable, sortable, and downloadable format. To ensure compliance with the act, the Office emails reminders to approximately 14,000 registrants before the deadlines and sends follow-up notices after due dates. The Office also sends additional notifications throughout the filing period to keep users informed of filing requirements.

Online Telephone Directory

Last year, our organization released a beta version of the online telephone directory to the House community and the public at directory.house.gov. This mobile-friendly and searchable directory not only improves public access to House offices but also allows us to reduce the printing of House phonebooks. With further upgrades and the support of the congressional community, we will continue to reduce printing of this publication.

PRIORITIES AND BUDGET REQUEST FOR FISCAL YEAR 2018

We appreciate the Subcommittee's ongoing support for the operations of the Office of the Clerk. For the upcoming fiscal year, we respectfully request \$28,421,000 to carry out our existing and new responsibilities to the House. This is a \$2,153,000 increase, which includes funding for the Turner Redstone Data Center, the second phase of our implementation of the comparative print rule, and the purchase of a large capacity color printer. The following priorities are our most significant ongoing and upcoming projects.



Personnel and Training

The Clerk's Office continually evaluates training opportunities for our staff to ensure they align with our mission and goals. As some of our staff near retirement age, we continue to prioritize cross-training to manage changes that result when key personnel leave the organization. Our goal is to keep our exceptional employees motivated by strengthening current skills and helping them acquire new skills. We have established a thorough training plan process to further develop our workforce talent to be able to promote from within and to ensure personnel transitions do not disrupt our operations.

Website Redesign

The Clerk's Office will launch a redesigned website in 2017. The redesigned website will focus on legislative activities with a goal of bringing key legislative information and updates together in one place. We will also launch a new HouseLive, our streaming internet video service, which will add features such as video rewind and closed captioning search and integrate floor summaries into the live broadcast. While the look and feel of the website will be updated, the functionality and Application Program Interface (API) infrastructure supporting the website are the major enhancements. The APIs allow us to improve efficiencies and provide more modern access to data for internal House customers, other Legislative Branch customers, and the public in support of our transparency and accessibility efforts.

Electronic Voting Station Upgrade

The Clerk's Office is actively testing the next generation of electronic voting stations this year. A prototype voting station was delivered early this year. Our team is working with our vendor and performing comprehensive testing to confirm the reliability and dependability that is required. There is still a lot of engineering work and testing to do, but, if all goes well, we could deploy the new stations this year.

Comparative Print Implementation

The Clerk's Office is working with the Office of Legislative Counsel to improve and develop the systems necessary to comply with the new House rule on comparative prints. The new rule, which goes into effect on December 31, requires comparative prints showing proposed changes from current law prior to legislation being considered in the House. The systems we are developing will allow the House to comply with this rule by the end of the year and provide a future path for increased automation and improved usability. We have submitted requests to fund this unplanned project for fiscal year 2017 and 2018 to the Subcommittee.

Turner Redstone Data Center

The Clerk's Office plans to add data center operations in the new Turner Redstone Data Center later this year. We are currently working on a detailed implementation plan and coordinating our efforts with the Chief Administrator's Office.



Congressional Biographical Directory

Congressional Biographical Directory (BioGuide) is a searchable biographical directory of Members of Congress from 1774 to the present. Having launched in 1996, it is also the oldest website still hosted at Congress.gov. Along with the Office of the Historian and in consultation with our Senate partners, we are discussing a complete overhaul of the look, feel, and functionality of the BioGuide website.

Increased Storage for Congressional Records

The Center for Legislative Archives, part of the National Archives, maintains, preserves, and provides public access to archived House records pursuant to House Rules. However, the National Archives is running out of space for congressional records. Last year we secured suitable additional storage space at a Government Publishing Office facility and obtained funding for the initial phase of construction. We expect to occupy the new space in late 2018.

Lobbying Disclosure

We need to begin the process of developing an enhanced web-based lobbying disclosure system to provide the lobbying community with a better means to file individual and bulk reports. We aim to improve the administrative functions of the system to ensure robust filing statistics, search capabilities, and means to approve pending reports. By creating a unique lobbyist identifier, we will be able to synchronize House and Senate notification, approval, reporting, and referral efforts. This enhanced disclosure system is an item that remains on our priority list but continues to be pushed back due to the addition of unforeseen projects and other higher-priority projects.

On-Demand Printing

The Clerk's Office provides printed legislative materials for use on the House Floor and in Committee hearings and for distribution to congressional staff and the public. Our production printers are nearing the end of their lifecycle. New printers will be faster, have improved binding and finishing capabilities, and allow us to reduce our reliance on overstocking materials. Through the year and next, we will focus our efforts on shifting from a warehousing system to an on-demand print and delivery operation. With appropriate funding, we will implement this change in steps and would anticipate completion by fiscal year 2020.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

