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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 2022 budget request for the Congressional Research Service (CRS). At the outset, I would like to thank the Committee for your support of our fiscal 2021 request. CRS has already begun efforts to recruit the expertise needed to strengthen CRS's science and technology-related analytical capacity. We also continue to work with the Library's Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) to modernize CRS's IT systems.

In addition to outlining CRS's budget requirements for the coming year, my testimony today will highlight a selection of noteworthy support the Service provided to Congress during fiscal 2020, and hopefully draw your attention to the resilience and dedication of CRS staff in supporting Congress during this most challenging period. I will also bring you up to date on developments related to a number of our strategic initiatives.

SERVICE TO CONGRESS

Fiscal 2020 was a year like no other. The emergence and spread of COVID-19 exacted a toll on human life and the national economy that was unprecedented. And yet, despite the enormous disruption caused by the global pandemic, I am pleased to report that CRS continued to successfully carry out its mission to provide Congress "the highest quality of research, analysis, information, and confidential consultation, to support the exercise of its legislative, representational, and oversight duties." This would not have been possible but-for the perseverance of CRS staff and I would like to thank my colleagues for their hard work in fulfilling this important responsibility.

In March of 2020, as news of the impending pandemic grew increasingly dire, CRS worked quickly to execute the CRS pandemic plan to ensure that it would continue to support Congress's needs during any prolonged pandemic event. Within 24 hours, the Service transitioned its entire operation, expanding existing workplace flexibilities to enable staff to work remotely full-time. As a result, CRS was well positioned to provide Congress with timely analysis, information, and consultative support as it considered the plethora of issues presented by this public health crisis. From March through September 2020, CRS prepared and regularly updated over 1000 new products on COVID-19-related issues. To enable expedited access to these products, a COVID-19 resource page was developed on the CRS.gov and Congress.gov websites, organizing CRS prepared material under 26 issue areas, covering topics ranging from the temporary moratorium on evictions provided under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act to frequently asked questions regarding testing for COVID-19. Several of these products incorporated custom CRS graphics. In addition, CRS experts responded to over 8200 COVID-related inquiries and conducted over 80 briefings for congressional staff on COVID-related subjects. CRS continues to support Congress as the issues presented by the pandemic evolve.

In addition to COVID-19 related issues, CRS assisted Congress in its consideration of many other policy and legal questions presented. CRS experts provided extensive research and analytical support as Congress explored the impact of climate change on the agricultural sector; voting rights and election security; comprehensive energy policy; prescription drug regulation; and police reform, among others. The Service worked closely with lawmakers as they considered legislation to reauthorize the Higher Education Act and the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act, as well as enactment of the Great American Outdoors Act. In addition, analysts and attorneys advised Members and congressional staff on the legal and procedural questions associated with impeachment proceedings and supported the Senate's consideration of various judicial nominations, including the confirmation of a new Supreme Court Justice.

The Service supported Congress's examination of various foreign affairs, defense, and trade related matters, such as developments in the Middle East region, US-China trade relations, renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement, and the national security implications of emerging technology in advanced weapons systems. CRS experts also provided guidance on the legislative process, congressional oversight, and the annual appropriations bills.

In addition, CRS continued its offering of seminars and programs for congressional staff, including sessions on the Global Implications and Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic; FY2021 Federal Research and Development (R&D) Funding; and the perennially popular Federal Law Update series. Due to the pandemic, many of CRS's programs were presented virtually during the fiscal year, and the Service quickly transitioned its in-person institutes to webinar format.

In total, during fiscal 2020, CRS experts responded to over 75,000 congressional requests; prepared over 1300 new products; updated over 2500 existing products; and conducted live and virtual seminars that were attended by approximately 8500 congressional staff. As in previous years, the Service provided support to almost every Member and committee office through the provision of its products and services.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

CRS remains engaged in accomplishing the goals and objectives identified in its 2019-2023 Directional Plan. The following is a summary of the Service's progress during fiscal 2020 in advancing some of the key initiatives undertaken to achieve these goals.

Gallup, Inc. Survey and Addressing the Full Range of Congressional Information Needs

In fiscal 2020, CRS contracted with Gallup, Inc., to conduct a survey of congressional staff designed to gauge the value and utility of various research products and consultative services offered by CRS, as well as to gather information about how such products and services are used by Congress. Gallup contacted over 13,700 congressional staff from early February through mid-March 2020 and received survey responses from over 1300 district, state, and DC-based staff members. CRS continues to evaluate and consider the results as it develops and delivers research products and services to Congress.

IT Modernization/Integrated Research and Information Systems (IRIS)

CRS continues to work with the Library's Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) to modernize its IT infrastructure with the deployment of new tools and software to enhance support to congressional stakeholders. The Integrated Research and Information System (IRIS) initiative is a multi-year effort to update the Service's mission-specific information technology to provide CRS staff with the best resources to create and deliver products and services to

Congress. CRS and OCIO are currently implementing several major work streams. These efforts include updating the client relationship management and workforce information management systems, improving the text analysis program to provide greater ease of conducting legislative analysis and comparisons, streamlining the content management system, and enhancing the taxonomy tool for better search results. These improvements are in varying stages of development and implementation.

Congress.gov

In fiscal 2020, CRS and the Library continued efforts to enhance Congress.gov and improve congressional user support with a number of developments, such as offering weekly alerts of future committee meetings and increasing access to legislative amendments, committee prints, and committee hearing transcripts. CRS also conducted live onsite and webinar training for congressional staff from 90 House Member offices and committees, as well as answering over 12,000 requests for assistance. In addition to ongoing enhancements, CRS partnered with OCIO and the Law Library to focus on multiple projects to retire legacy backend systems that, once replaced, will improve functionality of Congress.gov. Other projects accomplished in fiscal 2020 include modernizing the legislative data interchange between the House Clerk and the Library; developing tools and data standards for curating legislative data; exploring opportunities for efficient collaboration on bill text analysis; and sustaining and streamlining the CRS Bill Summary analysis, authoring, and publishing processes. CRS and its Library colleagues are appreciative of the ongoing high-performing partnership with House Clerk colleagues as legislative data workflows, tools, and standards are modernized.

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

Modernization

Known officially as the “Constitution of the United States of America: Analysis and Interpretation,” CONAN serves as the official record of the U.S. Constitution for Congress. In 2019, CRS collaborated with OCIO and the Law Library to introduce a new website for CONAN: constitution.congress.gov. The new site features hundreds of pages of updated constitutional analysis and content. In fiscal 2020, CRS legislative attorneys have continued to provide comprehensive analysis of the Supreme Court’s jurisprudence as it relates to every

provision of the U.S. Constitution, including the implications of recently decided cases. Since the launch of the public website in 2019, CONAN has received over three million unique visitors to the site and its pages have been viewed over seven million times.

Improving Recruitment and Retention of a Diverse and Productive Workforce

CRS continued its efforts to recruit, retain, and professionally develop a highly skilled staff. For example, in fiscal 2020, the Service provided training on core presentation skills for virtual briefings, as well as encouraged participation learning sessions on diversity and inclusion. In addition, the CRS Diversity and Inclusion Working Group continued to meet throughout fiscal 2020, and discussed, among other things, outreach strategies for improving the diversity of applicant pools for CRS positions and fostering an inclusive workplace.

FISCAL 2022 BUDGET REQUEST AND PRIORITIES

The CRS budget request for fiscal 2022 is 129.6 million dollars, an increase of 4.1 million dollars (or 3.1 percent) from the amount appropriated for fiscal 2021. As in previous years, approximately 90 percent of the requested amount would be dedicated to staff pay and benefits. CRS is requesting no additional funding beyond that which is necessary to cover mandatory pay and price level cost increases.

During this time of national crisis, CRS's top priority is to ensure sufficient capacity to continue the delivery of its core services to meet Congress's research and analytical needs. In fiscal 2022, CRS will continue to bolster analytical capacity, especially in the area of science and technology policy. This additional expertise will better enable CRS to support Congress in areas of increasing complexity and importance. In addition, the Service will continue to work closely with OCIO to meet the next milestones in modernizing its IT infrastructure. Moreover, CRS will build on its efforts to recruit, retain, and develop a diverse, professional workforce, with the skills and expertise necessary to provide Congress with exceptional service.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Herrera Beutler and Members of the Subcommittee, CRS is honored to serve as a trusted and reliable resource for Congress during this difficult period in our

nation's history. The accomplishments outlined above are a testament to CRS's commitment to support Congress with timely, authoritative research, analysis and information, undeterred by the challenges that we now face. On behalf of my colleagues at CRS, I would like to express my appreciation to the Committee for your continued support and for your consideration of our fiscal 2022 request.