

**Office of the Sergeant at Arms
Testimony of
The Honorable William J. Walker
Sergeant at Arms
U.S. House of Representatives
Before
The Subcommittee on Legislative Branch
Committee on Appropriations
January 11, 2022**

Good morning Chairman Ryan, Ranking Member Herrera Beutler, and Members of the Appropriations Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch. I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today and thank you for your ongoing support. It is an honor and a privilege to serve this great Institution, and I look forward to continuing our partnership with the Subcommittee. I also thank the Members of this Subcommittee for the supplemental appropriation for the United States Capitol Police (USCP). The appropriations are a sound down payment on reducing the many risks and vulnerabilities facing Congress.

Before I begin, I must acknowledge the debt of gratitude we owe the USCP, the Metropolitan Police Department, the National Guard and all law enforcement officers who defended the Capitol and democracy last year. We must remember those we have lost over the past year – Officers Brian Sicknick, Howard Liebengood, and Billy Evans of the USCP and remember that many of officers still bear scars, seen and unseen. However, their steadfast commitment to this institution serves as a powerful inspiration, and I am fortunate to work collaboratively with the brave and dedicated officers of the U.S. Capitol Police.

Let me get right to the bottom-line, we are unquestionably safer today than we were a year ago. The question is, are we safe enough? The answer is: work remains. Because the threat landscape today is ever changing, the security of the Capitol, its Members, staff, and visitors is a never-ending journey, not a destination. To meet the security challenges posed by the constantly evolving threat, the Office of the House Sergeant at Arms (HSAA) and the USCP must be ever vigilant and proactive.

What has changed? The HSAA is better leveraging human resources, technology, and partnerships to provide the safest, and most secure atmosphere possible. The HSAA has hired security subject matter experts from the United States Secret Service, the U.S. Intelligence Community, the Department of Homeland Security, and other agencies. These experts have deep knowledge, experience, and a history of success protecting people, property, and data. These personnel additions supplement the existing dedicated, professional and committed HSAA.

Member security is my highest priority. Member security has five dimensions: Member security at the Capitol, at their residences, during travel, events in their Districts and threats to Members.

After January 6th, all spaces within the Capitol complex occupied by Members have access to duress alarms.

I request resources for every Member to have at their Washington, D.C. and district residence a standard security package.

I also request resources for a Member Travel Operations Center to support all domestic and foreign travel. This would build on newly created partnerships with the Department of Homeland Security (Transportation Security Administration) and the Department of State (Overseas Security Advisory Council) regarding threats to Members while traveling.

For events in a Member's District, I recommend a standardized suite of training for all District Law Enforcement Coordinators (DLEC). My office is developing new training including videos for District Coordinators. Topics include security awareness, threat and risk assessments and risk mitigation. Ideally, your DLEC would be either a former local Law Enforcement professional or someone with strong ties to the local Law Enforcement community. The Coordinator would routinely meet with local Law enforcement to assess security for Members. Plans also include re-energizing regional and national District Coordinator security conferences attended by USCP and HSAA staff.

Threats to Members will be deterred through aggressive identification and prosecution of offenders. The unprecedented number of threats must be addressed and disincentivized. Prosecution, prison time, and publicity surrounding those brought to justice will reduce the threats. When I served with the Drug Enforcement Administration, we partnered with United States Attorney's Offices to have special agent attorneys be designated as Special Assistant United States Attorney's to prosecute drug offenses. I shared the concept with the USCP and insisted they hire Attorneys to serve as Special Assistant United States Attorneys to assist in the prosecution of threats against Members, which they did.

In addition, the HSAA, in concert with the Intelligence Community is facilitating the gathering of threats against Members. We are also collaborating with the Department of Justice on prosecutions. My objective is to work more effectively in integrating State and local prosecutors in bringing those making threats against Members to justice. Accordingly, I ask Members to urge the Department of Justice to provide their full support and assistance to all prosecutable threats made against Members. Threats against Members must be an enforcement priority for the Department of Justice as well as State and local jurisdictions.

Another priority of mine is the hardening of the Capitol, both physically and electronically. The Architect of the Capitol (AOC) can most fully comment on the physical security assessments underway, the physical security improvements in design, and ongoing construction. My office is exploring new technologies, in collaboration with the Architect of the Capitol that would further secure the Capitol.

Identity Access Management is also an initiative which will increase security at the Capitol. Working in collaboration with this Subcommittee and the Capitol Police Board, I would like to institute a Capitol Access Verification Entry System (CAVES) program. The system would ensure Members of Congress and the USCP know exactly who is entering the Capitol Complex and for how long. CAVES would be a security model based on a strict identity verification process. Having a secure ID with the proper electronic devices and software to validate highly secure government identification is an essential starting point for the CAVES system.

Another priority is Capitol Security Officers. The HSAA proposed the Capitol Security Officer concept which we are working with the Capitol Police Board to implement. The Capitol Security Officer concept is based on the U.S. Marshals Service use of Court Security Officers to augment Deputy Marshals to protect judges and provide security in the 94 Judicial Districts in the United States, the Territories, and the District of Columbia.

The use of Capitol Security Officers will come after a thorough review of all posts throughout the Capitol complex, to adequately determine duties and functions that are inherently “security” and those that are essentially “police” positions. Capitol Security Officers would not serve in lieu of officers; to be clear, the USCP needs those additional Police Officers. I strongly support whatever appropriation request that Chief Manger deems necessary to accomplish his mission. Adding Capitol Security Officers will serve as a force multiplier allowing Capitol Police Officers to train, focus on vital police and investigatory work, such as intelligence, threats, and dignitary protection, and allow officers to take their accrued leave.

Working together with the Members of this Subcommittee, the USCP, and Chief Manger, I feel strongly we are moving in the right direction with these and other proposed security enhancements. It is my intention to pursue these measures, and to continue to explore other security measures which will increase the safety and security of all Members of Congress.

As important as the timelines and priorities are, flexibility is also paramount in today’s risk management environment. As has been seen in the recent past, security departments must be able to move from response to civil unrest to appropriate screening of personnel in a professional and efficient manner. This requires flexibility in budgeting and timelines, which will be addressed in a forthcoming formal Security Master Plan.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before the Subcommittee. I am so appreciative for your unyielding support and partnership as we enhance the security of the Capitol complex. I would like the Subcommittee to know the HSAA, our partners on the Capitol Police Board, and the USCP are continually working on new initiatives and priorities to protect Members of Congress and the Capitol complex.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have.