

**Office of the Sergeant at Arms
Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Submission**

**Statement of Mr. William P. McFarland
Sergeant at Arms
U.S. House of Representatives
Before
The Subcommittee on Legislative Branch
Committee on Appropriations**

Good morning Chairman Valadao, Ranking Member Espaillat, and Members of the Committee. I appreciate the invitation to appear before you today in support of the fiscal year (FY) 2025 budget request for the Office of the Sergeant at Arms (SAA), which totals \$34,141,000 and 206 full-time equivalents (FTEs); a decrease of \$4.6 million, or 11.99% and an increase of 11 FTEs from the FY2024 enacted level.

This budget request expands upon the priorities and initiatives that I testified on last year and that the SAA has successfully launched and continues to implement today. These priorities and initiatives focus on 1.) investing in SAA employees; 2.) modernizing the SAA; and 3.) continuing and building security and safety programs.

In my testimony last year, I emphasized the importance of the SAA workforce and detailed how they are the organization's most valuable resource. As part of the SAA Strategic Plan established last year, the SAA launched a people initiative to focus on and invest in its workforce. To date, investments in the SAA workforce include: the creation of a staff council—a forum to provide the workforce with a voice to express interests or concerns to upper management, improve transparency within the organization, and increase employee engagement; providing a detailed series of leadership workshops and online curricula to **all** SAA employees; and providing customer service training from top-ranked hospitality trainers to employees within our Information Services, Protocol and Special Events, Chamber Operations, and Parking Security Divisions. We have also implemented organization-wide cross-training opportunities for interested SAA staff to expand their knowledge base and increase the level of service we provide to the Congressional community.

In partnership with a global human capital consulting company, the SAA continues to promote transparency amongst the workforce through two strategic initiatives 1.) a revised performance management program and 2.) developing transparent career paths. In January, the SAA released two performance management guides containing best practices to support meaningful interactions around employee performance and career development. This initiative is intended to support staff career growth and development within not only an employee's respective division, but the organization at large. The idea is to develop and keep great talent within the organization and encourage longevity with our team.

Since my last appearance before this Committee, two additional Strategic Plan initiatives have been introduced. In January, each SAA staff member received a skills survey to collect information regarding the most important skills and skill expectations across positions and

divisions. Also, a SAA Policy Repository Project was launched in March 2024, allowing all SAA staff to easily access organizational policies, thus increasing transparency and aligning expectations of staff.

Included in the FY2025 budget request, the SAA is requesting \$21.5 million in support of 206 FTEs. In addition to base salaries, this figure includes a projected cost of living adjustment (COLA), longevity increases, and \$200,000 for meritorious increases to be awarded as part of the SAA's new performance management program. Additionally, included as part of the non-personnel request, the SAA is requesting \$355,000 to continue providing training and professional development opportunities and investments in the workforce.

Last year, as part of our efforts to expand the ways in which we communicate and engage with the Congressional Community, we launched the SAA Service Center. The SAA Service Center serves as a one-stop shop for Congressional offices to ask questions, pick up tickets for special events, outreach and communications on SAA services, and for SAA staff to conduct briefings, trainings, and meetings. In 2023, the Service Center distributed tickets for the Joint Meetings of Congress for the visits of the President of the Republic of Korea, Prime Minister of the Republic of India, and the President of the State of Israel. The Service Center distributed more than 26,000 Gallery Passes to Member offices.

In order to remain agile and adapt to the evolving needs of the House of Representatives and the greater Congressional community and to counter the growing threats that Members of Congress and their staffs face, the SAA continues to modernize its operations. In August 2023, the SAA finalized implementation of a new organizational structure to better support our Congressional stakeholders. I appreciate the Committee's support for this initiative. The SAA organization has grown over the years and our mission continues to expand; to support our expanding mission, we made these changes to our organizational structure to better align our teams, setting SAA employees up for success, while remaining agile and adapting to the needs of Congress. In the spirit of transparency, I was pleased to disseminate the SAA organizational chart to all SAA employees, something that had not been done throughout my tenure in the organization.

Last year, I spoke with the Committee about our efforts to launch a new platform to support security requests from Member offices. I am happy to report that in 2023, the SAA awarded a purchase order to develop a Secure Member Portal, which has since launched. I am also happy to report that the vast majority of Member offices have enrolled in this new application. We have identified future capabilities and are actively looking to incorporate them. This platform, which is accessible via computer or mobile device includes custom process flows, notifications, and dashboards and uses a low code platform to request and track the status of the various requests our office coordinates to include; travel security, district office security, threat reports, residential security, security trainings, law enforcement coordinators, law enforcement event support, and mail hoods. The FY2025 budget request includes \$300,000 for the recurring annual subscription to maintain this portal.

Also included in the budget request is funding for the SAA Police Services Division to provide in-person Security Awareness Briefings in Members' districts. In conjunction with the U.S. Capitol Police (USCP), Security Awareness Briefings provide a security overview for

Members and staff on how to respond to typical security issues that an office encounters, and includes best practices for district office security, residential security and for hosting and attending events in their district. In 2023, SAA employees provided 110 Security Awareness Briefings with Congressional and law enforcement partners. The FY2025 budget request includes \$100,000 for Security Awareness Briefings and \$60,000 for the District Security Service Center to conduct site visits to district offices to provide information on security systems, mail hoods, and other security functions.

Other security initiatives that the SAA has undertaken include purchasing twenty-five two drawer safes and twenty-five five drawer safes for use by Members and staff to safeguard classified and national security information.

Recently, we have seen demonstrations and other security incidents targeting Members' homes. In order to provide guidance and best practices to members' families the SAA created and distributed a "Spouse and Family Safety and Security Guide". This guide is a SAA publication produced to address safety and security concerns of spouses and families of Members. The guide covers general security best practices, protecting personal identifiable information (PII), travel security, and emergency preparedness. It also provides emergency contact information and a fill-in template for family emergency contacts.

Furthermore, my Police Services Division has met individually with Member offices and Committees regarding swatting, and how SAA programs and law enforcement coordination can assist with mitigating the risk. The SAA has successfully assisted Members with having their personal addresses identified with local law enforcement to ensure communication and de-escalation. Additionally, in partnership with Ms. Catherine Szpindor, the Chief Administrative Officer, and her team, the SAA created a cyber security program to provide data and privacy protection and to assist with removing sensitive PII from the internet, making Member addresses more difficult to locate on the internet. The FY2025 budget request includes \$441,000 to reimburse Members for this program.

The Emergency Management Division partnered with the American College of Surgeons Committee on Trauma (ACS) to provide bleeding control training to the House community. This training teaches multiple ways to control severe bleeding followed by hands-on training using tourniquets, wound packing gauze, and other equipment. Additionally, the SAA purchased bleeding control kits to place across the House wing of the Capitol and the House Office Buildings.

I want to thank this Committee, as well as House leadership for your support on SAA's efforts to re-invigorate long stalled security upgrade projects. As I spoke about last year, my team is committed to these vital projects around campus. I have worked closely with your Committee, the Acting Architect's team and my counterparts in the USCP and Senate, and we have made some progress, but we have a lot more work to do as an institution. I look forward to continuing to work with new project managers from the Architect of the Capitol to see these projects to completion.

With the State of the Union Address now behind us, the SAA is preparing for a busy year ahead. Planning for the Presidential nominating conventions is well underway. SAA staff from

both the Police Services and Emergency Management Divisions have been coordinating with the USCP and other state and federal law enforcement partners. In fact, my team and I made a trip to both sites last month. As we move from the nominating conventions in August and through the elections, our focus will turn to planning for the Presidential Inauguration. In my role as Chair of the Capitol Police Board, I have asked that USCP provide continual updates to the Board throughout the planning process.

As we move forward, I would like to highlight some initiatives included in our FY2025 budget request, and I look forward to updating the Committee on these efforts as we head into FY2025.

In the Division of House Garages and Parking Security, \$80,000 is being requested for the integration of a vehicle counting system. This effort aligns with my commitment to leverage technology into our workstreams. The system would allow for a real-time dashboard of garage and lot capacity and could be used dually as a traffic management system to assist with the entry and exit of vehicles. The system would give SAA visibility of vehicle surges on campus in a matter of minutes.

In the Police Service Division, \$100,000 is being requested for the continued development of a Digital Communications Tool. This tool, in the form of a smart phone app or physical device, will allow users to request emergency assistance using 911 or to communicate with USCP during emergencies.

In the Emergency Management Division, \$322,000 is being requested for critical maintenance and upgrades to the House Operations Center (HOC). The budget request provides funds to update and modernize HOC equipment, systems, and capabilities to provide reliable services and information to the House Officers and House Leadership during an emergency. Upgrades include the replacement of the video wall and the uninterrupted power supply.

This budget request includes \$60,000 for the annual license and maintenance support for the Joint Emergency Mass Notification System (JEMNS) Accountability Tool. This tool leverages the existing mass notification tool used by Congress, and allows Member offices, committees, and support offices to track the accountability of staff in the event of an emergency. Earlier this year, the SAA conducted system tests with targeted audiences. In May 2024, a House-wide test will occur with all DC-based House staff and barring any large issues, this new capability is expected to launch in Summer 2024.

This budget request continues moving the SAA along with modernization and adapting to the needs of the House of Representatives. To better serve Members and their staff, SAA is streamlining aspects of the transition between Congresses. The SAA intends to use the Service Center as a hub to enhance Member services the SAA provides. Additionally, in coordination with the Police Services Division, we will be creating new guides, trainings and other materials to highlight current services provided by the SAA, such as residential security, district security, cybersecurity, and travel security.

Additionally, the SAA continues to upgrade the Gallery Pass distribution system, including working with Member offices to explore offering passes directly to designated individuals and international visitors. Lastly, the SAA is finalizing upgrades to the software used

to process badging Official Business Visitors, with the goal of streamlining the process for both visitors and staff.

In our ongoing investment of the SAA staff, in the year ahead, we will continue to implement the initiatives of the consulting company in which we are in partnership. These initiatives include expansion of career development training with clearly defined career progressions.

The FY2025 SAA budget request has been prepared in the spirit of zero-based budgeting, remaining fiscally responsible without jeopardizing mission-critical services provided to the House community. For FY2025, the Office of the SAA requests a total of \$34,141,000. This includes \$21,513,000 for personnel expenses to fund the 195 current FTEs plus 11 new FTEs requested in FY25, as well as \$12,628,000 for non-personnel items. I am very pleased to sit in front of you today and report that we are able to decrease our funding needs in FY2025 by 11.99% overall.

In closing, the upcoming year will not only include building upon the initiatives my team has been working on the past 12 months, but it will also demand rigorous planning and coordination for high profile events with significant security and protocol requirements, including the nominating conventions, elections, election certification, and the Inauguration. Additionally, the House will continue to play host to pivotal events such as the joint meeting held just last week. As the Chief Protocol Officer, we will continue to expand upon our protocol services to ensure the highest degree of professionalism is extended to all dignitaries during Congressional events, and in coordination for their visits with Members of the House of Representatives. As Chairman of the Police Board during this critical period, my foremost priority is ensuring the safety and security of these gatherings.

My office is fully committed to continue delivering top-tier, non-partisan security services for our esteemed Members, their families, and staff. We recognize the immense responsibility entrusted to us and are dedicated to upholding the highest standards of professionalism and efficiency.

I look forward to working with this Committee and my fellow House Officers here today. I welcome any questions you may have, and I am happy to provide further insight into our strategies and preparations.