

Testimony of  
The Honorable William J. Walker  
Sergeant at Arms  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Before  
The Subcommittee on Legislative Branch  
Committee on Appropriations  
April 6, 2022

Good afternoon, Chairman Ryan, Ranking Member Herrera Beutler, and Members of the Appropriations Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch. I appreciate the opportunity to present the Office of the Sergeant at Arms budget request for fiscal year 2023. It is an honor and privilege to serve this great institution and our Nation as Sergeant at Arms (SAA). The guidance and oversight from the Subcommittee has been insightful, candid, and constructive; and it is my expectation that we will forge an even stronger synergistic bond going forward.

As you know, I appeared before this Subcommittee in January and shared my strategic vision relative to the statutory mission of the Sergeant at Arms Office and to thank you for the supplemental appropriation for the United States Capitol Police (USCP). The supplemental was a significant investment to help mitigate the risk and threat environment, and to reduce security vulnerabilities to the Congress.

Before going into my budget overview, I would like to frame the risk environment for the Capitol complex, Members of this body, and the institution as an enterprise. The risk and threat atmosphere, especially for Members has increased significantly over the past year and continues to grow.

This unfortunate circumstance has been confirmed by intelligence information from federal law enforcement agencies and other partners. Their assessment is that threat actors, including Domestic Violent Extremists (DVE), are promoting acts of violence against government organizations and legislators on the Federal, state and local level as well as against law enforcement and public safety organizations, and other government entities.

In view of this growing threat, the Sergeant at Arms Fiscal Year 2023 budget request is \$38,793,000. This request includes \$16,558,000 to fund 168 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) positions plus 14 new FTE for a total of 182 FTE and \$22,235,000 for non-personnel items. The \$11,098,000 increase over the FY 2022 enacted budget is ascribed to additional personnel required to strengthen Sergeant at Arms staffing levels in addition to items essential to enhance the safety and security of this complex, Members, staff and all visitors.

This office has leveraged risk analysis to enhance our situational awareness and enable the Sergeant at Arms staff in partnership with the USCP, to develop comprehensive and seamless operational security plans. Because of the growing threats and directions of interest communications, we continue to focus on the "Five Dimensions" of Member security I noted in previous testimony before this Subcommittee.

These are:

- Member security on Capitol Grounds
- Member residential security
- Member travel security
- Special events in the Members' home districts
- Active threats against Members of Congress

Accordingly, I offer an overview of my FY 2023 budget request, highlighting some of the significant physical and other security measures and strategies that are ongoing or new. As noted, in my January testimony, dynamic security planning must be mission-critical with an integrated focus on a comprehensive security plan for the Congress. Some specific and important security initiatives that should be noted are as follows:

- Replacing Escape Hoods and Victim Rescue Units (VRU) that are at the end of their lifecycle.
- Providing access to a standard security package for Member residences.
- Strengthening the District Office Security Program including security systems installations, mail safety devices and periodic security briefings.
- Increased security awareness and threat mitigation briefings for District Law Enforcement Coordinators (LEC).

- Emphasizing that LECs have the knowledge, skills, abilities, access and credibility to serve as a vital link between Members and their local law enforcement to ensure their security needs are met.
- I recommend that Members consider having former law enforcement professionals serve as LECs in their office.
- Procuring software to support emergency operations, conduct pre-event planning for evacuations, sheltering and specified internal relocation drills.
- Continuing the implementation of the Joint Audible Warning System (JAWS) being developed collaboratively with the Capitol Police Board and the USCP to replace the outdated annunciator system which will enhance the life safety notification system for the House.
- Continuing contracted services and rehired annuitants with security subject matter expertise to provide greater capability and capacity to effectively address the executive protection, intelligence, and special event security responsibilities of the Sergeant at Arms.
- The hiring of additional Sergeant at Arms staff to increase effectiveness in the following Sergeant at Arms divisions: Police Services, Emergency Management, Parking Security and Information Services.

As you may be aware, many Members receive threats and unusual direction of interest communications that understandably raise concerns for the Members, their families, and staff. The number of threatening communications has dramatically increased over the past several years and these threats have become more visceral and violent. For example, since January 2022 to date, there have been 1,811 threatening communications against Members of Congress. Furthermore in 2021, there were 9,625 investigations related to threatening communications against Members.

Accordingly, my office, specifically the Police Services Division, continues to proactively interface with Member offices to coordinate security for special events that take place off Capitol grounds including the Washington, D.C. area, their districts, or across the country. In 2021, my Police Services staff along with the USCP conducted 51 security awareness briefings for Member offices.

Since January 2022, Police Services has conducted 5 security awareness briefings. In 2021, Police Services' had 6,446 interactions with Member district offices and have 956 interactions to date this year. Accordingly, I am asking for six new FTEs

to optimize this critically important division and better provide services to Members in both Washington, D.C. and in their districts.

When a Member office desires law enforcement support for an event, the Sergeant at Arms requests that USCP provide a security assessment. If the USCP security assessment determines that protection is warranted, then we work collaboratively with the USCP or other Federal, state and local law enforcement partners to ensure the protection is provided. Protective services can range from a notification to local law enforcement, to a USCP executive protection deployment.

My office will continue to coordinate with security experts, intelligence professionals, and leverage physical security counter measures to develop and maintain an optimal technical and operational security posture for the Capitol. These important physical and other security efforts continue to be coordinated with the AOC, the Senate Sergeant at Arms, the Chief of Police, as well as the committees of jurisdiction.

Lastly, Sergeant at Arms' FY 2023 budget request continues to support funding for staff travel, including advanced operational planning and other large-scale off-campus events attended by Members of Congress. Funding will continue to provide critical job-specific training for Sergeant at Arms staff in the areas of leadership and management, professional development, customer service, information technology, and emergency preparedness. Funding will continue to cover communication services for all divisions of the Sergeant at Arms, as well as general office printing, including printing of emergency preparedness brochures and District office security training materials.

In closing, the Sergeant at Arms' FY 2023 budget request has been prepared in the spirit of zero-based budgeting, without jeopardizing mission-critical services provided to the House community. Thank you once again for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am profoundly grateful for the Committee's unwavering support of our sincere efforts to preserve the delicate balance between necessary security measures and open access to the Capitol complex. Finally, let me thank my Sergeant at Arms staff for their hard work and commitment to excellence. Along with the brave men and women of the USCP, other law enforcement and

security professionals, they sacrifice daily to protect the citadel of democracy. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.