



U.S. House of Representatives

CAO

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Statement Before the House Appropriations
Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch
on the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer
FY2023 Budget Request

The Honorable Catherine L. Szpindor
April 6, 2022

Chairman Ryan, Ranking Member Herrera Beutler, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to present the **fiscal year (FY) 2023 priorities and subsequent budget request of \$211.2 million for the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)**.

I would also like to thank the Subcommittee for your continued support of the CAO and its talented and dedicated staff. We are now two years into the COVID-19 pandemic during which the support and services provided by the CAO have been critical to ensuring the continued and successful operations of the U.S. House of Representatives. During the past two years, the CAO has provided resources for Members and staff across the House to ensure they can carry out their Constitutional duties, while also providing resources and services to support them in their professional development, as well as their mental and physical health.

As the House continues to navigate a hybrid of in-person and remote work, the CAO continues to deliver, expand, and strengthen the services we provide the House – from ensuring on-campus and remote network connections remain secure; to providing counseling and well-being resources for Members and staff; to facilitating coaching and training designed specifically for the unique job roles at the House; to building, repairing, delivering, and installing furniture; to processing payroll and benefits for all House staff.

CAO'S GUIDING PRIORITIES

The CAO remains committed to its mission to serve the House community by providing administrative, technical, and operational solutions so Members can perform their Constitutional duties while guided by our organizational motto: **Member Focused. Service Driven.**

To realize our vision to be an essential resource for every Member of the People's House, the organization continues to focus on four priorities: 1) improve communications with Members and staff; 2) institute rigorous planning, prioritization, and execution of projects; 3) enhance its support of the well-being of House employees; and 4) promote and foster an inclusive and diverse workplace within the CAO.

FISCAL YEAR 2023 BUDGET REQUEST

I am grateful for the opportunity to highlight the important work of the CAO, as well as how the CAO's FY23 budget request will enable the organization to improve its existing services and offer new ones to meet the needs of the House community. The FY23 budget request for the CAO is \$211.2 million, an increase of \$18 million, or approximately 9 percent, above the FY22 enacted funding level.

The increase includes: \$5.9 million for critical technology initiatives, including strengthening the security of House cloud resources and improving and modernizing services like the House network, innovative improvements to Member office technologies by the new House Digital Service team, and development and operational support expenses for the Appropriations Submission Application. This increase will also fund the deployment and expansion of House data storage and bolster data archival and retrieval services.

Additionally, \$5 million of the requested increase for new initiatives from various CAO business units is redefined to the CAO's new Emerging Projects Investment Fund. The investment fund is for

high-priority, high-impact projects that are requested or identified by CAO leadership; House Leadership; or key stakeholders like this Subcommittee, the Committee on House Administration, and the Modernization Committee. This Emerging Projects Investment Fund will provide accountability for specific requested projects, ensuring the CAO makes wise investments that directly meet the priorities of the House. The fund provides early-stage capital to closely examine project requests, identify required resources, and fully determine the total cost of a project. This fund also gives the CAO the ability to compare the utility of each requested project with others that are “in the pipeline” to ensure all our projects create as much impact as possible for the House community.

An additional \$1.3 million is requested to provide our Logistics and Support team with further contractor support and equipment needed to conduct district offices inventories, the CAO TV Program, and acquiring and delivering new furniture.

The FY23 budget request includes \$5.8 million, or a 6.5 percent increase, in current personnel funding for staff longevities and a projected 4.6 percent cost of living adjustment.

Our FY23 budget request is consistent with our FY22 budget request in seeking an increase of 9 percent over the previous year. This requested increase in funding for the CAO is, in part, because the supplemental funding to support remote proceedings is no longer available for some of our operations necessitated by a hybrid in-person/remote work environment. We anticipate these remote tools and technologies will be needed for continued House operations.

PROTECTING THE HOUSE

The CAO’s Office of Cybersecurity is charged with protecting more than 12,000 Members and staffers who access the House network, systems, and data from across the country on over 40,000 separate devices. Now, possibly more than ever, a strong cybersecurity posture is critical to protect the House against cyberthreats constantly present domestically and around the world. In FY23, Cybersecurity will continue to secure, monitor, and support the House Cloud platform that is vital to continuing on-campus and remote House operations. Additionally, the team will bolster House Network Access Control, which ensures only approved devices can access the House network and data, ensuring no malicious devices can connect to or exploit House resources. The Cybersecurity team also works directly with Member offices to provide cybersecurity briefings at their request.

MODERNIZING HOUSE TECHNOLOGY

At the recommendation of the Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress, the CAO established an innovative House Digital Service team that will work to modernize House technology services and resources, making them accessible and user-friendly for Members and staff. This team will work differently than our more traditional enterprise-focused IT teams. It will closely observe and collaborate with Member office staff to identify their unique challenges and quickly develop solutions to meet those challenges using modern technology. The team will bring cutting-edge, private-sector ideas and practices with the freedom to experiment and innovate. House Digital Service will also leverage modern practices and technologies to rapidly test, build, and deploy production-grade software and deliver better products and services for the House.

The CAO is focused on additional ways to modernize House technology. Our Finance and House Information Resources teams are developing and deploying a new expense reimbursement submission, tracking, and approval system, called My Expenses. This tool will automate expense report submission and approval and will replace the need for wet signatures with the ability to approve reports through a mobile and desktop app. My Expenses will be rolled out to Member offices in waves beginning in April 2022. Starting in January 2023, the tool will be rolled out to Committee offices.

Another modernization effort was the 2021 launch of Quill, the popular e-signature platform for Congressional group letters. The tool, originally developed by the Senate, was modified for the House and is now helping staff create letters, gather signatures, and track progress of letters from start to finish. I am very pleased the Appropriations Committee has now required Member offices to use Quill to e-sign Community Funding Project requests. Our modernization efforts will continue to focus on simplifying and easing many administrative functions at the House. For example, during FY23, the CAO will improve the onboarding and offboarding of House staff by incorporating digital signature technology to simplify various processes.

TASK FORCE ON A DIVERSE AND TALENTED HOUSE WORKFORCE

Work in FY23 will also entail the continued growth of the Task Force on a Diverse and Talented House Workforce, in conjunction with this Subcommittee, the Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress, the Committee on House Administration, my fellow House Officers, and other stakeholders. Established at the direction of this Subcommittee, the Task Force, comprised of 25 staff from across the House, is working to improve human resources management practices throughout the House, including how it recruits, develops, and retains a diverse and talented workforce.

The Task Force is currently examining benefits, staff training, and possible workforce data improvements, including compensation and diversity data. This work is incredibly important, and working together with our fellow House colleagues, this Task Force will be an effective team focused on accomplishing the goals laid out by this Subcommittee.

During FY23, the Task Force will continue to explore opportunities to improve data about the House workforce. It will also study benefits and efforts that could improve staff retention. This will include developing a list of all known benefits currently available to House staff, as well as a review of potential benefits that could be offered.

HUMAN RESOURCES SUPPORT FOR THE HOUSE

The CAO will continue to grow its House Human Resources Hub (HR Hub). Officially launched in August 2021, the HR Hub now contains more than 125 documents, tools, and other assets. Content within the HR Hub is organized into three categories: **Hiring, Developing, and Retaining**. As of February 2022, the HR Hub has been visited over 7,000 times with nearly 3,000 documents downloaded.

The HR Hub will continue to expand to include additional resources, such as formal job descriptions and interactive career paths for the most common roles in Member offices. The CAO will also launch the House Resume Bank – a component of the HR Hub – where prospective applicants can submit their

resume for specific job roles. House offices can then pull candidates from the House Resume Bank based on their hiring needs and preferences.

I would also like to focus on the HR activities specific to my organization. We are working to improve our efforts to attract diverse talent to join the CAO. In addition to posting all CAO job openings on the Professional Diversity Network, which includes access to over 30 diversity-focused job boards, the CAO Human Resources team also attends job fairs sponsored by professional associations, affinity groups, colleges, and universities. In support of our diversity-focused recruitment efforts, the CAO has attended 17 in-person and virtual job fairs since 2019.

In 2022 and 2023, we will take further significant steps to increase our recruiting and outreach efforts specifically focused on diversity. The Human Resources team will appoint a staffer to manage and lead the CAO's diversity recruiting and outreach efforts, attend a minimum number of diversity-focused job fairs and events to recruit talent to the CAO, and use CAO social media to promote our job opportunities in new ways. The CAO will also establish a formal internship program to identify, hire, and develop entry-level talent.

WELL-BEING AND EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE

We are grateful for the \$500,000 in supplemental funding that this Subcommittee provided us in FY21 to expand employee assistance and well-being resources for the House during the trying days of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The CAO remains committed to supporting the well-being of House staff. Through its Office of Employee Assistance (OEA) and House Center for Well-Being, the CAO offers a wide array of support services and resources focused on improving and maintaining well-being.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, and following the January 6 attack on the Capitol, OEA's support services have been in demand across the House community, including in district offices. In the spring of 2021, the OEA expanded its services to include a secure video conferencing tool to conduct remote counseling sessions for clients. Additionally, the OEA introduced a new managerial coaching course offered in partnership with an industry leader in leadership coaching.

The OEA will continue to explore new resources and services to directly support all House offices, including self-help mobile apps, possible partnerships with consulting psychiatrists to provide emergency support, and programs to research mental health resources and referrals nationwide that would allow OEA staff to devote maximum time to providing direct counseling services to House staff.

In November 2021, the CAO acquired and made available for all House staff premium access to the popular meditation, sleep, and relaxation app, Calm. Additionally, the House Center for Well-Being greatly expanded its resilience and meditation training and resources for Members, managers, staff, and U.S. Capitol Police officers, which have proven to be very popular.

The Center for Well-Being will offer House staff access to additional nationally recognized and popular apps, programs, and resources so staff have even more opportunities to focus on their well-being. The Center will also explore additional benefits such as gym and fitness studio memberships, tax prep and filing services, resume building and review software, and on-site and off-site social offerings.

STAFF TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In June 2021, the CAO launched a new staff training program, called CAO Coach. The program is currently staffed by two experienced former Chiefs of Staff and two experienced former District Directors. The program will expand to include two recent Legislative Directors to further build out the program's offerings.

Drawing on their decades of experience, the Coaches develop programming that features their colleagues as panelists discussing in-demand topics like *Coping with Emotional Casework*, *De-Escalating Challenging Situations in a Congressional Office*, and *Parenting as a Staffer*. The Coaches are developing a "101" video series for every common job position in a House office, hosting staff networking events, helping facilitate retreats, and providing customized training as requested by Member offices.

The Congressional Staff Academy continues to offer a wide catalog of professional development curriculum for House staff, including managerial and leadership development training for new and seasoned managers. Additionally, the Staff Academy provides access to the LinkedIn Learning platform for all House staff, granting access to tens of thousands of on-demand learning opportunities on a vast array of topics. The Staff Academy also facilitates the important required annual trainings for the House community, including Workplace Rights and Responsibilities Education, Cybersecurity Awareness Training, and Ethics trainings.

CONGRESSIONAL MEMBER LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

At the recommendation of the Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress, the CAO has also launched the Congressional Member Leadership Development Program, a new Member training effort. As part of this effort, the CAO is piloting the Congressional Excellence Program, which will provide current and future generations of Congressional leaders with training and resources that can equip them to better serve the American people. The Congressional Excellence Program pairs Members and their Chiefs with experts in leadership and organizational development to build a compelling vision of service, display excellence in leadership, and generate significant impact on behalf of their districts and our nation.

Also, as part of the Congressional Member Leadership Development Program, the CAO has partnered with the Congressional Management Foundation to create a series of leadership podcasts called *The Exemplary Member*, which is designed specifically for Members of Congress. The first episode has already been released to the House community, with the rest of the series to be aired in the coming months.

CONCLUSION

Through our strategic focus on planning, prioritizing, and executing our projects, we are confident the investments, priorities, and initiatives outlined above will directly support and facilitate the critical work of the People's House and the Members and staff who serve it each day.

Thank you again for your support and for the opportunity to present the CAO's FY23 budget request.