



OFFICE OF THE CLERK
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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, FY2016**

FEBRUARY 25, 2015

Chairman Graves and Ranking Member Wasserman Schultz, I appreciate the opportunity to testify before the Subcommittee regarding the operations of the Office of the Clerk. As you know, the Clerk's Office supports the core legislative operations of the House of Representatives and its committees. Nearly every step of the legislative process involves the Clerk's Office in some way, from the introduction of new bills on the House Floor to the presentment of enrolled bills to the White House for signature by the President. The Clerk's Office ensures the integrity of the legislative process while making technological progress to improve the transparency of legislative operations for the American people.

HOUSE LEGISLATIVE OPERATIONS

Support for House Floor Operations

On the House Floor, the Clerk's Office is responsible for supporting the legislative process in its many dimensions, as required by statute and the *Rules of the House of Representatives*. Our bill clerks process all newly introduced bills and their accompanying Constitutional Authority Statements. Tally clerks record all votes cast in the House through the Electronic Voting System or manually in the House Well. They also create the official House Calendar and process all committee reports filed in the House. Our journal clerks produce the constitutionally mandated *Journal of the House of Representatives* and handle all Presidential Messages received by the House. As bills pass in the House, our enrolling clerks prepare the official text for transmission to the Senate or the White House. Our reading clerks deliver bills and messages to the Senate in addition to their duties of announcing pending business on the House Floor. Whenever the House is in session, day or night, our staff is hard at work supporting Floor operations.

Enhancing Transparency and Accessibility of House Floor Proceedings

While supporting these key aspects of the legislative process, the Clerk's Office is also responsible for making House Floor proceedings transparent and accessible to the public. To that end, the Clerk's Office hosts the official online repository, Bills to be Considered on the House Floor, which is publicly available at docs.house.gov. This online repository provides the text of measures scheduled for Floor consideration each week.

Our Floor staff also maintain and update the online summary of Floor activities, which tracks daily Floor proceedings, available on the Clerk's website. This online summary includes information on pending legislation and votes taken throughout the legislative day. The Clerk's Office also provides the public with live and archived video streaming of all House Floor proceedings through HouseLive.gov. In order to make Floor proceedings



accessible to the deaf or hard of hearing, the Clerk's Office provides closed-captioning services as well. Additionally, our official reporters transcribe House Floor debate, gavel-to-gavel, which is publicly available the next day through the online version of the Congressional Record. Finally, as legislation progresses through the legislative process, our staff makes daily updates to the bill summary information available on Congress.gov.

Support for Committee Operations

In addition to its support for legislative operations on the House Floor, the Clerk's Office provides a number of services to assist House committees in fulfilling their legislative responsibilities. Our official reporters provide reporting services for all committee hearings, depositions, and markups. Our House librarians provide research services for committees and offer regular training through the House Learning Center to assist legislative staff with their research needs. Our professional archivists provide regular consultations and assistance to committee staff in complying with their archival obligations under House Rules. Additionally, they oversee all committee records that are maintained at the National Archives and Records Administration and assist committees in recalling their archived records as needed.

Enhancing Transparency and Accessibility of Committee Proceedings

One of the major tasks assigned to the Clerk's Office over the past four years has been to improve the transparency of the committee process by providing a centralized online portal for the general public to track House committee activities. In response, the Clerk's Office developed the Committee Repository website (docs.house.gov). The public can now find an online calendar with a daily schedule of all committee hearings and markups. Committee documents related to those hearings and markups can also be viewed and downloaded, including: hearing and meeting notices; witness lists, testimony, and truth-in-testimony disclosure forms; opening statements; legislative text for markup and amendments offered in committee; and tally sheets for recorded votes. The House has made significant progress in just a few years to improve committee transparency, and the Clerk's Office is proud to support that effort.

Legislative Documents

Finally, the Clerk's Office continues to chair the Bulk Data Task Force, which was established at the direction of this Subcommittee in 2012. The Task Force, which includes representatives from the Senate, Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service,



Government Publishing Office, and other interested stakeholders, seeks to coordinate and improve public accessibility of legislative documents. Recently, the Senate announced it will join the House in making its bills, bill summaries, and bill status documents available via bulk data download. With the inclusion of the Senate, the Government Publishing Office has completed the groundwork to make all congressional bills and bill summaries available in bulk data format beginning this year. We thank this Subcommittee for taking the lead in initiating this effort, and we will continue to keep you updated on our progress.

ARCHIVES, ART, AND HISTORY OF THE HOUSE: PRESERVATION AND PUBLIC ACCESS RESPONSIBILITIES

Public Access to Archived House Records

The House has assigned the Clerk's Office the important work of preserving its archived records. To do so, our professional archivists provide all House committees and Officers with ongoing training and consultation for proper records management. As required by House Rules, each committee transfers its noncurrent records to the Clerk's Office at the end of each Congress. Our office in turn transfers those records to the National Archives and Records Administration's (NARA) Center for Legislative Archives where they are professionally maintained and made publicly available in accordance with House Rules. The Center for Legislative Archives works hard to ensure House records are properly preserved in an accessible format, especially as the type of electronic records received constantly evolves with new and emerging technology.

Last year I was honored to chair the Advisory Committee on the Records of Congress, which is co-chaired by the Secretary of the Senate and includes the Archivist of the United States, House and Senate Historians, and other congressional officials and Leadership appointees. I am pleased to report that we made progress in making Congressional records more readily accessible to the public by providing online finding aids that assist researchers in locating potentially relevant records for their important work. I want to especially thank NARA's Center for Legislative Archives for working with the Clerk's Office to make this important step in improving the transparency of archived House records. We also continue to work with NARA on its space management challenges in order to develop a viable long-term plan for the preservation of legislative records in Washington.

Art and History

Along with our efforts to make House records open and accessible to the public, the Clerk's Office continues to make the art and history of the House publicly accessible in a variety of



formats. Our curatorial staff is responsible for the day-to-day preservation of the historical art and artifacts in the House Collection. As part of their work, they continue to digitize images of the House Collection and make those images publicly available through our History, Art & Archives website (history.house.gov). With content provided by the House's art and history staff, this website provides citizens immediate access to a wealth of information about the House of Representatives. This resource is heavily used by educators for teaching purposes. Last year, the website hosted over 1.5 million visitors with over 4 million page visits. We continue to expand the dynamic content available to the public online.

Working with the House Historian, our archival, curatorial, and communications staff significantly contributed to the recent electronic publication (eBook) of *Hispanic Americans in Congress, 1822–2012*, which was commissioned by the House. This resource is now widely available to the public for free download through our website. The Clerk's Office is also continuing to support the House Historian, who has been commissioned by the House to compile oral histories from current and former House Members involved in the historic and annual marches from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, as well as the civil rights movement in general. Those oral histories will be made available as part of "The House and Civil Rights" online exhibit on history.house.gov.

PUBLIC DISCLOSURE RESPONSIBILITIES

In addition to its work supporting the legislative operations of the House and preserving its records, art, and history, the Clerk's Office plays a major role in providing public disclosure information as required by law and the Rules of the House.

Financial Disclosure

The Clerk's Office manages the filing and public disclosure process for all financial disclosure forms filed by House Members, candidates, Officers, and employees, as well as disclosures filed by employees of the U.S. Capitol Police, the Library of Congress, the Government Publishing Office, the U.S. Botanic Garden, and the Congressional Budget Office. When Congress passed the STOCK Act of 2013, it required the Clerk's Office to develop an online filing system for financial disclosure reports. Working closely with the Ethics Committee and the legislative branch agencies that file with the Clerk's Office, we deployed that new online system last year. In our first year, more than 70 percent of filers used the new online tool. We continue to work with the Ethics Committee to make upgrades to this new system for the upcoming filing season.



Other Public Disclosure Services

In addition to financial disclosure information, the Clerk's Office processes all official foreign travel and gift travel disclosure filings and post-employment lobbying restriction notices and makes that information available online. Our Legislative Resource Center also makes a variety of other filings publicly available, including legal expense fund disclosures and Franking Commission files.

Lobbying Disclosure

The Clerk's Office also continues its efforts to enhance its lobbying disclosure filing system in coordination with the Secretary of the Senate, who shares responsibility for administering the filing requirements of the Lobbying Disclosure Act. Last year, the Clerk's Office processed a combined total of over 90,000 lobbying disclosure registrations, quarterly activity reports, and semi-annual contribution reports and made those filings available online in a searchable, sortable, downloadable format. This year we will begin to mandate that filers use our online filing system, replacing older IBM forms. These lobbying disclosure efforts are intended to "increase public confidence in the integrity of Government," one of the primary goals identified by Congress when it passed the Lobbying Disclosure Act.

PLANNING AND BUDGET REQUEST FOR FY 2016

The Clerk's Office seeks to carry out all of its legislative, preservation, and public disclosure responsibilities in an efficient and cost-effective manner. The Office is currently operating 22 percent below its peak budget. Even so, we anticipate growing demand for the services provided by the Clerk's Office, especially our efforts to further enhance the transparency of the House's legislative operations and the accessibility of its legislative documents, official records, and public disclosure filings.

For example, in the rules package that passed in the House last month, the House charged the Clerk's Office to "continue efforts to broaden the availability of legislative documents in machine readable formats ... in furtherance of the institutional priority of improving public availability and use of legislative information produced by the House and its committees." Working with our partners in the legislative branch, we will continue to make this a priority. Additionally, we plan to make upgrades and improvements to our financial and lobbying disclosure systems.

We are fortunate to have a loyal team of employees who carry out their duties to the House with dedication and professionalism. We continue to focus on making training and



professional development opportunities available to our staff. I was very proud of the work our staff did this past year to ensure the smooth relocation of a number of our divisions as a result of the Cannon renewal project. We were able to relocate a large number of employees with little to no disruption in our services to the House community and general public.

We appreciate the Subcommittee's ongoing support for the operations of the Office of the Clerk. For the upcoming fiscal year, we respectfully request \$24.98 million to carry out our ongoing and new responsibilities to the House. Thank you, again, for the opportunity to testify.

