

Testimony Related to Strengthening Congressional Casework through the Establishment of a Congressional Casework Liaison Office, Expansion of the CRS Directory of Casework Liaisons, and Prohibition on the Use of Funds to Restrict Agency Responsiveness to Congressional Casework Inquiries.

Submitted by Anne Meeker of POPVOX Foundation for the House Appropriations Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch Fiscal Year 2027

Dear Chair Valadao, Ranking Member Espallat, and Members of the House Legislative Branch Appropriations Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Anne Meeker, and I am a former House caseworker and Director of Constituent Services, now with POPVOX Foundation, where I support Congressional modernization including work to study and support Congressional casework. This testimony addresses three casework-related requests:

1. The establishment of a Congressional Casework Liaison Office (CLO) within the Chief Administrative Officer, funded at approximately \$350,000–\$450,000 in fiscal year 2027;
2. An expanded CRS directory of casework agency liaisons; and
3. A general provision prohibiting the use of appropriated funds to restrict agency responsiveness to Congressional casework inquiries.

### **The Case for Casework Investment**

Casework is one of Congress' most direct constitutional functions — how individual Americans experience their government being responsive to them, and how the Legislative branch oversees the Executive Branch on behalf of individual citizens. It is inherently nonpartisan. End-of-year summaries frequently show casework recovering millions of dollars in delayed and retroactive benefits for constituents and local economies.

As this testimony is submitted, caseworkers across the country are fielding urgent calls from constituents with family stranded in the Middle East. Offices on both sides of the aisle have stood up FAQ guides, provided support and guidance to frightened constituents, and are advocating for individual constituents' safety in real time. This follows the same pattern from past evacuations, disasters, and shutdowns: each crisis demonstrates both the value of casework and the structural gaps in how caseworkers are supported.

With 441 offices and relatively frequent turnover, the House faces an especially acute challenge in institutional knowledge retention. When experienced caseworkers depart, the agency relationships and process expertise they built leave with them. New offices start from scratch. Investing in casework infrastructure has never been more important.

### **1. Establish a Congressional Casework Liaison Office**

The Committee should direct the CAO to establish a CLO — a small, dedicated function to serve as a central advocate, communication hub, knowledge manager, and data steward for the House casework community, beginning with one full-time employee. The CAO Coach program has done outstanding work supporting caseworkers through office-level consulting, but structural gaps remain that office-level support alone cannot fill. The CLO would address these gaps through several core functions:

*Agency–Congress Communication Hub.* Agencies have no reliable way to reach all caseworkers who handle their portfolio, and caseworkers have no institutional channel to surface systemic issues back. The Middle East situation illustrates this: offices across the country are independently navigating the same bottlenecks. The CLO would maintain structured two-way

communication channels and an up-to-date directory of casework staff by agency portfolio, working with the LegiDex staff directory.

*CaseCompass Stewardship.* The House has invested through the Modernization Initiatives Account in CaseCompass — a standardized casework taxonomy and data aggregation system built by the House Digital Service. CaseCompass needs a dedicated institutional home for ongoing taxonomy updates, data quality management, and coordination with caseworkers, the House Digital Service, the Coach program, and CRM vendors. The CLO would provide that landing spot.

*Knowledge Management.* Caseworker peer communities on Teams are genuinely unique among Congressional staff — and impose a significant burden on the individual caseworkers who moderate them on top of full caseloads. The CLO would provide institutional support: organizing channels into searchable repositories, developing shared resources, and preserving expertise against turnover.

*CRM Vendor Liaison.* The CLO would represent caseworker needs in the CAO's work with CRM vendors, ensuring these specialized users have a collective voice in procurement and feature development.

This builds on bipartisan groundwork from the Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress and the CHA Subcommittee on Modernization and Innovation, which held a hearing on constituent engagement and AI in December 2025. Phase 1 cost of \$350,000–\$450,000 is benchmarked to comparable functions such as the House Intern Resource Office.

## **2. Expanded CRS Directory of Agency Liaisons**

The CRS directory of agency liaisons is one of CRS' most-utilized products, but it covers only DC-based contacts — excluding the regional, processing center, and local contacts caseworkers frequently need. This request has been included in multiple prior appropriations cycles and in House Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress Recommendation #150. CRS has responded that expanding the directory to the scope caseworkers need would be too resource-intensive — which underscores the problem: the work CRS has determined is too burdensome for one office is currently being performed independently by caseworkers in each of 441 offices. CRS should provide an expanded, machine-readable directory including local and regional contacts, and a report on agency Privacy Act release form policies. The CLO would complement this effort by maintaining practitioner-level contacts and routing updates.

### **3. Prohibit Restricting Agency Responsiveness to Casework**

During transitions and reorganizations, communication freezes disrupt casework: bounce-back emails, unanswered phones, disappeared contacts. Delayed agency responses mean delayed benefits, stalled cases, and financial harm to constituents. ACUS recognized this in 2024, recommending that agencies maintain responsiveness through Presidential transitions. The Committee should include a general provision prohibiting the use of funds to restrict agency responsiveness to casework, with a reporting requirement on inquiry volume, response timelines, and liaison staffing.

### **Conclusion**

These requests work together: the CLO provides institutional infrastructure, the expanded CRS list addresses a persistent information gap, and the prohibition protects the communication

channel itself. Each is a modest investment relative to its return. I urge the Subcommittee to prioritize these in fiscal year 2027.