

**STATEMENT BEFORE THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH
ON THE OFFICE OF THE CLERK FY 2026 BUDGET REQUEST**

The Honorable Kevin F. McCumber, Clerk of the U.S. House of Representatives

April 2, 2025

Chairman Valadao, Ranking Member Espallat, and Members of the Subcommittee:

I am extremely proud to testify on behalf of the Office of the Clerk's 222 staff, whose more than 2,500 years of service to this institution are a testament to their dedication and true commitment to public service.

Thank you for your ongoing support for our Office and for the opportunity to testify about our operations and fiscal year 2026 budget request.

To put the bottom line up front, we respectfully request \$48,992,000 for fiscal year 2026, an 18.18 percent increase above the fiscal year 2025 enacted funding level. There are several reasons for this increase. First, this increase reflects our accumulating needs during the past two years as we have been operating under fiscal year 2024 levels due to a continuing resolution. Second, this level of funding supports our most valuable asset, our staff, through longevities and cost-of-living adjustments. In addition, it supports funding for 11 new positions, the result of a staffing needs assessment conducted over the last year to ensure we can continue to execute our evolving mission. Six of these new positions will support our growing technology portfolio, which includes our modernization initiatives; four will support an increase in Committee field hearings; and one will support our additional administrative needs. Finally, our Legislative Information Management System (LIMS) redevelopment and other modernization projects necessitate the next largest increase to our request. Absent the inclusion of these modernization efforts, our budget request is just 1.45 percent above our fiscal year 2025 enacted level. Our request enables us to continue these projects, some of which received initial funding from the House's Modernization Initiatives Account, uninterrupted and to meet the deadlines as prioritized. We are able to keep this request for necessary funding low due to significant efforts to identify savings and find efficiencies, including renegotiating contracts and locking in long-term pricing for recurring nondiscretionary services, all without sacrificing mission readiness.

Eighty percent of the requested amount supports operational activities and mandated projects, including closed captioning and stenographic reporting contracts, salaries, and technology to carry out our existing and added responsibilities. Specifically, personnel expenses for 255 full-time equivalent positions account for \$35,376,000 of our fiscal year 2026 request. Critically, support for our projects accounts for more than \$7,209,000 of our request. These projects include business continuity and disaster recovery activities and required maintenance of the Electronic Voting System (EVS). Our request funds refinement of the Comparative Print Suite (compare.house.gov) and the eHopper (eHopper.house.gov) and allows us to continue our work on LIMS redevelopment and modernization initiatives including the centralized Committee portal, collaborative legislative drafting tools, lobbying disclosure modernization, the Central Legislative Index, the House Calendar, the Floor Action Reporting System (FARS), and the Senate Action Reporting System.

The remaining twenty percent of the request addresses nonpersonnel expenses, including training, equipment, software maintenance and warranties, nontechnology contractor support, and contracts for activities such as curation and exhibition developments.

Your continued investment in our Office supports specialized, professional staff across nine divisions, the technology at the backbone of the legislative process, and the House's ongoing modernization efforts. It also enables us to provide information to the public about the legislative process, support the House's operations, assist Members in fulfilling many of their statutory and constitutional responsibilities, and work to preserve this institution's history, art, and artifacts.

As you can see, our work is wide-ranging and interdivisional, but I would like to focus on projects and personnel that support three main areas: (1) modernizing the legislative process; (2) providing transparency and public disclosure; and (3) supporting Members and the institution.

MODERNIZING THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

The Office plays a vital role in the House's daily legislative activities. We facilitate House proceedings; operate the EVS; produce the constitutionally mandated *House Journal*; transcribe Floor proceedings for the *Congressional Record* and hearings and depositions for Committees; process submissions of legislative documents; oversee the recording of Roll Call Votes; maintain Chamber technology and provide streaming video; prepare messages to the Senate about legislation that has passed the House; read bills, resolutions, amendments, motions, and presidential messages on the Floor; and make legislative activity updates publicly available via the Office of the Clerk website (clerk.house.gov).

During the 118th Congress, we processed 12,550 bills for introduction—an 8.7 percent increase over the 117th Congress. We manually entered the names of 166,806 cosponsors. We recorded 1,241 Roll Call Votes, supported 1,292 hours of legislative activity, and transcribed, proofread, and edited 14,471 pages of Floor proceedings for inclusion in the *Congressional Record*. Further, we assisted Committees by supporting 2,676 meetings, depositions, transcribed interviews, and classified briefings, and transcribing 266,668 pages of Committee activity.

I would like to highlight a few of our products and projects designed to improve the House's operations. These plans build upon our earlier successes and reinforce our commitment to engaging with users to refine our tools and deliver new features.

eHopper

Implemented in 2020, the eHopper remains the primary submission method for legislative documents. Last year the eHopper accounted for 94 percent of bill submissions. We continue to release new features to increase efficiency for House staff making submissions and Clerk staff processing documents. In February 2024, we deployed features that allow House staff to submit cosponsors with just a few clicks. We subsequently integrated eCosponsor forms into our LIMS application to save Bill Clerks from manually processing hundreds of thousands of cosponsors each Congress. On March 21 of this year, we added a feature to integrate Constitutional Authority

Statements as well. These two updates improve the quality of submissions and move legislative activities toward data-driven workflows.

Comparative Print Suite

We continue to improve the Comparative Print Suite, a set of applications that displays legislative text changes in context, including how a bill changes law and how two versions of legislative text differ. These features allow advanced users to see how an amendment changes underlying bill text and to compare selected provisions in a measure to a bill. We continue to partner with the Congressional Staff Academy to conduct on-demand training for House staff to learn how to use the tool and to gain access to additional features.

In 2024 we welcomed Senate users. We are collaborating with a group of pre-pilot participants and the Secretary of the Senate to ensure a smooth launch. Recently, the Senate gave security approvals to enable general access in the Senate. This will allow us to expand beyond the initial pilot group in coordination with our Senate colleagues.

Legislative Information Management System

LIMS is a mission-critical system that we use to manage House legislative operations, record legislative activities, and exchange data with our legislative branch partners. Nearly all House legislative activities are recorded in LIMS.

Our fiscal year 2025 request included funding for the next phase of the LIMS modernization, which addresses bill introductions (the Bill Briefs module), FARS, and the Member Information System. We continue to deliver new capabilities incrementally and transition users and processes to the modernized LIMS.

In fiscal year 2026, we will continue transitioning activities from the legacy system. We aim to perform all change of Congress activities for the 120th Congress in the modernized LIMS. We will need to continue using the legacy system beyond January 2027, and we anticipate that this will require funding at the current level before we can retire it. It is important to note that we are implementing significant process improvements and efficiency gains throughout this overhaul.

Centralized Committee Portal

Based on initial recommendations from the Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress to provide Committee votes as data, we undertook an effort to provide a modern platform for Committee staff to complete their common tasks. Using Modernization Initiatives Account funding, we began creating a Committee portal application that can be used to track Committee referrals, update Committee membership, and collect vote tally sheets as data for publishing on the U.S. House of Representatives Committee Repository (docs.house.gov/Committee). We anticipate initial delivery in the second quarter of 2025, with a pilot rollout in May. The portal will eventually feature additional capabilities, including improved integration with Committee verification processes, the ability to publish meetings on the Committee

Repository, and a meeting scheduler that interfaces with the Deconflict Committee Scheduler.

Collaborative Legislative Drafting

During the 118th Congress, the Offices of the Clerk and the Legislative Counsel worked with this Subcommittee and the Committee on House Administration's Modernization Subcommittee to secure funding from the Modernization Initiatives Account to undertake an extensive study of the current practices in legislative drafting in the House. This study is intended to examine challenges in drafting, collaboration, and any other pain points in the legislative drafting ecosystem.

Our fiscal year 2026 request for \$1,500,000 is to support the follow-on development effort and software licensing anticipated following the completion of the study to improve legislative drafting tools and enhance collaborative drafting among Leadership, Members, Committees, and the House Office of Legislative Counsel.

PROVIDING TRANSPARENCY AND PUBLIC DISCLOSURE

In addition to supporting the legislative process, we provide information to the public and process, publish, and produce numerous required disclosures. For example, during 2024, Legislative Resource Center staff assisted more than 7,000 people by phone, and the House Library disseminated more than 13,000 documents and answered more than 11,500 in-person, phone, and email reference questions.

Other transparency efforts include those required by law, such as the public disclosure of gift travel (2,209 documents published in 2024) and official foreign travel (150 documents published); financial disclosures (4,035 processed and published online) and periodic transaction reports (2,188 processed and published online); lobbying disclosures (117,711 forms processed and published online), new lobbyist registrations (3,950), and registration amendments (454).

As the Subcommittee is aware, we are actively working with the Senate to modernize and harmonize the chambers' lobbying disclosure systems. Together, we created the Lobbying Disclosure Act Executive Decision Board, which meets monthly and has organized a team to develop a new system. The House and the Senate have decided on the general development framework and the use of an identity management platform to enable unique lobbyist identifiers. The new system will be built on top of the Senate's existing framework, which was upgraded in 2023. We plan to begin the development phase later this month with the House providing two contractors for software engineering support and licensing of identity verification services. We will continue to ensure all tasks and outcomes align with the House's needs and requirements. These upgrades will significantly improve the user experience, provide more efficient processing and automation, integrate the chambers' systems, and allow for greater transparency to the public. As mentioned last year, the new system will solve the issue of duplicate accounts and meet the request of assigning unique identifiers to lobbyists.

SUPPORTING MEMBERS AND THE INSTITUTION

We support Members and the institution in myriad ways. For example, during the 118th Congress, we conducted 172 required Workplace Rights and Responsibilities training sessions for Members, provided support for 34 Speaker-led ceremonial events, transferred more than 35 terabytes of electronic records to the National Archives and Records Administration, and fulfilled thousands of stationery orders and franked envelope requests.

We successfully completed our transition to the 119th Congress, which required the efforts of dozens of our staff and coordination with our institutional partners during New Member Orientation and on Opening Day. Our congressional transition functions resulted in a reduction in paperwork new Members were asked to complete and required new Members to only sit for one photo, not two, which was shared with institutional offices for official use. We worked with state election officials to review and verify Certificates of Election and in turn to prepare the official roll of the House. We are currently holding after-action meetings with staff to learn what went right and what we can improve when we begin planning anew for this biennial effort.

Included in our 119th Congress planning efforts was a discussion about potential outcomes of the upcoming presidential election should the House be required to elect the President in a contingent election. As you know, Article II, Section 1, Clause 3, of the Constitution specifies the House chooses the President in the event of a tie or if no person receives a majority of electoral votes cast, with each state getting one vote. While the House would determine the particulars, each state with two or more Representatives would likely need a ballot box to collect the votes of its Representatives to determine which candidate would receive the state's single vote. Beginning last spring, we worked with the Chief Administrative Officer's furniture team to design and build custom boxes for each state at no outside cost, several of which I brought with me today.

Along with preparing for the future, many of our staff support efforts to preserve the House's history, art, and archives. Last year, we moved 640 pieces of art and published 684 open-access, downloadable images from the House Collection on the History, Art & Archives website (history.house.gov), making the House's treasures more accessible to Members, staff, and constituents. Our curatorial staff seek important additions to the Collection, which in 2024 included donations that range from an 1830s oil portrait of a House Chaplain to Speaker Joe Cannon's silver walking stick to a prank-loving House Page's sixty-year-old bottle of "Dome Polish."

I want to take a moment to thank the Clerk team, whose work, day in and day out, exemplifies our mission to provide the procedural support necessary for the orderly conduct of the House's official business.

Chairman Valadao, Ranking Member Espallat, and Subcommittee Members, the Office of the Clerk is committed to ensuring faithful stewardship of taxpayer dollars as we serve this great institution. Thank you again for your continued support and for the opportunity to testify. I welcome your questions.