

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 2023 budget request for the Congressional Research Service (CRS). I would like to thank the Committee for your support of our fiscal 2022 request.

My testimony today will outline CRS's budget requirements for the coming fiscal year, including the need for additional resources to advance the Service's IT modernization efforts. In addition, I will highlight some of the noteworthy support CRS provided to Congress during fiscal 2021, and bring the Committee up-to-date on developments related to a number of our strategic initiatives.

SERVICE TO CONGRESS

As we begin the restoration of onsite operations, I want to reaffirm CRS's commitment to 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." Last year, I was proud to report on the resilience and dedication of CRS staff in fulfilling this important responsibility while overcoming the many challenges presented by the pandemic. As another year has passed under these difficult circumstances, CRS's determination to carry out its mission endures. CRS prides itself on providing timely and authoritative information, research, and analysis for its sole client, the U.S. Congress. Recent examples of our responsiveness include products and services on the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the Supreme Court nomination of Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson.

During fiscal 2021, CRS experts provided extensive research and analytical support on a variety of issues before Congress including border security; climate change; cybersecurity; federal disaster relief and emergency management; access to digital broadband technology; proposals to create an Advanced Research Projects Agency for health; tax policy; immigration; and the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan. Analysts and legislative attorneys assisted Congress in its consideration of the many issues and programs, proposed as part of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 and the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022. With respect to COVID-19, CRS provided consultation and analysis on the fiscal response to the pandemic, legal issues presented by vaccination requirements, PPE production and distribution, and liability issues related to the manufacture and distribution of vaccines. In addition, CRS staff continued to provide guidance on the legislative process, congressional oversight, and the annual appropriations bills.

In fiscal 2021, the Service produced over 90 videos and podcasts featuring CRS analysts and legislative attorneys discussing a host of topics including: the Supreme Court's recent term; federal research and development funding; regulatory issues in the energy sector; capital markets

and securities regulation; military readiness; and federal disaster assistance programs. CRS also continued its offering of seminars and programs for congressional staff, including sessions on Understanding Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI); Law Enforcement Use of Facial Recognition Technology; the Federal Law Update series; and numerous programs addressing military and defense-related issues.

In total during fiscal 2021, CRS experts responded to over 71,000 congressional requests; prepared over 1,100 new products; updated over 2,200 existing products; and conducted 273 seminars that were attended by approximately 13,300 congressional participants. In addition, CRS information specialists completed 250 Geographical Information System (GIS) projects, incorporating visualized geographical data in a variety of CRS products. As in previous years, the Service provided support to almost every Member and committee office through the provision of its products and services.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

CRS continues to work toward achieving the goals and objectives identified in its 2019-2023 Directional Plan and has begun the development of its strategic goals and objectives for the next strategic planning cycle. The following is a summary of the Service's progress during fiscal 2021 in advancing some of the key initiatives undertaken to accomplish the goals in its current directional plan.

Knowledge Management

CRS is developing and implementing strategies to manage, preserve, and capture the institutional knowledge that it relies upon to provide exceptional service to Congress. The Service utilizes its Research Portal as a hub for digital resources, to provide staff with quick and easy access to information needed to research, analyze and advise on legislative issues. The Research Portal has been particularly useful during the COVID-19 pandemic, while most CRS staff have been working remotely. In addition, CRS is engaging in efforts to ensure the capture and timely transfer of the tacit knowledge held by senior analysts, attorneys, and information professionals. Activities to facilitate the sharing of information, knowledge, and best practices have enabled new staff to learn from the experience of their colleagues. In fiscal 2021, CRS established a Knowledge Management Advisory Group to work closely with the research divisions and offices on knowledge management and to develop plans for the preservation of knowledge. This fiscal year, CRS will be implementing various aspects of its information resource instructional program providing our staff with best practices on training techniques such as adult learning and virtual instruction, to enhance our audiences' training experience.

IT Modernization/Integrated Research and Information Systems (IRIS)

Robust information technology is a critical and indispensable tool in today's workplace. To that end, CRS continues to work with the Library's Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) to modernize its IT infrastructure with the deployment of new tools and software to enhance support to congressional stakeholders. The Integrated Research and Information System (IRIS) initiative is a multi-year effort to update the Service's mission-specific information technology to provide CRS staff with the best resources to create and deliver products and services to Congress. CRS and OCIO are currently executing several major work streams to include CRS.gov website redesign, taxonomy and enterprise search, authoring and document management, as well as the Text Analysis Program (TAP) for supporting bill summaries and bill

comparisons. Technical solutions have been adapted to maintain alignment with Library and legislative branch cloud strategies. Projects are currently proceeding consistent with contractual requirements, schedules, and resources and are being informed by both internal CRS staff as well as our congressional stakeholders. These efforts are essential to modernizing CRS mission critical applications to achieve the Library’s “digital first” strategy and meet the evolving needs of Congress.

Congress.gov

In fiscal 2021, CRS partnered with OCIO to continue to actively engage with House Clerk and Secretary of the Senate data partners to modernize legislative data interchanges. Replacing legacy data processing workflows with new data interchanges will better safeguard congressional data. Enhancements to Congress.gov that will improve access to accurate, timely, and complete legislative information include: the first “Century of Lawmaking” migration (adding more than 33,000 bills and resolutions dating from 1799-1873); searchable law texts dating from 1951; searchable Congressional Record dating from the 1900s; improved committee hearing announcements and transcript access; and the creation of an on-demand, searchable Help Center. CRS and our Library colleagues are appreciative of the ongoing high-performing partnerships with House, Senate, and GPO colleagues as legislative data workflows, tools, and standards continue to be modernized through collaborative efforts.

Constitution of the United States of America: Analysis and Interpretation (CONAN) Modernization

Known officially as the “Constitution of the United States of America: Analysis and Interpretation,” CONAN serves as the official record of the U.S. Constitution for Congress. In 2019, CRS collaborated with OCIO and the Law Library to introduce a new website for CONAN: [constitution.congress.gov](https://www.constitution.congress.gov). The new site features hundreds of pages of updated constitutional analysis and content. In fiscal 2021, CRS legislative attorneys have continued to provide comprehensive analysis of the Supreme Court’s jurisprudence as it relates to every provision of the U.S. Constitution, including the implications of recently decided cases. CRS legislative attorneys have also been preparing the print decennial 2022 edition of CONAN. Covering Supreme Court interpretations of the Constitution through the Court’s October 2021 term, the decennial 2022 edition will feature a revised format designed to integrate the print version of CONAN with its digital counterpart at www.constitution.congress.gov. Since the launch of the public website in 2019, CONAN has received over seven million unique visitors to the site and its pages have been viewed over seventeen million times.

Improving Recruitment and Retention of a Diverse and Productive Workforce

CRS continues to recruit, retain, and professionally develop a diverse, highly skilled workforce to meet the evolving needs of Congress. Specific goals for diversity and inclusion are identified in the CRS Operations Plan around recruitment, training, and communications. Updates on diversity and inclusion efforts are communicated to staff through messages from leadership, and CRS’s staff newsletter.

The Service has developed and executed a recruitment plan for merit selection positions that includes outreach to potential applicants from underrepresented groups. During fiscal year 2021, CRS participated in 42 recruitment events many of which were sponsored by minority-serving institutions and schools or organizations with a focus on underrepresented groups and has

participated in 25 of such events thus far in fiscal 2022. The Service also supported a variety of paid summer internship opportunities through our Student Diversity and Inclusion Internship Program. To inform future efforts, CRS has engaged with Texas A&M University's Bush School of Government on a capstone project to research strategies for improving the recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce and is working with other Library of Congress offices to conduct a barrier analysis focused on the CRS workforce.

CRS continues to offer training opportunities for leadership, writing and presentation skills and has developed customized statistics training to support staff professional development. The Service also continues to host programs open to all staff and supervisors, aimed at fostering a more inclusive and respectful workplace such as "Connecting with Respect"; "Microaggressions in Everyday Life"; "Anti-Harassment Training"; and "Embracing Allyship."

FISCAL 2023 BUDGET REQUEST AND PRIORITIES

The CRS budget request for fiscal 2023 is 132.600 million dollars, an increase of 3.494 million dollars (or 2.7 percent) from the amount previously appropriated. Included in the budget request is 5.326 million dollars for mandatory pay related and price level increases, a program increase of 2.169 million dollars and 8 FTEs, and a 4 million dollar non-recur for the Integrated Research Information Systems (IRIS) initiative. Almost 90 percent of the requested appropriation would be dedicated to staff pay and benefits.

In addition, planning is underway for the January 2023 New Member Seminar. CRS is looking forward to greeting the freshman class of the 118th Congress, particularly in light of the program's hiatus in 2021 due to the pandemic.

As noted, IRIS promises to provide a secure, reliable IT environment to support CRS's work for Congress in four key areas: information research, policy and data analysis, content creation, and product delivery. With culmination of the initiative scheduled for fiscal 2023, additional resources will be needed to support the continuous development and sustainment of CRS's newly modernized IT systems. In a joint request with OCIO, CRS is requesting 2.169 million dollars, primarily to hire 8 FTE positions that will support IRIS's implementation and maintenance.

Looking forward to fiscal 2023, CRS will continue to work with OCIO to deploy new IT tools that will enhance its ability to deliver timely, authoritative information and analysis and provide innovative product and service offerings that meet the needs of an ever evolving Congress.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Herrera Beutler and Members of the Subcommittee, on behalf of my colleagues at CRS, I would like to express my appreciation to the Committee for your continued support. CRS greatly values its role in support of the important work of Congress. Each day, the Service strives to carry out its mandate to provide Congress with timely, authoritative, non-partisan, and objective support to inform the legislative debate. Thank you for your consideration of our fiscal 2023 request.