

Statement of Mary B. Mazanec
Director, Congressional Research Service
Before the
Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
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Chairman Ryan, Ranking Member Herrera Beutler and Members of the Subcommittee,

Thank you for the opportunity to present the fiscal 2021 budget request, in the amount of 129.52 million dollars, for the Congressional Research Service (CRS). I would also like to thank the Committee for your support of our fiscal 2020 request. With today's testimony, I look forward to highlighting several noteworthy fiscal 2019 accomplishments for CRS, updating you on a number of strategic initiatives of the Service, and providing more detail regarding our priorities for the requested fiscal 2021 funds. In addition, I will outline CRS's plans to expand support on science and technology-related issues for Congress.

SERVICE TO CONGRESS

First and foremost, our mission is to support the work of Congress. Fiscal 2019 was an especially productive year on that front. Congress relied upon CRS experts to support the full range of its legislative, oversight and representational duties. The Service examined the nature and extent of the various policy questions under its consideration; identified and assessed policy options; assisted with oversight and fact-finding activities; supported congressional review of nominations and treaties; and provided products, information, and consultations. CRS supported Congress during every stage of the legislative process and across a range of timely public policy issues including: agriculture; international trade; border security; cybersecurity and data privacy; campaign finance; climate change; prescription drug development and distribution; and healthcare reform. In addition, CRS experts provided context and analysis of issues related to U.S. engagement in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East. CRS analysts also assisted Congress with a variety of questions related to legislative procedure, executive branch operations, federal agency rulemaking, and the budget and appropriations process.

During fiscal 2019, the Service responded to over 71,000 requests from congressional offices and committees, including approximately 6,500 in-person consultations. This represented a more than thirteen percent increase in requests over the previous fiscal year. Additionally, analysts, attorneys, and information professionals prepared 1,100 new products and updated over 2,000 existing products. CRS staff also conducted 345 seminars and hosted over 10,400 congressional participants, representing a twenty-one percent increase in attendance over fiscal 2018. As in

previous years, the Service provided support to more than 99% of Member and committee offices.

In cooperation with the Committee on House Administration, CRS hosted seventy Members from the freshman class of the 116th Congress at its New Member Seminar in Williamsburg, Virginia in January 2019. The four-day policy orientation provided critical information and training on legislative and budget process, as well as objective overviews of policy issues such as health care, defense, immigration, cybersecurity, transportation, and global challenges. Members of Congress were also introduced to the variety of CRS and Library services available to support them in their new roles. CRS is looking forward to delivering a successful New Member Seminar for the incoming 117th Congress in January 2021.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

CRS is fully engaged in accomplishing the priority initiatives identified in last year's budget request and the 2019-2023 CRS Directional Plan, which established two goals. The first goal is to "Enhance service and access for all of Congress." The second goal is to "Optimize resource utilization." Fiscal 2019 marked the completion of and continued progress on a number of objectives aligned with these two goals. The following is a summary of the action items taken to advance these initiatives over the past year:

Identifying and Addressing the Full Range of Congressional Information Needs

The Service contracted with Gallup, Inc. to gather feedback from congressional users in 2020, regarding satisfaction with CRS products and services. As the mid-point of fiscal 2020 approaches, CRS is on target to meet the milestones related to this effort.

IT Modernization/Integrated Research and Information Systems (IRIS)

The IRIS initiative is a multi-year effort to modernize the Service's mission-specific information technology (IT) to provide CRS staff with the best tools possible to create and deliver products and services to Congress. CRS completed the first phase of the IRIS initiative in fiscal 2019. Working with the Library's Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO), CRS installed the initial hardware and software foundation, and embarked on an intensive effort focused on the Service's authoring, content management, and publishing tools. At the end of fiscal 2019, CRS completed a pilot project with approximately fifty CRS staff serving as users. The lessons learned from the pilot will inform future development efforts. Our next goal is to reach a minimum viable product (MVP) and conduct a second pilot test with a larger group of CRS users. CRS will continue to work with OCIO to modernize its IT infrastructure with the deployment of new IT tools and software.

Congress.gov/Legislative Information System (LIS) Retirement

The Legislative Information System (LIS) user interface was retired from use in November 2019, completing the migration to a more authoritative, reliable, secure and advanced source of legislative information for congressional users. To prepare congressional staff for the retirement of LIS and transition to Congress.gov, CRS conducted a series of outreach and education campaigns. Information related to the transition was posted on the LIS homepage, Twitter, as well as emailed directly to users. CRS also delivered over 3,000 brochures to Member and committee offices promoting the capabilities of Congress.gov and outlining available training dates. The Service provided classroom, webinar, or customized Congress.gov training to over 1,100 staff members from more than 422 congressional offices. In addition, a number of enhancements to Congress.gov were released in fiscal 2019 including committee report search and display improvements; searchable committee schedules; and improved email alert capability. CRS, in partnership with OCIO and the Law Library, will continue to enhance the functionality of Congress.gov and to ensure that congressional users are comfortable with the transition to this resource.

Constitution of the United States of America: Analysis and Interpretation (CONAN) Modernization

On September 17, 2019, “Constitution Day,” the Library of Congress and CRS launched a new website for CONAN—constitution.congress.gov. Known officially as the “Constitution of the United States of America: Analysis and Interpretation,” CONAN has served as the official record of the U.S. Constitution for Congress for over a century. Prepared by CRS legislative attorneys, the publication provides a historical overview of the origins of the Constitution as well as analysis and explanation of the Supreme Court’s jurisprudence with respect to every provision. The modernized CONAN website provides improved search capabilities and a user-friendly interface, making the content fully searchable and accessible to congressional and public users for the first time. During fiscal 2019, CRS staff prepared 440 pages of constitutional analysis and other content to replace outdated material. Further improvements to CONAN’s functionality and additional revised content are planned in the coming year.

Strengthening the Workforce: Staff Recruitment, Retention and Development

CRS’s most valuable resource is its staff and the Service is fully committed to supporting programs to ensure the recruitment, retention, and professional development of a highly skilled and diverse workforce. During fiscal 2019, the Service provided a variety of training activities, empowering staff to strengthen and maximize their knowledge and skills including: professional writing, oral presentation delivery, leadership and senior executive training, and mentoring. CRS also provided training for staff on the topic of “unconscious bias” as part of a broader effort to support a culture of diversity and inclusion. In the area of recruitment and retention, CRS working groups engaged in initiatives to examine diversity and inclusion activities at the Library and CRS as well as comparable agencies and organizations, and to identify strategies to improve the diversity of applicant pools for CRS positions.

Assessing Congress's Science and Technology-Policy Resource Needs

As directed by the conference report accompanying the Energy and Water, Legislative Branch, and Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act, 2019 (P.L. 115-244), CRS contracted the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) to assess the science and technology policy-related resources currently available to Congress in the Legislative Branch and to make recommendations on how to best enhance such support. The NAPA study found gaps in the provision of needed resources including: networking, consultative support, short and medium term reports, and so called "horizon scanning" reports that identify emerging trends and issues. The report provided Congress with a number of recommendations including: enhancing the science and technology capabilities of existing Legislative Branch support agencies, such as CRS; creating a separate agency to fill existing gaps in available resources; and creating a science and technology advisory office.

Knowledge Management

CRS continued to capture and digitize institutional knowledge and facilitate knowledge sharing through its Knowledge Management Initiative. Fiscal 2019 marked the launch of the CRS Research Portal, a tool intended to curate research materials gathered by analysts, attorneys, and librarians on selected public policy issues. In addition, CRS continued efforts to digitize its products. Continuation of these and other activities are planned for fiscal 2020 and beyond and will facilitate improved management of CRS's information resources, more effective collaboration among CRS experts, and better responsiveness to Congress's information and reference needs.

FISCAL 2021 BUDGET REQUEST AND THE NEED FOR INCREASED RESEARCH CAPACITY

The CRS budget request for fiscal 2021 is 129.52 million dollars, an increase of 9 million dollars (or 7.5 percent) over the amount appropriated for fiscal 2020. The requested increase includes 7.1 million dollars for mandatory pay related and price level increases. As in previous fiscal years, staff pay and benefits account for approximately 86 percent of the amount requested by CRS.

In fulfilling its mission, CRS must constantly assess its available resources to ensure that it is meeting Congress's needs. Over the past year, this Committee and others in Congress have considered whether Congress has the "deep technical advice necessary to understand and tackle the growing number of science and technology policy challenges facing our country." For example, the House Committee on Science, Space, & Technology held a hearing entitled, "Experts Needed: Options for Improved Science and Technology Advice for Congress."

To address this need, as part of its budget proposal CRS is requesting 1.93 million dollars to enhance its research capacity in the science and technology area by adding 12 FTE. The

additional positions would enable CRS to provide Congress more timely and robust support on a variety of science and technology related issues including: cybersecurity, natural resources, renewable fuels, climate change, and federal government information and IT management policy.

CONCLUSION

It is an honor to serve as Congress's research and analytical arm. Each day we strive to fulfill our mission by providing Congress with "the highest quality of research, analysis, information, and confidential consultation, to support the exercise of its legislative, representational, and oversight duties." As always, our top priority looking forward will be to continue providing Congress with timely, authoritative, non-partisan, and objective support. The initiatives and requested increases in today's testimony, reflect CRS's ongoing commitment to meet the important responsibility that Congress has entrusted to us; and to do so as comprehensively and efficiently as possible. On behalf of my colleagues at CRS, I would like to express my appreciation to the Committee for its continued support and consideration of our fiscal 2021 request.

Mary B. Mazanec is the Director of the Congressional Research Service.

Dr. Mazanec was appointed Director of CRS in December 2011 after serving as Deputy Director. Before coming to CRS, she served as a Deputy Assistant Secretary and Director of the Office of Medicine, Science and Public Health (OMSPH), Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR), Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

Before ASPR, Dr. Mazanec served as the Chief Medical Officer and Director of the Division of Public Health Services, Office of Health Policy, and Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (OASPE), DHHS. Before joining the OASPE, she was a Senior Policy Analyst for the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC). Dr. Mazanec was a 1998-1999 Robert Wood Johnson Health Policy Fellow. During her fellowship and immediately thereafter, she was a Senior Health Policy Analyst/Advisor for the Subcommittee of Public Health, Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions.

Dr. Mazanec received her BS from the University of Notre Dame and her MD and JD from Case Western Reserve University (CWRU). She completed her internal medicine training at the University of Michigan, and her subspecialty training in pulmonary and critical care medicine at CWRU. She is a Diplomat of the American Boards of Internal Medicine and Pulmonary Medicine. Dr. Mazanec is currently an adjunct Associate Professor of Medicine and Pathology at CWRU, and a member of the Ohio State Bar and the District of Columbia Bar.