



OFFICE OF THE CLERK  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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

**STATEMENT BEFORE THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH  
ON THE OFFICE OF THE CLERK, FY2015**

**MARCH 6, 2014**

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Chairman Cole, Ranking Member Wasserman Schultz, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you about the operations of the Office of the Clerk and our fiscal year 2015 budget request. With the resources and direction provided by this Subcommittee, the Clerk's Office continues to carry out its duties and responsibilities for the legislative and institutional operations of the House of Representatives. I thank the Subcommittee for its support over the past year.

## **SUPPORT FOR THE LEGISLATIVE OPERATIONS OF THE HOUSE**

As the Subcommittee is aware, the Office of the Clerk oversees a broad range of services, including support for many of the core legislative functions of the House of Representatives. Our staff is directly involved in each step of the legislative process. Bill clerks handle the introduction of all bills and resolutions by Members of the House. Our official reporters cover all committee hearings and markups. We provide assistance and support to committee staff by preparing committee documents and reports in XML format to facilitate accessibility. Our official reporters transcribe House Floor proceedings, gavel-to-gavel, for inclusion in the Congressional Record. Our tally clerks operate the Electronic Voting System, our journal clerks prepare the constitutionally required Journal of the House of Representatives, and our enrolling clerks prepare legislation that has been considered by the House for transmittal to the Senate or to the White House for presentment to the President. At the end of the legislative process, our archival staff preserve all noncurrent records of the House, including committee records in electronic and paper formats, and make those records available in accordance with House Rules. Throughout the legislative process, the Office of the Clerk provides support to the House, Members, committees, and staff.

## **TRANSPARENCY IN THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS**

Given our unique involvement in each stage of the legislative process, the Office of the Clerk has taken on a leadership role in developing and deploying new technologies to increase the transparency of House committee and Floor proceedings.

### ***Making Legislative Documents Available for Bulk Data Download***

After successfully coordinating an effort to make the text of all bills introduced in the House available to the public for bulk data download in 2012, the Clerk's Office completed an effort in 2013 to make House bill summaries available for bulk download. In the 2013 appropriations cycle, this Subcommittee called for the creation of a Bulk Data Task Force to study the feasibility of providing such downloads. That Task Force, chaired by the Clerk's Office, brings together bipartisan leadership, committee staff, representatives from GPO and



the Library of Congress, and other stakeholders to enable the bulk download of House documents through GPO's website.

In partnership with the Library of Congress, the Task Force also initiated two Legislative Data Challenges, which were open to the public and involved translating House bills into the widely accepted international format Akoma Ntoso. The second challenge also included bills from the United Kingdom Parliament. This effort aims to advance the exchange of legislative information worldwide. The first challenge winner was announced December 19; the second challenge winners were announced February 25.

The Task Force is working on the requirements for its next project, the modernization of Member and committee data.

### ***Improving HouseLive***

As you know, HouseLive (HouseLive.gov) delivers live streaming video of House proceedings to desktop and mobile device users. In the past year, the Clerk's Office implemented HouseLive functionality to allow users to search for specific Member Floor statements within archived webcasts of Floor proceedings.

The free video clipping tool offered by the Clerk's Office enables House staff to download video clips of Floor speeches and post them to their web or social media sites. The clipping tool, which debuted in 2011, is proving to be very useful to Members and committees. Video clipping tool usage increased 47% in 2012 and 90% last year. Almost 3,000 video clips were downloaded in 2013.

The Clerk's Office is planning our next HouseLive project, which will make all archived video—in addition to the live feed—available on mobile devices.

### ***Enhancements to the Committee Repository***

Last year we successfully deployed the expanded Committee Repository website (docs.house.gov), which includes a centralized calendar of all committee hearings and meetings as well as access to a number of committee documents, providing the public with a one-stop shop for the important work conducted by House committees. Building on this achievement, we actively supported the repository by making several improvements to the administrative module, public site, and data made available to the public. Clerk staff also worked with the Rules Committee to adopt a GPO XMetal utility that will soon allow Committee Repository users to capture committee votes and post them on websites.



The Clerk's Office is committed to working with the Committee on House Administration and committee staff to identify other ways to add value to the repository.

### ***Website and Social Media Development***

I am pleased to report that we have continued to partner with the Office of the Historian to enhance its History, Art & Archives website ([history.house.gov](http://history.house.gov)). In its first full year, the website had 1,551,758 visits and 7,830,158 page views. A project is underway to make the website available to mobile device users.

The Clerk's Office assisted the Office of the Historian with the setup and August release of its History, Art & Archives YouTube Channel ([youtube.com/USHouseHistory](http://youtube.com/USHouseHistory)), which allows social media users to explore oral history interviews featuring former Members, House Officers, and staff on a range of topics. In November, the History, Art & Archives @USHouseHistory Twitter account ([twitter.com/USHouseHistory](http://twitter.com/USHouseHistory)) was launched and quickly gained more than 1,000 followers.

Our Office introduced an RSS feed that provides a summary of House Floor proceedings in a format that can be easily repurposed. We are also putting the finishing touches on the new Floor Summary @USHouseFloor Twitter account, which is slated to go live in mid-March 2014.

Finally, one of the top web development priorities for the Clerk's Office is to redesign our website. The project is in the early requirements-gathering stage and will continue throughout 2014.

## **PUBLIC DISCLOSURE SERVICES**

In addition to our efforts to make the House's legislative operations, history, art, and archives more accessible to the American people, the Office of the Clerk is charged with administering numerous other transparency initiatives to increase public awareness of and confidence in the legislative process.

### ***Financial Disclosure: Implementation of the STOCK Act***

During 2013, the Clerk's Office worked with the House Ethics Committee to develop an electronic filing and public disclosure system for all financial disclosure reports filed with the Clerk. As required by the STOCK Act, the system was deployed on January 2, 2014, and allows the public to search data contained in the reports. Since its launch, 49% of the periodic transaction reports (PTRs) filed have been submitted electronically.



The Clerk’s Office will continue to develop components for the Financial Disclosure System (eFD) throughout 2014 by adding guidance updates from the Ethics Committee, optimizing the application’s performance, building PTR search and import functions, and creating a filing review tool for the Ethics Committee. Furthermore, in partnership with Ethics, we will support several financial disclosure preparation clinics before the May 15 filing deadline.

### ***Lobbying Disclosure***

In addition to administering the House’s financial disclosure system, the Clerk’s Office maintains the electronic filing and disclosure system for all lobbying registrations, quarterly lobbying activity reports, and semi-annual lobbying contribution reports, as required by the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995. Our staff administers this system on a continuous basis for the House and Senate. The Office processed more than 98,000 unique lobby disclosure filings last year.

In 2014, the Clerk’s Office will test and deploy an import tool to allow filers to use a web-based form and will provide upgrades to the tool that creates a printable version of the electronic form.

## **INSTITUTIONAL SERVICES AND MEMBER SUPPORT**

In addition to our responsibilities for the legislative operations of the House, the Clerk’s Office provides important institutional services and Member support, with the goal of achieving savings for Member offices that would otherwise need to fund these services individually.

### ***House Library***

The House Library provides legislative research resources, database access, and digital and print subscription services to Members, committees, and legislative support offices—achieving cost savings for the House. The Library’s substantial collection of national and international publications and video services, as well as our knowledgeable staff, make it an invaluable resource. House librarians regularly offer classes at the House Learning Center for ProQuest, one of the most popular Library offerings, as well as outreach training to District staff.

### ***Management of Vacant Member Offices***

The Office of the Clerk supervises Member offices that become vacant following deaths or resignations. Administration of vacant offices is a statutory responsibility of the Clerk that



requires time and resources. Since I last testified before the Subcommittee, the Clerk's Office has managed ten vacant Member offices (Illinois 2nd, South Carolina 1st, Missouri 8th, Massachusetts 5th, Alabama 1st, Louisiana 5th, Florida 13th, North Carolina 12th, Florida 19th, and New Jersey 1st), four of which remain under our supervision.

### ***Records Management and Archival Services***

The Clerk's Office provides Members with assistance in archiving their papers. Under House precedent, a Member's personal legislative records remain the property of the Member even after he or she leaves office. Our archival staff provide Members with consultations and guidance should they choose to deed their papers to universities or other research facilities upon their departure from the House.

Pursuant to House Rule VII, the Office also receives noncurrent committee records for processing and archiving. Clerk staff participate in the Committee Records Forum as well as conduct presentations at the House Learning Center to advise committee staff on best records management practices.

### ***Preserving the Heritage of the House***

The Clerk's organization serves as the custodian of all art and historical artifacts in the House Collection. We continue to make tremendous progress in caring for the House's heritage assets. Curatorial staff move approximately 1,000 artifacts each year to protect them during construction, to install them in committee rooms and ceremonial spaces, and to clean and conserve the House's treasures so that they will remain part of the institution for generations to come.

### ***Contingency Planning***

The Clerk's Office works closely with the other House and Senate Officers to ensure that we are prepared for emergencies that may confront the legislative branch. We remain mindful of the importance of continuous review and improvement of our emergency planning with our legislative partners to ensure continuity of operations.

### ***House Employment Counsel***

The Office of House Employment Counsel (OHEC) provides House-wide employment law services to Members, committees, and other House employing offices. In addition to providing legal representation, OHEC offers training and advice to assist offices in



complying with the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995. All consultations with OHEC are handled on a strictly confidential basis.

### ***Capitol Services***

Through our Capitol Services Group, the Clerk's Office supports the Members and Family Committee Room, the Lindy Claiborne Boggs Congressional Women's Reading Room, the Congressional Prayer Room, and attendant services for Floor operations.

### **FY 2015 BUDGET REQUEST**

To fulfill this wide range of responsibilities, the Office of the Clerk relies on our highly professional, diverse, and experienced staff. As we review our operations under a zero-based budgeting process, we always look for innovative ways to reduce costs without compromising quality. At the same time, we know that demands for our services will grow in the coming years. To meet these demands, we are aggressively pursuing ways to use technology to provide additional services and improve delivery of current services; consequently, we will be spending a larger share of our budget on technology. We regularly research new technology to evaluate its ability to meet the needs of the Clerk's organization and the House of Representatives. As the House focuses its efforts on making the legislative process more transparent, it will prioritize electronic data collection, digitization, storage, presentation, and archiving. The House will need to make more of its functions publicly available in a variety of media, some of which are being developed or are unknown.

Much as we met our mandate under the STOCK Act to facilitate public access to financial disclosure records, we look forward to playing a leading role in making the legislative operations of the House more transparent. Our goal is to continue to contain costs and be wise stewards of taxpayer dollars, while providing innovative legislative services and support to the House. For FY 2015, we are requesting \$24,639,000 to fund our operations. This is an increase of 2.6 percent over FY 2014; but 0.5 percent less than FY 2013.

I appreciate the opportunity to appear before the Subcommittee today. I am ready to assist you in any way throughout the development of the FY 2015 spending bill for the House, and I will be more than happy to answer any questions you may have.

