



OFFICE OF THE SERGEANT AT ARMS

**Statement Before the Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch
Committee on House Appropriations**

FY 2026 Budget Submission

The Honorable William P. McFarland
Sergeant at Arms | April 2, 2025



Opening

Good morning Chairman Valadao, Ranking Member Espaillat, and Members of the Committee. I appreciate the invitation to appear before you today to testify in support of the fiscal year (FY) 2026 budget request for the Office of the Sergeant at Arms (SAA), which totals \$40,606,000 and 206 full-time equivalents (FTEs); an increase of \$6.5 million, or 18.94% and 0 FTEs from the FY 2025 enacted level, and a modest 4.7% increase over the FY 2024 enacted budget of \$38,793,000.

I would like to thank the Committee for its support in funding the SAA at its FY 2025 requested level. I appreciate the partnership that we've had over the past two years, and I look forward to our continued work together to ensure the safety and security of the Capitol Complex, Members of Congress, their staffs, and visitors in both Washington, D.C. and in their districts. As you noted last week Chairman Valadao, "It is when we all work together that we can ensure the greatest level of safety for all of us."

When I began as Sergeant at Arms two years ago, I shared with this Committee a Strategic Plan to guide our organization for the 118th Congress. Since then, we've made significant strides in investing in our people and providing premier and innovative services to the Congressional community. While I will highlight a few of our past accomplishments during my testimony today, I also know our job is never finished. To continue meeting the evolving needs of the House, we have recently updated our Strategic Plan to set our direction for the 119th Congress.

This revised Strategic Plan builds directly on the tremendous progress we've made over the past two years. It clearly defines our Vision, Values and Strategic Goals and reaffirms our core mission. The Plan provides the foundation against which all of our efforts in the 119th Congress, including this FY 2026 budget request, are aligned. By rooting every initiative in this framework, we ensure all of our resources are most efficiently directed toward our Strategic Goals and that my team is aligned to accomplish our mission.

Cultivate Excellence In People

Our first Strategic Goal for this Congress continues to reflect our dedication to the organization's most important asset—our people. We strive to attract, empower, and develop a respected, dynamic workforce through a high-standard culture of trust and respect.

Since my last appearance before this Committee, the SAA has implemented a revised performance management process in which employees write performance objectives aligned to the SAA strategic plan. This revised performance management process empowers employees to craft their own performance goals and take ownership not only of their day-to-day roles and responsibilities, but also their career growth.



We've also continued to invest in our staff by prioritizing employee training. This includes supporting staff in attending industry training courses and conferences that align with their job responsibilities and individual areas of interest, helping them hone specialized skillsets and stay current with best practices. In addition, we've partnered with an industry-leading leadership development firm to deliver recurring leadership training across all levels of the organization—reinforcing our value of Universal Leadership and ensuring every employee is equipped to lead with purpose, no matter their role.

Included in the FY 2026 budget request, the SAA is requesting \$22.6 million in support of 206 FTEs. In addition to base salaries, this figure includes a projected cost of living adjustment (COLA), longevity increases, and \$200,000 for meritorious increases to be awarded as part of SAA's new performance management program. Additionally, included as part of the non-personnel request, the SAA is requesting \$345,000 to continue providing training and professional development opportunities and investments in the workforce.

Exceed Service Expectations

The next Strategic Goal for this Congress I would like to highlight is centered on our service to the Congressional community. We strive to ensure exceptional, secure, and positive experiences by strengthening the culture of accountability and building strong relationships. Put simply, we seek to exceed the expectations you have of us.

During the last Congress, we partnered with a premier hospitality customer service training organization to improve front line customer service and have received positive feedback from Members and staff in this area. Additionally, we have focused on ensuring our communications are clear, consistent, and professional. To that end, we've implemented new branding procedures that standardize the look and feel of outreach across the organization and continue to expand the services available in the SAA Service Center in Longworth to provide Members and staff a one-stop-shop to engage with the Office of the SAA. And in partnership with your committee, the Architect of the Capitol (AOC) and U.S. Capitol Police (USCP), we have made significant strides with new hardened doors, enhancing the physical security of the building while maintaining its historic integrity.

Included in the budget request is \$530,000 to continue contractor support services and end-user enhancements to the Secure Member Portal which the SAA launched in March 2024. This Portal serves as a resource to allow Member offices to request and track security services coordinated through the SAA. The FY 2026 budget request includes funds for system refinements to improve internal workflows and to streamline reporting which I believe will have a positive impact on our service delivery. Based on stakeholder feedback and other best practices, funds will be used to identify, plan, and implement end-user enhancements to system functionality and appearances. Additionally, funds will be used to advance the portal's



development, integration, and expansion using a scalable architecture plan to accommodate future forms and functionality as the SAA requires.

Also included in the budget request is funding for the SAA to continue to provide in-person Security Awareness Briefings in Members' districts. In conjunction with USCP, Security Awareness Briefings provide a security overview for Members and staff on how to respond to typical security issues that an office encounters, and includes best practices for district office security, residential security, and for hosting and attending events in their district. In 2024, SAA staff provided 147 Security Awareness Briefings with Congressional and law enforcement partners around the country. The FY 2026 budget request includes \$115,000 for Security Awareness Briefings and \$60,000 for the District Security Service Center to conduct site visits to district offices to provide information on security systems, mail hoods, and other security functions.

Additionally, in response to direction from this Committee, the FY 2026 budget request includes \$1.5 million for the annual life cycling of 20% of the House's inventory of escape hoods used for respiratory protection during a HAZMAT incident or an airborne agent attack. The annual life cycling of 20% of escape hoods will ensure that no hoods are in use past their manufacture-recommended expiration date and stabilize annual budget requests.

Innovate Ahead

Our final Strategic Goal for this Congress accounts for the need for our organization to forecast and continuously adapt to the needs of the Congressional community. We strive to leverage technology and adaptive processes to drive innovation and proactively anticipate evolving needs.

The budget request includes \$1.9 million for the expansion of a digital communication tool/rapid alert mobile duress system for Members, which is in response to direction received from this Committee in FY 2022. In FY 2024, the SAA issued a Request for Quote (RFQ) and a purchase order for a 90-day mobile duress pilot program. The pilot program was extended in FY 2025 to allow for additional time to test capabilities that were not available during the original 90-day pilot. The funds requested in FY 2026 will support the acquisition, setup, and management of a mobile duress capability for Members to contact emergency responders during a serious security situation.

The budget request includes \$310,000 for an artificial intelligence tool used to generate relevant and actionable alerts and real-time event monitoring when incidents around the country occur. To date, we have utilized this tool to monitor real-time alerts on an array of topics, including weather events, national security advisories, protests, police activity, and Member mentions across the 1.1 million publicly available data sources. We've leveraged this tool in the development of a SAA Common Operating Picture, and this software has been used



in support of recent events to include the 2024 Presidential Nominating Conventions, the 2025 Inauguration, and the March 2025 Presidential Address to Congress. The FY 2026 request supports SAA's expansion of its operations by geofencing key locations, such as Member district offices, so that SAA has a greater awareness of what incidents may be occurring within a predetermined radius of these key locations and can proactively reach out to your staff to see if support is needed.

The budget request includes \$112,000 for real-time parking availability software, fleet management software, and invests in an upgrade to the current parking management software. Since the 114th Congress, Parking Security has used the same Parking Asset Management (PAM) database for permit issuance, renewals, parking space management, enforcement, and reporting. PAM has run its course over the past decade, and we look to identify and acquire a more robust database that harnesses similar features but also integrates with existing systems and offers an easy-to-use interface for both customers and administrators, to include a mobile capability. Further, the investment in a real-time parking availability software will modernize SAA's management of parking security.

Closing

In closing, the FY 2026 SAA budget request has been prepared in the spirit of zero-based budgeting, remaining fiscally responsible without jeopardizing mission-critical services provided to the House community. For FY 2026, the Office of the SAA requests a total of \$40,606,000. This includes \$22,590,000 for personnel expenses to fund 206 FTEs, as well as \$18,016,000 for non-personnel items.

My office is fully committed to continue delivering top-tier, non-partisan security services for our esteemed Members, their families, and staff. In my first Congress as the Sergeant at Arms, I placed a renewed focus in executing the fundamentals. This Congress we are fixated on taking the organization to the next level in terms of technology and modernization while still striving for excellence in executing the fundamentals. We recognize the immense responsibility entrusted to us and are dedicated to upholding the highest standards of professionalism and efficiency.

I look forward to working with this Committee and my fellow House Officers here today, and I welcome any questions you may have.