



OFFICE OF THE CLERK
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

THE HONORABLE KAREN L. HAAS
CLERK OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

**STATEMENT BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON
HOUSE ADMINISTRATION ON THE PRIORITIES
OF THE OFFICE OF THE CLERK, FY2016**

JUNE 3, 2015

Chairman Miller and Ranking Member Brady, thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Committee on House Administration regarding the priorities of the Office of the Clerk for the upcoming year. As you know, my staff and I routinely meet with your committee staff, and we enjoy a very positive and collaborative relationship. I appreciate the support and feedback this Committee provides to the Clerk's Office as we seek to support the legislative operations of the House.

To a large extent, the core responsibilities of the Clerk's Office remain constant from year to year. Under the rules of the House of Representatives and various statutes, the Clerk of the House is charged with supporting the legislative operations of the House and its committees, preserving and protecting the heritage of the House, and providing numerous public disclosure services. While our core responsibilities remain fairly constant, the manner in which we perform our work requires regular review to ensure we are taking advantage of rapidly evolving technology that can improve the timeliness, accuracy, transparency, and public accessibility of our work product.

HOUSE FLOOR OPERATIONS

On the House Floor, the Clerk's Office supports each step of the legislative process. Our staff handles the introduction of all bills and resolutions, maintains the constitutionally mandated *Journal of the House of Representatives*, transcribes all House Floor debate for the *Congressional Record*, administers the Electronic Voting System (EVS), tallies all Floor votes, engrosses and enrolls measures that have passed in the House, and presents bills to the White House for signature by the President.

We also provide public access to the legislative proceedings of the House through a number of channels. The Clerk's Office developed and hosts the online *Bills to be Considered on the House Floor* portal at docs.house.gov. This portal provides access to the text of measures that are scheduled for Floor consideration in the House. We provide public access to live and archived video of all House Floor proceedings through HouseLive.gov. Finally, we work closely with our partners at the Library of Congress and the Government Publishing Office (GPO) to transmit large volumes of legislative data that both entities aggregate and make publicly available online. The Library of Congress makes much of the legislative data generated by the Clerk's Office available at Congress.gov. Likewise, GPO uses our transcripts and legislative content to produce the daily *Congressional Record*, which is also made publicly available online.



Upcoming Priorities

One of the Clerk's most important responsibilities is recording, tallying, and publicly disclosing all Floor votes cast in the House of Representatives. We plan to continue the multi-year process to update the EVS used by the House. In 2009, the Clerk's Office updated the summary display boards in the House Chamber. In 2010, we upgraded the main display boards. Our next step is to update the voting stations throughout the Chamber. We will replace all voting boxes and related wiring and will upgrade Member voting cards to be compatible with the improved technology. We will work carefully to ensure a seamless and smooth transition, taking advantage of various district work periods to complete the project. We hope to begin the intensive testing phase for the upgraded voting system during the August 2016 district work period.

In addition to upgrading the technology by which Members cast their votes on the House Floor, we are making plans to enhance the disclosure of vote results that the Clerk's Office makes publicly available online. For example, we plan to make vote results more easily searchable by party and state delegation.

We will also be working on a number of improvements to the Clerk's website over the coming year. We are focusing our redesign efforts on making the information we provide on House Floor activity far more prominent and user friendly for both our internal users and the public who rely on the Clerk's Office to provide accurate, timely, and official information about the legislative activity of the House. We hope to begin beta testing a new site in January 2016 and to deploy a fully redesigned site by the end of next year.

SUPPORT FOR HOUSE COMMITTEES

The Clerk's Office also provides legislative support services for House committees. We provide official reporters to cover all committee hearings, markups, depositions, investigative interviews, and briefings. Our House librarians provide legislative research and training for staff. The Clerk's Office also developed and hosts the *Committee Repository* at docs.house.gov, which provides a centralized point of public access to hearing and markup documents for all House committees. Our Legislative Resource Center aggregates committee legislative information and makes it available on the Clerk's website and through Congress.gov. Finally, our professional archivists assist committees with their responsibility under House rules to archive all noncurrent committee records, which remain available to committees to recall for use. We partner closely with the Center for Legislative Archives at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), where archived committee records are retained, preserved, and made publicly available to researchers pursuant to House rules.



Upcoming Priorities

As you know, this Committee has taken the lead in initiating a project to streamline and standardize the process for producing committee hearing reports. We are pleased to provide technical assistance to the Committee on its standardization project. When the project is completed, the Clerk's Office will update the online *Committee Repository* to include these hearing reports, further enhancing the availability of committee information to the public.

We will also continue to work closely with NARA to manage official House records. NARA is developing a plan to ensure that there is adequate and sufficient space to preserve House and Senate records in Washington in the medium and long term. Our goal is to ensure that congressional records continue to be archived in a manner that allows committees to quickly access their records and to make House records publicly available to researchers pursuant to House rules. I hope that we will have a medium- and long-term space management plan in place from NARA in the near future.

PRESERVING THE HERITAGE OF THE HOUSE

In addition to our responsibility to manage and archive the official records of the House and its committees, the Clerk's Office is charged with preserving the heritage of the House. Our professional curators provide staff support to the House Fine Arts Board, on which several members of this Committee serve. We work hard to ensure that the fine art and artifacts that have been accessioned into the House Collection are preserved for future generations. Working closely with the House Historian and his staff, we have made great strides in expanding public access to the House Collection by digitizing images of the historic paintings, statues, and artifacts and making them available with historical commentary through our History, Art & Archives website at history.house.gov.

Upcoming Priorities

Building upon the work the Historian's office has undertaken in researching and publishing the three Minorities in Congress volumes, *Black Americans in Congress*, *Women in Congress*, and *Hispanic Americans in Congress*, the House authorized the House Historian to write a history of Asian and Pacific Islander Americans in Congress. Our archival and curatorial staff are working closely with the House Historian and his staff on the research phase of this latest project, which will continue over the next two years. We are identifying documents, photographs, and other artifacts to be included in the final publication.

We would also like to make additional progress in redesigning and enhancing the *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress* website at bioguide.house.gov, which provides historical information on every Member who has served. This resource is one of the



most-used tools for historical research jointly provided by the House and Senate. BioGuide also assists the Clerk's Office by assigning a unique ID to each Member of Congress, which allows us to track Members for multiple purposes, including their Financial Disclosure filings. We have completed the requirements phase for an upgrade to the BioGuide website and will move into the design and development phases as time and resources permit in 2016.

PUBLIC DISCLOSURE SERVICES

By statute and the rules of the House of Representatives, the Clerk's Office is charged with administering a number of public disclosure requirements related to the integrity and transparency of the legislative process. We provide extensive assistance to the Ethics Committee by handling the intake and public disclosure of required filings, including Financial Disclosure Statements, Periodic Transaction Reports, and Gift Travel Disclosures. In coordination with the Secretary of the Senate, we administer the receipt and public disclosure of all lobbying disclosure filings. We assist the Franking Commission by making its records publicly accessible through the Legislative Resource Center. We also process and publicly disclose all official foreign travel reports for the House.

Upcoming Priorities

Following passage of the STOCK Act of 2012, the Clerk's Office undertook the design and development of an electronic filing system for all Financial Disclosure Statements and Periodic Transaction Reports filed by Members, Officers, congressional candidates, and employees of the House, Library of Congress, Capitol Police, Congressional Budget Office, Government Publishing Office, and Architect of the Capitol. In May 2015, we completed the second cycle in which the electronic filing system was available for annual Financial Disclosure Statements. We were pleased to deploy a number of improvements to the filing system this year. Filers are now able to import information from their previous annual Financial Disclosure Statement and Periodic Transaction Reports into their most recent annual filing. This enhancement should reduce filing errors and assist the Ethics Committee with its review responsibilities under the law. In 2016, we plan to continue to provide technical assistance to the Ethics Committee with its internal review system, and we will continue to use feedback we receive from users to improve the electronic filing system.

Earlier this year, we required all Lobbying Disclosure Act filers to make a transition to a web-based filing system. Older IBM forms that were electronically filed with the Clerk and the Secretary of the Senate were quickly becoming obsolete and necessitated this migration. Now that all filers are using our web-based system, we will work with the Secretary of the Senate, who shares responsibility for the lobbying disclosure system, to make further technical improvements to our filing and public disclosure system.



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Finally, I think it is important to note that we depend on the professionalism, skill, and dedication of our staff as they carry out their roles in supporting the legislative operations of the House and its committees. In the Clerk's Office, we are fortunate to have many employees with decades of service to the House. Their institutional knowledge and memory are invaluable. We recognize the need to prioritize professional development and cross-training for our staff in the coming year and will continue to look for ways to provide relevant and cost-effective opportunities.

We also recognize that the Clerk's Office is well positioned to provide training to other House employees. Our archivists, librarians, and historians conduct frequent training sessions and seminars in their areas of expertise for House employees through the Chief Administrative Office's House Learning Center. We are always looking for ways to assist the House community and to make our services well known and accessible. We will continue to make this a priority in the coming year.

Let me again thank the Committee for the opportunity to testify today regarding the priorities of the Clerk's Office. Much of our work is done behind the scenes, but our work product is critical to the legislative operations of the House. We take pride in our work and the role we play in serving this great institution. Again, I appreciate the support and guidance the Committee provides to us in fulfilling our mission, and I look forward to continuing our work together.

