



Office of the

**CHIEF
ADMINISTRATIVE
OFFICER**

The Office of the Chief
Administrative Officer Fiscal Year
2026 Budget Request

The Honorable Catherine L. Szpindor

Chief Administrative Officer

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NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED BY THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

The Office of the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) of the U.S. House of Representatives appreciates the opportunity to present its Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26) budget totaling \$243,184,000 to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Legislative Branch led by Chairman Valadao and Ranking Member Espallat.

Since FY23, the CAO has operated at the same funding level. During that time, the cost of House-purchased software and hardware increased between 30-50%. Operating with a flat-lined budget despite increasing operational costs requires the CAO to use funding originally allocated for its low to medium priority projects and programs to support its high-priority projects and programs. For the past two fiscal years, the CAO has managed to operate without House service reductions or disruptions. In fact, on the contrary, the CAO managed to achieve notable service improvements. However, for FY26, there are new cost requirements that cannot be deferred nor offset by funding from low-priority projects, and failing to adequately fund them would jeopardize critical House operations.

CAO FY26 TOPLINE REQUEST

The CAO's FY26 budget request is \$243,184,000, which is \$30,112,000 or 14.1% over its FY25 budget.

\$135.5 million or 56% of the requested FY26 budget is for programmatic (non-personnel) costs, and \$107.7 million or 44% is for personnel costs. \$19.3 million or 64% of the requested increase is to cover increased programmatic costs. \$10.8 million or 36% of the requested increase is to cover increased personnel costs.

\$132.0 million or 54% of the CAO's total FY26 budget request is dedicated to its House Information Resources (HIR) division responsible for building, maintaining, and protecting the House's critical IT infrastructure and Member data. Requested funding increases associated with HIR services total \$13.0 million and account for 43% of the total requested increase over FY25.

\$111.1 million or 46% of the CAO's total FY26 budget request covers the broad scope of additional critical functions and services performed by the CAO, including payroll and benefit administration, disbursement and tracking of House payments, broadcasts of Floor and committee proceedings, media gallery operations, House-wide procurement services, office design and moves, custom furniture builds and refurbishment, asset delivery and tracking, executive Member and staff training, staff and intern recruitment and development resources, wellness support and counseling services, management of campus food and convenience facilities, and the administration of the House Child Care Center. Requested funding increases associated with the CAO's non-HIR services total \$17.0 million and account for 57% of the total requested increase over FY25.

HIGH-PRIORITY PROGRAMS & PROJECTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE REQUESTED FY26 BUDGET INCREASE

Although the CAO has managed to operate at the same funding level since FY23 without House service reductions or disruptions, there now exist new programmatic and personnel funding requirements that cannot be offset through funding reprioritization without serious security and service implications. Below are examples of consequential components of the CAO's request for increased FY26 funding.

House Payroll & Benefits System Replacement: \$6.7 million

The core system used to manage payroll and benefits administration for Members of Congress and the approximate 12,000 congressional staff is over 20 years old and nearing the end of its lifecycle. Failing to replace the soon-to-be obsolete system now will jeopardize the continuity of payroll and benefit administration, onboarding and offboarding employees, and the maintenance of official records. In addition to protecting the continuity of payroll and benefit administration, replacing the system will present opportunities to modernize the payroll disbursement processes and improve user experience. This project is a large, multi-

year project that will require substantial staff resources and several million dollars annually over the next three or four fiscal years.

Personnel: \$5.3 million (\$10.8 million offset by \$5.5 million through contractor conversions)

The CAO's FY26 personnel budget represents a \$10.8 million increase in personnel costs to support existing staff, cost of living increases, longevity increases, overtime, active recruitments, and contractor conversions. The \$10.8 million increase in personnel is offset by savings in non-personnel costs of \$5.5 million achieved through the conversion of contractors to full-time employees.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Technology Integration: \$2.5 million

With an AI policy and governance structure in place, the House has a unique opportunity to accelerate AI adoption through the rollout of a secure, House-wide AI application that will allow staff to fully utilize AI technology within the House's secure IT environment. This expansion requires \$2.5 million for the purchase of licenses, contractors with necessary AI expertise, and additional IT infrastructure and tools to support large-scale AI deployment. This effort will require a robust training initiative to ensure House staff are using AI responsibly to improve office efficiency.

House Phone System (Avaya): \$2.2 million

Over the past few years, the cost of supporting House phone systems has increased, and additional funds are necessary to sustain and enhance support services for Members' district and D.C. offices. In addition to the increased sustainment costs, increased funding is requested to upgrade the D.C. phone platform from a traditional system to an IP-based platform to expand call management tools and improve user experience. Migration to an IP-based platform includes new costs associated with additional hardware, servers, equipment installation, and annual maintenance.

House Enterprise Infrastructure and Architecture: \$1.8 million

The House's enterprise IT infrastructure is comprised of all on-premises and cloud-based servers, tangible hardware, and software required to securely host every application used by the House, including those deployed by the House Clerk and Sergeant at Arms. In FY26, additional funds are required for virtual server infrastructure, contractors to support servers, extended warranties for hardware maintenance, and software upgrades.

House Websites: \$1.5 million

The CAO Web Services team is currently responsible for building and maintaining approximately two-thirds of all House websites, including those for Member, committee, and leadership offices at no cost to the offices. Additional funding is required in FY26 to support continued website accessibility features (508 compliance), contractors for site development and testing, performance monitoring applications, and database service and storage resources.

House Cybersecurity: \$1.2 million

The House's cybersecurity program requires increased funding to support the sustainment and expansion of secure foundational cloud and on-premises infrastructure, critical House website protections, and continuous security monitoring of systems and applications. The increased funding for cybersecurity will also fund important awareness programs such as phishing campaigns and cybersecurity briefings tailored specifically for the House community.

House Mac Device Management and Security Software: \$1 million

At 3,000 and quickly growing, the footprint of Mac computers used by House offices is significant. These devices require the best-of-breed end-point system management and monitoring application to protect House users and their data. The CAO is seeking additional FY26 funds to upgrade to a new, improved Mac management system. The new system will expedite the deployment of operating system updates and support multiple users per Mac device – a popular intern configuration for Member offices that the current management software does not support.

House Data Storage: \$670K

The CAO's IT infrastructure plays host to a multitude of applications used by House offices and relies on secure data storage platforms to store office files, data, digital content, databases, websites, and multimedia files. To support the increased storage demand, the CAO is seeking additional FY26 funds to expand its secure enterprise storage capacity.

House Learning Management System Replacement: \$550K

In 2019, the CAO's Congressional Staff Academy deployed a centralized learning management system to provide staff with a single portal to access, complete, and track mandatory and elective training. Unfortunately, the current system's software is limited and inefficient. To address these limitations and improve user experience, the CAO is seeking additional FY26 funding to replace the current system.

House Digital Services: \$533K

The CAO's Digital Service team has successfully developed and deployed several popular custom products for the House at the request of the Committee on House Administration's Subcommittee on Modernization. These products include HouseCal, FlagTrack, LegiDex, and CaseCompass. Though the initial deployment of these applications was funded via the Modernization Initiatives Account, that account does not cover their sustainment. Additional CAO funding is required in FY26 to ensure their continued development and support.

There are many additional high-priority projects and programs across the entire CAO that require increased funding. For example, the cost of House-wide news and clipping subscriptions absorbed by the CAO increased by nearly \$300K, a required rewrite of the House Alert System will cost \$220K, and the pilot digital wayfinding project will cost nearly \$100K.

OPERATIONAL & SERVICE ENHANCEMENTS ACHIEVED IN FY25 DESPITE BUDGET RESTRICTIONS

Despite the requirement to operate at its FY23 level, maximizing the use of its limited resources, the CAO made important advancements to multiple service projects and programs in FY25.

NEW & EXPANDED CAO SERVICE INITIATIVES

Cybersecurity: Protecting the House's IT infrastructure that supports Members, approximately 12,000 staff, and over 40,000 connected devices from cyber criminals is the CAO's most critical and challenging responsibility. During FY25, in addition to its House-wide threat prevention and detection activities, the CAO's Cybersecurity team played the lead role in AI governance and technology risk evaluations. In 2024, 57 security reviews were conducted to evaluate risks posed by cloud services, artificial intelligence products, and newly-developed applications to support House offices. Similarly, as new products were introduced to the House environment, continuous security audits were conducted to ensure the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of House data stored in cloud, web, and on-premise servers and database solutions.

Integration of Generative AI technology: Prior to FY25, ChatGPT, a Generative AI (GenAI) Large Language Model (LLM) technology, was approved for limited House use. At the same time, the CAO conducted AI governance assessments, established a House-wide AI Advisory Group, and published AI use cases and best practices. Since

then, to further advance AI integration into House operations, the CAO established an internal, cross-functional team (the AI Center of Excellence) that spearheaded the development of the House AI IT Policy published September 2024. The AI Center of Excellence continues to proactively evaluate emerging off-the-shelf AI technologies and has been exploring the development of House-specific AI tools that would operate in secure cloud space. All AI integration efforts in FY25 were entirely supported by existing CAO resources. More robust integration will require additional dedicated resources as requested in the CAO's FY26 budget.

Casework Aggregation (CaseCompass): At the request of the Committee on House Administration's Subcommittee on Modernization, the CAO is preparing to launch a cutting-edge casework aggregation prototype called CaseCompass capable of collecting, anonymizing, and analyzing Member office casework. The project, which currently includes 40 offices, is the first of its kind and has great potential to help Members process casework and understand common constituent pain points with federal agencies subject to congressional oversight and policymaking.

Staff Conferences: In 2024, the CAO continued to expand the popular in-person staff conferences tailored for specific D.C. and district office staff positions, including new conferences for Committee Staff, Legislative Directors, Legislative Assistants, Staff Assistants, and staff in Departing Member Offices. All told, 12 conferences were hosted in 2024 to provide training for 10 unique staff roles. Since the CAO conference program was first launched in 2022, 25 conferences have been held with nearly 3,000 staff from 422 different congressional districts attending. In 2024, 97% of attendees reported learning something new that will help them and their office, and 98% of attendees would recommend the conferences to their colleagues. There are 13 conferences planned for 2025.

HouseCal, LegiDex, SocialStats, & eForms: Within the past year, the CAO released multiple applications that assist Members and staff in their daily routines, including HouseCal, LegiDex, and SocialStats. HouseCal is a popular all-in-one online calendar for Members and staff to track voting days, hearings, markups, and meetings in real time. HouseCal also provides quick and easy access to live committee and Floor video feeds. LegiDex is a pilot online staff directory that feeds off multiple official House data sources to give staff an easy way to access contact information for all current House staff. Users can browse by office and see what roles and issues staff are assigned and bulk export email lists based on that data. SocialStats.house.gov is a new social media tracking app that allows offices to track their Member's trends on X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and Facebook and compare them to other Member statistics. The CAO also expanded the use of its eForms application that allows offices to electronically prepare and submit required House forms. Use of eForms over paper submissions has grown exponentially with nearly 30,000 forms submitted via the application to date.

Human Capital Office for House Offices: In January 2025, the CAO launched a new, centralized House Human Capital Office to make the CAO's core human resources more accessible to Member, Committee, and Leadership offices. The new office is comprised of the CAO's Office of Employee Assistance, Center for Well-Being, the Green & Gold Congressional Aide Program, the House Intern Resource Office, and the Office of Talent and Development.

Field Hearings: The CAO's House Recording Studio continues to support the increasing volume of House committee field hearings with on-site audio, broadcast, and streaming services that save committees an average of \$3,500 to \$5,000 per hearing. Today, the Recording Studio supports approximately 30 field hearings annually. During the 118th Congress, the Studio supported field hearings in 23 states and one U.S. territory.

Tech Partner+ Program: The CAO's Technology Partner+ Program, which provides 24/7 in-person and remote consultative and technical services to enrolled Member, Committee, and Leadership offices, continues to grow.

In 2025, the program grew by 17% and currently has 135 participating offices, which is 31% of the Member office community. All CAO Technology Partner support services are provided at no cost to House offices.

119th Transition: Congressional transitions are the Super Bowls of CAO operations where service units work around the clock to execute a high volume of transition activities in a very condensed period. The 119th Transition was certainly no exception. Examples of CAO 119th Transition activities include, but are not limited to, launching 4 customer-facing transition websites with more than 400 tasks and resources, assisting with 65 D.C. office and 125+ district office closures around the country operated by departing Members, reviewing nearly 800 district leases, facilitating 192 D.C. office and 200+ district office moves, onboarding and training 124 Member-elect aides, deploying the New Member Resume Bank that received over 30,000 resumes, onboarding over 1,100 new Member staff, delivering and installing new Member office equipment, installing new office carpet and drapes, refurbishing nearly 600 pieces of House furniture, and building and publishing all new Member House.gov websites.

COMMITMENT TO STEWARDSHIP

The CAO takes seriously its responsibility to obtain maximum value for the finite resources it manages. Operating at FY23 levels amid inflationary increases for three consecutive years makes the CAO's commitment to stewardship critical to the continuity of House operations.

The CAO is especially proud of the estimated \$25 million in savings it successfully negotiated for multiple technology goods and services critical to House operations. In total, in 2024, the CAO's Acquisitions team achieved over \$27 million in savings across 3,980 contracts and small purchases for the entire House valued at approximately \$147.4 million.

CONCLUSION

The CAO's mission is simple. It provides solutions that help Members perform their Constitutional duties. Every service the CAO provides is intended to support and protect House Members and staff. The CAO constantly strives to evolve and improve the broad scope of House services it provides. Often, CAO service improvements are made at the request of its stakeholders, and the CAO welcomes these requests. However, the cost to sustain and expand its services is increasing, and additional funds are required in FY26 to prevent service disruptions and avoid risking critical operations.