



**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 OFFICE OF THE CLERK'S PARTNERSHIP WITH THE
GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE**

OCTOBER 11, 2017

Chairman Harper, Ranking Member Brady, and members of the Committee, thank you for the invitation to appear before the Committee today to discuss our partnership with the Government Publishing Office (GPO) and the future legislative support needs of the House.

PARTNERSHIP WITH THE GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

The responsibility of the Office of the Clerk is to support the legislative requirements of the U.S. House of Representatives. The professional men and women of our organization accomplish this each day by working closely with our business partners. One of our most important partners is the Government Publishing Office. On a daily basis, we work with GPO to compile and print the complete record of the daily business of the House. That work includes compiling the *Congressional Record*, processing bills and reports, and making legislative data available electronically to Members, staff, and the public in a timely and accurate manner. In addition, GPO also supplies the House with letterhead and envelopes, publishes congressionally mandated books, prints special event programs and invitations, and binds official publications.

However, GPO provides far more than print services. It supplies and maintains the printers we use to enroll bills and produce the *Journal* used at the start of each legislative day as well as the parchment paper and presentation cases for presenting enrollments to the President. We require GPO's proofreading expertise for large enrollments and many official documents, including introduced legislation, and their publishing support for the production of the *House Journal*. GPO also provides technical support for TextPad and XMetal, which are desktop applications used throughout the House to edit documents. GPO employees are often "detailed" to House Committees and other institutional offices to lend expert support for processing legislative documents and compiling legislative history. GPO also provides other items to the House, including Office Supply Cards that Member offices use; ink stamps our office uses daily to efficiently process legislative documents; and the aye, no, and quorum voting cards Members use to vote in the Well. This list is not exhaustive, but as you can see, the products and services GPO provides are extensive and critical to our daily operations.

As the primary liaison to GPO for the House, my team interacts with the organization daily, often beginning before dawn to coordinate the arrival of the *Congressional Record*, continuing throughout the day and into the night with the processing of the day's bills and reports, and finalizing the *Record* for the day. Paper copies of the *Congressional Record*, House Calendar, and bills under consideration are necessary to conduct legislative business in the House Chamber each day. GPO and the Office of the Clerk work together to make sure those documents are available. Our coordination with GPO is constant and we could not provide the House the services it needs to legislate without it.

As you know, the work of Congress continues to be driven by paper. When we submit items to GPO for processing, we transmit both paper and electronic versions. If a discrepancy arises, we defer to the official papers of the House. There is currently no requirement that introduced measures be drafted by the Office of Legislative Counsel. There are very recent examples of Members introducing measures in a Microsoft Word instead of XML. When this occurs the clerks reach out to the sponsor's office to obtain an electronic copy of the document to send to GPO. GPO takes the extra step to convert the Word document into XML to maintain consistency and meet transparency requirements.

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LEGISLATIVE DATA STANDARDIZATION

Over the last several years, there have been many significant improvements to how we prepare, distribute, authenticate, and archive legislative data. Many deserve credit for these improvements: House leadership and the leadership of this Committee, House Officers, Members of Congress, and our legislative partners. However, our internal and external customers have driven much of the demand for greater transparency and digital access. Today, staff across the legislative branch work together to ensure that both the official document of record, along with its paper and digital representations, are accurate and available in a timely manner.

As your Committee looks toward GPO modernization, we believe it is important to understand how we arrived where we are today, be aware of current improvement efforts that are already underway, and anticipate and meet the future needs of Members, staff, and the public.

In 1996, the chairs of this Committee and the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration directed the Clerk of the House and the Secretary of the Senate to establish common data standards for the exchange of legislative information. Following this directive, Congress embarked upon an initiative to establish standards for the transformation, creation, and exchange of legislative documents in XML format. The Legislative Branch XML Working Group was established to coordinate and manage these efforts. The Working Group consists of nonpartisan support staff from the House, Senate, GPO, Library of Congress, and other legislative organizations. The original directive included an initiative to customize XML editors to create House and Senate bills and resolutions.

In 2000, the Clerk of the House and the Secretary of the Senate presented the SGML/XML Feasibility Study Final Report to the House Committees on Rules and Administration, and in 2001, the House Office of Legislative Counsel began to use an XML editor to draft legislation. The proliferation of congressional XML continued with House votes in 2003, House and Senate bills in 2004, and Senate votes in 2009. This early work has been characterized as “First Generation” XML, with the focus on a document’s visual characteristics. In 2013, the Office of Law Revision Counsel, with assistance from the XML Working Group, launched congressional XML into its “Second Generation” with the release of United States Code in XML using the United States Legislative Markup (USLM) schema. The USLM schema, which is interoperable with the OASIS LegalDocML international standard, describes not only a document’s presentation but also its structure, organization, and semantics—what it means. Among other benefits, this structure enables richer search capabilities and document and data linking.

In 2011, the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives for the 112th Congress called for greater legislative document transparency and accessibility. The change’s intent was to place electronic distribution on par with traditional printing. On June 1, 2012, House Report 112-511 that accompanied H.R. 5882—Legislative Branch Appropriations Act of 2013 directed the establishment of the House Bulk Data Task Force (BDTF) to expedite the process of providing bulk access to legislative information. The Task Force is a partnership of legislative branch agencies, including the House of Representatives (Office of the Clerk, Office of General Counsel, Office of Law Revision Counsel, Office



of the Parliamentarian, Legislative Branch Subcommittee, Committee on House Administration, Committee on Rules, and House Leadership), Senate, Library of Congress, Government Publishing Office, and Government Accountability Office that collaborate to bring about openness and transparency. One of the group’s primary goals is to provide more data and documents online and, over time, in bulk and machine-readable formats using XML standards.

Task Force accomplishments to date include

- Bill to be Considered on the House Floor at docs.house.gov, which provides Members, staff, and the public with access to bills and resolutions at a crucial point in the House legislative process that was not previously available. (2012–2013)
- Bills in bulk on GPO’s FDsys repository (2013)
- Bill Summaries in bulk on GPO’s FDsys repository (2014)
- Member data in XML on the Clerk’s website (2014)
- Bill Status in bulk on GPO’s FDsys repository (2015)

In his remarks to the annual Legislative Data and Transparency Conference in June 2016, House Speaker Paul Ryan urged the Task Force and other groups to “keep moving ahead by publishing all legislative measures in a standard format. That means enrolled measures, Public Laws, and Statutes at Large.” To achieve greater interoperability across the legislative branch, it would be best if the law and our legislative documents were in the same flavor of XML—the USLM schema. To that end, GPO was tasked with the “documents in USLM” project. From conception and planning, to procurement and day-to-day execution of this project, key Clerk, Secretary, and GPO staff have been working together to publish enrolled measures, Public Laws, and Statutes at Large in a machine-readable format—the USLM XML schema. We expect to complete this project in spring 2018.

Draft Roadmap for Publishing Legislative Documents in USLM XML Format

Completed	U.S. Code
Current Stage	Enrolled bills, Public Laws, and Statutes at Large
A	HOLC/SOLC compilations (non-positive law)
B	Remaining bill/resolution versions (introduced, reported, engrossed, all amendments, et. al.)
C	Committee Reports
D	House portions of the <i>Congressional Record</i> , including the <i>Daily Digest</i>
E	Hearing Record
F	House Calendar
G	<i>Precedents of the U.S. House of Representatives</i>
H	<i>House Journal</i>

ONGOING AND FUTURE SUPPORT NEEDS

As this Committee looks to modernize the legislative processes and GPO's work, we believe there are several things to keep in mind. First, with the technological improvements, we no longer need large quantities of prescribed copies of printed legislative documents. However, House Members and their staff, the Office of the Parliamentarian, and the Office of the Clerk do need some printed copies to conduct legislative business. Copies of bills, reports, calendars, and the *Congressional Record* are some of these critical documents. Although the required quantity of printed copies of documents has decreased, the Office of the Clerk must have the flexibility to coordinate with those documents' customers to determine what is needed.

Second, it is crucial to continue the current "round-the-clock" service provided by GPO. Frequently the legislative clerks work late into the night to process introduced measures and Committee Reports or to compile the day's legislative record that is needed for the next legislative day. Making that information available electronically on FDsys and in printed form is essential.

Third, GPO is an indispensable part of the evolving effort to modernize how Congress makes legislative documents and data available in print and online. The production and exchange of legislative documents occur jointly with the House and Senate transmitting their data to GPO and the Library of Congress. The previously discussed efforts to standardize this data must continue to allow us to meet the current and future needs of our customers.

Fourth, support beyond print and technological expertise must continue. The ability to enlist additional proofreaders or detailees to help Committees and our office with their documentation processes is essential. These experienced professionals ensure that the final products are of the highest quality and accuracy.

I would like to thank the Committee for this opportunity to detail the partnership between the Office of the Clerk and the Government Publishing Office. As GPO works to provide 21st century information products and services, we look forward to continuing and building on this collaboration.

