

**Statement of Mary B. Mazanec
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**Before the
Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
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Chairman Ryan, Ranking Member Herrera Beutler, and Members of the Subcommittee,

Thank you for the opportunity to present the fiscal 2020 budget request for the Congressional Research Service (CRS). At the outset, I would like to thank the Committee for your support of our fiscal 2019 request. The additional funds you generously provided have enabled CRS to strengthen the research and analytical capacity, which is so critical to our ability to provide Congress with exceptional service. In addition, we continue to make progress in our efforts to modernize CRS's IT systems. As I have noted in the past, this upgrade of our IT infrastructure is an important component in the Service's ongoing efforts to keep pace with the demands of an ever-evolving congressional client. I am also pleased to report that we are ahead of schedule with respect to the public release of non-confidential written products via Congress.gov.

In addition to outlining CRS's budget requirements for the coming year, my goal with today's testimony is to highlight some of the more noteworthy support the Service has provided to Congress during a very busy legislative session and to bring you up-to-date with respect to a number of important initiatives that we have undertaken over the past fiscal year.

SERVICE TO CONGRESS

Serving Congress remains at the core of the Library's mission and CRS plays a critical role in this effort. CRS is proud to serve as Congress's research and analytical arm and embraces its mission: to provide Congress "the highest quality of research, analysis, information, and confidential consultation, to support the exercise of its legislative, representational, and oversight duties." In fiscal 2018, CRS supported Members, committees, and staff in fulfillment of each of their important responsibilities with a broad range of timely assistance, which utilized a variety of formats that best met Congress's needs. CRS experts provided more than 62,000 custom products and services, including confidential memoranda; in-person, telephone, and email consultation; congressional testimony; background products; and other miscellaneous services. The Service produced and maintained approximately 9,000 general distribution products and hosted more than 8,600 congressional participants at its seminars, institutes, and training programs. Between its customized product and service offerings, general

distribution products, seminars and 24/7 online presence, CRS continues to interact, in some way, with virtually all Member and committee offices.

The Service provides expertise in every area of interest to Congress: American law, domestic policy, foreign affairs, government, and science and industry. For example, in fiscal 2018, CRS experts worked closely with lawmakers as they considered legislation to reauthorize the farm bill, the Higher Education Act, the Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness Reauthorization Act, and the Federal Aviation Administration Reauthorization Act. In addition, CRS assisted Members in addressing a variety of issues, such as the confirmation of a new Supreme Court justice, federal emergency-management challenges brought on by multiple natural disasters, and the growing opioid crisis. The Service provided analysis in foreign affairs matters, such as Russia and sanctions policy, North Korea, nuclear and ballistic missile threats, the Iran nuclear agreement, and the U.S. decision to withdraw from it, and a long list of other critical issues. Experts also provided guidance on the legislative process, administrative rulemaking, and the annual appropriations bills. In addition, CRS offered a robust roster of training for congressional staff.

In cooperation with the House, CRS hosted the New Member Seminar from January 4 to 7, 2019 in Williamsburg, Virginia. Seventy Members of Congress attended this policy orientation, which provided critical information and training on legislative and budget process, as well as objective overviews of policy issues such as health care, defense, immigration, cybersecurity, transportation, and global challenges. The seminar also introduced Members of Congress to Library and CRS services that will support their legislative, oversight and representational activities.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

CRS continuously examines its organizational enterprise to ensure it is properly aligned to meet Congress's needs. In fiscal 2018, the Service engaged in strategic and directional planning in coordination with the Library. The CRS directional plan was informed by insightful feedback from congressional users of the Service. In addition, input for the directional plan was solicited from both managers and staff in a variety of venues including: senior management and first-line supervisor meetings, working groups, brown bag lunch dialogues, all-staff meetings, and focus group sessions. The resulting directional plan supports the implementation of the goals and objectives identified in the Library's strategic plan for 2019-2023. The following initiatives illustrate some of the strategic efforts of the Service in 2018:

Public release of CRS Products: Notably this past year, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018 directed the Librarian of Congress, in consultation with the CRS Director, to establish and maintain a public website containing CRS reports. At our last hearing, I reported that CRS started work right away to implement the directive. This early planning enabled the Library to meet the statutory deadline, on Sept. 18, 2018, and launch the public website with over 600 reports, which are now accessible to the public at crsreports.congress.gov. Today, more than

2100 reports are available on the public site, a number that grows steadily as more products are added.

Integrated Research Information System (IRIS): With the initial year of funding provided in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018, CRS, in collaboration with the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO), made progress in the effort to modernize its information technology systems. IRIS will provide an environment that will support CRS's work for Congress in four key areas: information research, policy and data analysis, content creation, and product delivery. The new system will improve efficiency and foster innovation in CRS operations, while continuing to protect the security and confidentiality of congressional data. CRS continues to engage stakeholders through an iterative series of development and implementation phases.

Knowledge Management: CRS embarked on a knowledge management initiative in fiscal 2018. Activities included the development of the CRS Research Portal, which consolidated research materials and documented best practices used by analysts to respond to selected policy issues. By the end of the fiscal year, 18 research sites containing approximately 20,000 documents were added to the portal. Other activities included digitization of critical or one-of-a-kind materials.

The Service also continued initiatives in the areas of human resources management, policies and guidelines, and communications. These efforts have continued in fiscal 2019.

FISCAL 2020 BUDGET REQUEST AND PRIORITIES

The CRS budget request for fiscal 2020 is 121.57 million dollars, a decrease of 4.1 million dollars (or -3.3 percent) from the amount budgeted for fiscal 2019. Almost 85 percent of the requested amount would be dedicated to staff pay and benefits. The requested decrease takes into account a proposed transfer of 8.76 million dollars of appropriated funds from CRS to OCIO to centralize IT operations and personnel within the Library. CRS is requesting no additional funding beyond that which is necessary to cover mandatory pay and price level cost increases.

Now, and moving forward, CRS's priority is to provide objective, nonpartisan, authoritative information and analysis that effectively meets the needs of Congress. As those needs evolve over time, CRS must necessarily adjust the way it executes its mission to ensure continued superior service. Rapid advances in digital technology, coupled with an increasingly diverse and tech-savvy Congress require CRS to adapt its products, services, and operational capabilities to meet the demand for more enhanced and accessible offerings.

Looking forward to fiscal 2020 and beyond, CRS will continue to focus on its goals and priority initiatives to enhance and expand the accessibility of its products and services, and to optimize the use of the Service's resources. CRS will meet the next milestones in modernizing its IT infrastructure as it enters the operational phase of an upgraded content management system and launches new authoring and publishing tools and processes as part of the IRIS project.

Continued progress on this initiative will enable CRS to better meet Congress' expectations for exceptional products and services.

Additionally, CRS will continue to strengthen its research and analytical capabilities to ensure that it is best positioned to provide the requisite mix of skills and expertise across the breadth of public policy areas that Congress will confront in the coming years. With Congress's generous support for this effort in the fiscal 2019 budget, CRS has successfully addressed coverage gaps in a number of the policy areas targeted in its fiscal 2019 request. In fiscal 2020, the Service will continue to bolster its workforce with recruitment of additional expertise and identify areas of potential need as part of its ongoing assessment of resources in light of the changing congressional agenda.

CONCLUSION

On behalf of my colleagues at CRS, I would like to express my appreciation to the Committee for its continued support. The Service appreciates its role as Congress's trusted resource and is committed to providing exceptional research, analysis, and information to meet the needs of every Member and committee. Your steadfast support of CRS's mission has enabled the Service to fulfill this commitment through recent periods of fiscal constraint. As we begin this 116th Congress, CRS looks forward to the Committee's input as we seek to improve products and services and strengthen operational capabilities in our ongoing effort to be Congress's foremost resource for public policy research and analysis.