

**Statement of Robert R. Newlen
The Acting Librarian of Congress
Before the
Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives**

Fiscal 2027 Budget Request

March 6, 2026

Chairman Valadao, Ranking Member Espaillet, and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of the Library of Congress' Fiscal Year 2027 budget request. I am deeply grateful for the consistent support Congress has shown the Library throughout the last year and I am also profoundly grateful for the talented, resilient staff of the Library of Congress. After nearly five decades with this institution, I can say without hesitation that this is the strongest management team I have worked with.

As a legislative branch agency, the Library of Congress exists first and foremost to serve the United States Congress in the performance of its constitutional responsibilities. Thomas Jefferson once stated, "There is in fact no subject to which a member of Congress may not have occasion to refer." As a guiding principle, our vast work centers on this premise as we preserve the nation's intellectual and cultural heritage for the Congress and the American people.

From the outset of my tenure, my goal has been simple: to maintain exceptional service to the Congress. I have never approached this role as though it were only temporary stewardship. Instead, I have focused on preparing the Library for the future and ensuring we provide the best possible service to Congress and to the American public we serve.

The Library's Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 budget request totals \$931.429 million, which is a net increase of \$34.422 million (+3.8%) over the FY 2026 funding level, which has remained level since FY 2024.

The total request includes:

\$16.611 million to cover mandatory pay;

\$7.290 million for price level increases, and;

\$11.121 million and 7 FTE for program increases

The total request also includes a non-recur of \$600 thousand and \$44.849 million in offsetting collection authority for the Copyright Office.

While modernization and automation investments have allowed the Library to expand productivity and accomplish more with fewer resources, it is worth noting that the Library's staffing level has remained largely unchanged since FY 2015. Full-Time Equivalent levels at the Library have steadily declined from over 5,000 in the early 1990s to its current level of approximately 3,100. As they remain the greatest resource of the Library, it is critical that this relatively low staff level be adequately supported.

Continuing resolutions and level funding have required the Library to absorb increased costs for pay and inflation in recent fiscal years, threatening our ability to execute the Library's full range of programs and services as expected by the Congress.

This budget request is designed to maintain the Library's core operations, cover unavoidable cost increases, and make targeted investments that strengthen service, efficiency, and public value.

Over the past fiscal year, the Library has delivered meaningful accomplishments that advance our mission and directly benefit Congress and the public.

First, this year marks a quarter-century since Congress founded the Veterans History Project through unanimous consent. In the 25 years since, over 122,000 collections of US military veterans' original personal narratives, such as video or audio interviews, photographs, correspondence and diaries, have been preserved at the Library of Congress. Thousands of those have been gathered through direct Congressional encouragement and engagement. This milestone underscores an ongoing shared commitment to preserving firsthand accounts of service members, from WWI through recent conflicts. These collections honor veterans, serve educators and researchers nationwide, and provide Congress and constituents with a powerful record of service and sacrifice.

Second, Congress made it possible to modernize key systems in support of Congress and the American people. In fiscal 2025 the Library had success in many areas across the Library, including the launch of the Library Collections Access Platform (LCAP), allowing the Library to acquire, describe, and provide access to our vast collections; the release of the CRS website which provided a wide range of enhancements for congressional users; Copyright Public Records System, the new online public catalog replacement; and the launch of BARD 2.0, the National Library Service for the Blind & Print Disabled's Braille and Audio Reading Download service which provides NLS users across the US with instant access to hundreds of thousands of audio and braille books and magazines. These services provide us modern platforms on which we can build continued improvements to the important, effective and efficient services the Library makes available to Congress and the American people.

Beyond these specific accomplishments, the Library's work touched constituents in every state and territory. The Congressional Research Service continued to provide trusted, nonpartisan analysis directly to Members and committees. The National Library Service for the Blind and

Print Disabled ensured equitable access to reading materials for Americans with disabilities. Our digital platforms, particularly loc.gov, connected millions of users to authoritative information, historical documents, and educational resources. Together, these services demonstrated that every part of the Library is here to serve the Congress and the American people.

In close partnership with the Congress, the Library is also focused on improving how the public experiences and engages with the institution.

In the Thomas Jefferson Building, we continue to work closely with the Architect of the Capitol and are progressing with the Visitor Experience projects, including the upcoming opening of The Source (Youth Center) in May. The Source will be an active and participatory 4,000 square-foot space welcoming visitors—particularly kids ages 8-15 with their adults and school groups—to connect to digitized and replica materials from the Library’s rich primary source collections. The Orientation Gallery construction and exhibit fabrication is on-going with an anticipated opening in 2027.

As the nation approaches America’s 250th anniversary, the Library, which celebrates America every day through its collections documenting the nation’s history, creativity, and democratic ideals, is committed to playing a central role in this historic commemoration. The Library is actively planning programs and new exhibitions and is collaborating with the Congressionally chartered Semiquincentennial Commission on several of its initiatives. The Library is working on the Commission’s Our American Story initiative to ensure long-term archiving of oral histories, and offering technical guidance for contents of America’s Time Capsule to be installed in Philadelphia in July, which will then be made available to serve as a resource for other local, state and federal time capsules being planned for the 250th anniversary. Also, as we did in 2024 and 2025, the Library will host a group of students from across the United States in July as part of America’s Field Trip, offering an in-depth, behind-the-scenes tour of the Library.

This year especially, the Library invites all Americans to further appreciate the nation’s history by doing their own research and exploring the Library’s collections and expertise through exhibitions and dynamic programming. The Declaration’s Promise exhibit is planned to open on July 3, 2026, while the Two Georges: Parallel Lives in an Age of Revolution will remain open to the public through Independence Day. Then the Library’s exhibit Alive in Many Hands: 50 Years of the American Folklife Center, will open in September. Additionally, the Library continues to offer collections-inspired programming, such as monthly family days, afternoons with the Library and Live! At the Library, as well as Publica and Scholarly Symposia, and concerts, many of which will be organized to commemorate America’s 250th anniversary.

The Library has significantly expanded its public outreach and programming, both in person and virtually. Initiatives such as the National Book Festival, performances and exhibitions made possible through extraordinary gifts – such as the recent gift of a Stradivari instrument – and the

work of both the Poet Laureate and National Ambassador for Young People's Literature have enabled us to reach new audiences and engage the public in ways we could not before.

We are entering an exciting and consequential era for the Library.

We are continuing to responsibly harness the potential of artificial intelligence (AI) to improve internal processes, enhance services, and achieve cost efficiencies within existing resources. Across the Library we are experimenting with many use cases, with CRS Bill Summaries remaining our top priority. We have already demonstrated success by piloting AI-supported tools to improve metadata creation and discovery, reducing manual workload while improving accuracy. Importantly, this work is being done in close coordination with our legislative branch partners, ensuring transparency, security, and alignment with congressional needs within the constraints of working within existing public AI Large Language Models. To build on this momentum as well as allow the Library to effectively produce trustworthy and authoritative content, the Library needs a meaningful and sustained investment in AI capabilities.

In our FY 2027 budget request, the Library proposes establishing a centralized AI Enterprise Platform to responsibly develop and manage artificial intelligence models and services in a controlled environment, leveraging the ability to use customized training data to improve accuracy, incorporate confidential data as appropriate, and ensure data privacy. Building on prior research and pilot efforts, the platform will initially support two AI service models: one focused on legislative data for the Congressional Research Service and another supporting bibliographic data and collections workflows for the Library Collections and Services Group.

To improve reliability and performance of its major public websites, the Library is re-requesting funding in FY 2027 for Web Application Delivery and Management Improvements. Migrating the Library's websites to commercial cloud infrastructure will enable elastic scaling of computing resources, improved speed, and greater resilience during peak demand. These changes address long-standing limitations of physical data centers and better support users, data partners, and API-based services, while enterprise licensing of development and security tools will increase efficiency and support future enhancements.

The budget request also includes increases to the Copyright Office's Offsetting Collections authority to align spending authority with projected receipts, as well as funding to modernize the Office of the Inspector General's operations. OIG modernization will emphasize cloud migration and closed-loop AI tools to improve efficiency, reduce system maintenance burdens, and allow staff to focus on higher-value oversight and analytical work.

Finally, the Library seeks to realign the Constitution of the United States of America: Analysis and Interpretation (CONAN) program from the Congressional Research Service to the Law Library of Congress, reflecting its expanded public-facing role. Together, these initiatives advance the Library's strategic vision, A Library for All, ensuring it remains responsive,

resilient, and capable of serving Congress and the public in a rapidly evolving technological landscape.

Another critical need is continued progress on Fort Meade storage. Preserving the nation's collections requires secure, environmentally appropriate storage, and investment in this infrastructure is essential to protect materials that cannot be replaced. Funding for the construction of the mandatory Fort Meade Utility Plant and Module 8 is critically needed within the next 2-3 fiscal years. Without such funding, the Library will be forced to resume shelving Library collections on the floors of the Jefferson and Adams buildings, creating safety hazards and endangering collection materials.

All of us at the Library are committed to serving Congress and the American people. Whether through direct legislative support at CRS, preservation of veterans' stories, accessible reading services, creating and sharing our digital collections, or public programs, every employee plays a role in fulfilling that mission.

Finally, I want to reiterate my gratitude for Congress's continued support. We take seriously the responsibility entrusted to us. When making financial decisions, we always remember that these are hard-earned taxpayer dollars, and we remain committed to delivering exceptional service and the best possible value in return.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I look forward to your questions.

Enclosures:

Priority Statement from the Register of Copyrights and Director, U.S. Copyright Office

Priority Statement from the Director of the Congressional Research Service