CLERK | UNITED STATES HOUSE
of REPRESENTATIVES

**STATEMENT BEFORE THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH
ON THE OFFICE OF THE CLERK FY2023 BUDGET REQUEST**

THE HONORABLE CHERYL L. JOHNSON

APRIL 6, 2022

Chairperson Ryan and Ranking Member Herrera Beutler, Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for your ongoing support for the Office of the Clerk and for the opportunity to testify regarding our Office's operations and fiscal year 2023 budget request.

It gives me great pride to report that throughout this challenging time, we have continued to successfully support House legislative operations, Committees, and House Members while retaining a protective staffing structure. The Office of the Clerk consists of specialized professional staff across nine (9) divisions who support the House's operations while handling numerous diverse goals and priorities. Their capability, commitment, and energy are critical to the maintenance and modernization of this great institution.

The Office of the Clerk plays a vital role in the daily legislative activities of the House. Clerk staff facilitate Floor proceedings and operate the Electronic Voting System (EVS), manage proxy voting, produce the constitutionally mandated *House Journal*, transcribe Floor proceedings for the *Congressional Record*, process electronic submissions of legislative documents; oversee the recording of votes; upgrade Chamber technology and provide streaming video; prepare messages to the Senate about legislation that has passed the House; read bills, resolutions, amendments, motions, and presidential messages on the Floor; and make legislative activity updates publicly available via the Office of the Clerk's website (clerk.house.gov).

During the first session of the 117th Congress, Clerk staff processed 7,333 bills (with 57,947 original cosponsors and 56,082 additional cosponsors) and supported 712 hours of legislative Floor activity. In addition, we processed 17,318 proxy votes, made all proxy letters available on our website, and provided a quick guide to ensure compliance with H. Res. 8, which authorized voting by proxy. At the same time, we received and processed 6,532 financial disclosure documents, 111,650 lobbying disclosure documents, and hundreds of travel authorization forms, stationery orders, franked envelope requests, and related requisitions; supported all Committees in their use of the Committee Repository (docs.house.gov); and transcribed 7,849 *Congressional Record* pages and 133,665 Committee hearing transcript pages.

Regarding technology innovations, I will provide a few updates. Adopted at the start of the 117th Congress, Section (2)(l) of H. Res. 8 continued to permit Committees to electronically submit reported measures and both legislative and nonlegislative reports, a practice that began in the 116th Congress. Making this simple innovation permanent, which was a Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress recommendation, increased efficiencies and enabled Committee staff to collaborate remotely. During 2021 the Tally Clerks processed 144 Committee reports, 133 of which were submitted electronically.

Related to online submission, Legislative Computer Systems (LCS) staff are working to deliver a new and improved web-based eHopper experience for Members, their staff, and my staff in our Office of Legislative Operations. With integrated help and tooltips,

a step-by-step process will guide Members and staff through bill introduction and cosponsor addition and will ensure that the submission meets all requirements before it is sent to the Bill Clerks. We have scheduled the initial release of the Member application for later this month. We have already received requests from Member offices to provide additional features, such as submission tracking and automatic notification of the number assigned to the introduced bill or resolution after it has been processed. We are adding these items to our product roadmap and future delivery plans.

As I have testified previously, LCS is continuing the redevelopment and redesign of the Legislative Information Management System (LIMS), not only a mission-critical system, but the primary system Clerk staff use to manage House legislative operations, record legislative activities, and provide legislative data to our legislative branch data partners. Nearly all House legislative activities are recorded in LIMS. In 2021 LCS built most of the cloud infrastructure needed to deploy the new LIMS. This cloud infrastructure will be shared with other Clerk applications, such as the Comparative Print Suite and the eHopper. We are implementing cloud operations best practices for high availability, security, and cost management. We have worked closely with our peers in the Chief Administrative Officer's (CAO) organization, including those in the cloud, networking, identity, and Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) business units, to ensure solutions will work seamlessly with the House's enterprise infrastructure and adhere to policies for management, integration, and security. On the horizon are preparation for user-acceptance testing and production deployment for the first two LIMS modules: the Committee Action Reporting System (CARS) and the Bill Tracker Executive Action Reporting System (BEARS).

Another major multi-year initiative is the Comparative Print Project, a suite of software programs that will allow House staff and others to create on-demand, point-in-time comparative prints between legislative texts and between legislative text and the law. Specifically, the Comparative Print Suite displays how a bill might change current law and how two versions of a legislative proposal differ. As part of our pilot program, more than 160 House Committee staff and a small group from the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) and the Congressional Research Service (CRS) have access to the Comparative Print Suite. Their collective feedback about the system's usability, desirability, learnability, and accuracy continues to be positive and helpful. The project team has been working with the CAO's Congressional Staff Academy to develop on-demand and instructor-led courses. The project team is continuing to work on refining the system and is completing tasks related to the cloud infrastructure it will share with LIMS and the eHopper. In the coming weeks, we will release the Comparative Print Suite House-wide upon completion of the system's migration to the cloud infrastructure and required security audits.

For these three (3) products and any future products we build, we are committed to delivering modern applications and using state-of-the-art technologies, human-centered design principles, and cloud services to provide easy-to-use, robust, stable, secure, and reliable technical solutions for the House.

Another matter we are working on involves the lobbying disclosure system (lobbyingdisclosure.house.gov). Given the system's age, we recommend that it be redesigned and built anew. A contemporary system will improve the user experience, provide more efficient processing and automation, and allow for greater transparency. It will also allow us to meet the request of assigning unique identifiers to individual lobbyists. To assist in our analysis of this project, we continue to do research on similar systems in other jurisdictions and in both public and private sectors, and we are evaluating technologies that we can leverage in a redesign effort.

Additionally, LCS updated the Venus servers that drive the EVS main and summary displays in the House Chamber. This lifecycle replacement was critical to maintaining a robust and reliable display system. Finally, for fiscal year 2023 we are planning to install a redundant layer of data diode system for a secure, one-way communication of vote summary data.

We appreciate the Subcommittee's ongoing support for the operations of the Office of the Clerk. For fiscal year 2023, we respectfully request $40,327,000. The request is a net increase of $3,3827,000 (10.48%) above the fiscal year 2022 enacted funding level. Eighty-three percent (83%) of the requested amount will support salaries, training, and technology to carry out our existing and new responsibilities. Specifically, personnel expenses and training for 238 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions account for $28,327,600 of the overall request. The increase in personnel expenses supports the hiring of three (3) new technology staff to develop and maintain the increasing number of applications and systems my Office builds, maintains, and supports. I have only mentioned five (5) systems in my testimony today, but there are many more. IT staff in LCS need two engineers as well as a systems analyst who can lead new projects, work with customers and stakeholders to gather requirements, develop user stories, and collaborate with development teams throughout the application lifecycle.

More than $5,000,000 of the overall request will fund technology and modernization projects as well as business continuity and disaster recovery activities. This funding request supports procurement- and contractor-related costs for required maintenance of the EVS, the continued rollout of the Comparative Print Suite, continued development of the eHopper, and design and development of the lobbying disclosure system, as well as other items. Additionally, the requested funds will continue to support the modernization of LIMS.

The remaining seventeen percent (17%) of the overall request is for nonpersonnel-related expenses, equipment, software maintenance and warranties, nontechnology contractor support, and contracts (such as closed captioning, curation, exhibitions, and stenographic reporting).

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Herrera Beutler, Subcommittee Members: the Office of the Clerk is dedicated to making efficient and effective use of the funds allocated to our efforts in serving this great institution. Thank you again for your continued support and for the opportunity to testify. I look forward to your questions.

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