

Statement of Mary B. Mazanec
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Before the Committee on House Administration, U.S. House of Representatives
June 20, 2019

Chairperson Lofgren, Ranking Member Davis, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today regarding the Congressional Research Service (CRS) and its work to support Congress. CRS appreciates its role as Congress's trusted resource and is committed to providing exceptional information, research, and analytical service to every Member and committee. In addition to addressing your questions, during my testimony I will highlight examples of recent support the Service has provided to Congress during the previous and current legislative session. I also want to update you on a number CRS initiatives, as well as focus on the future direction of the Service.

With its customized product and service offerings, general distribution products, seminars and 24/7 online presence, CRS continues to interact, in some way, with virtually all Member and committee offices. In fiscal year 2018, CRS experts provided more than 62,000 custom products and services, including confidential memoranda; in-person, telephone and email consultations; congressional testimonies; background products, and other miscellaneous services. The Service produced and maintained approximately 9,000 general distribution products; hosted more than 8,600 congressional participants at its seminars, institutes, and training programs; and published nearly 6,000 bill summaries on LIS/Congress.gov.

CRS strives to provide expertise in every area of importance to Congress: American law, domestic policy, foreign affairs, government, and science and industry. In just this past week, CRS staff prepared many confidential memoranda that were provided to various Members. Additionally 30 new reports, 20 new two-page In Focus products, and three new Legal Sidebars were published. Each week on its website, CRS features five new reports of particular note—this week topics include Sudan, the U.S. Election Assistance Commission, regulating “big tech:” legal implications, opioid treatment programs, and U.S. Farm Program Eligibility and Payment Limits Under the 2018 Farm Bill. Also, CRS highlighted 25 of the most recent and relevant

research products in five current “hot topic” issue areas: Iran, Venezuela, the southern border, prescription drug pricing, and Midwest flooding.

CRS analysts are also routinely invited to testify before congressional committees. This past week, one analyst testified before the Senate Banking Committee on “Reauthorization of the Terrorism Risk Insurance Program.” Also, an analyst served as a panelist on “Asylum Protection in the United States and the European Union” before a meeting of the Helsinki Commission. In addition, CRS offered a 90-minute open house session for congressional staff regarding a current topic of interest. Also, this week, the Service continued the 4-part advanced seminar series on House and Senate legislative processes. Next week CRS is offering seminars on three topics of congressional interest.

In addition to the day-to-day work to support Congress, CRS also conducts special programs and spearheads strategic initiatives. In January, CRS was honored to again host the New Member Seminar, in cooperation with the House, Williamsburg, Virginia. Seventy Members of Congress attended this policy orientation, which provided critical information and training on legislative and budget process, as well as objective overviews of policy issues such as health care, defense, immigration, cybersecurity, transportation, and global challenges.

CRS also provides a twice-yearly Federal Law Update. During this two week seminar, the Service’s legislative attorneys provide federal law updates and analysis for Members and their staff, including review of recent Supreme Court decisions. This highly-valued program is one of the most-attended by Members and staff.

Notably, for the first time in its history, non-confidential CRS written products were made available to the public via Congress.gov. The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018, directed the Librarian of Congress, in consultation with the CRS Director, to establish and maintain a public website containing CRS non-confidential products. CRS’s early planning to implement this directive contributed to the Library’s ability to meet the statutory deadline, September 18, 2018, and launch the public website. At that time, the Library exceeded the implementation plan target by making over 600 non-confidential reports accessible to the public at crsreports.congress.gov. Today, more than 5,500 non-confidential products are available on the

public site. In collaboration with the Library, CRS is on track to meet the remaining deadlines identified in the implementation plan.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Throughout its history, CRS's mission has been to provide exceptional research, analysis, and information to meet Congress's legislative, oversight, and representational needs. As CRS continues in its second century, it aspires to distinguish itself as Congress's foremost resource for research and analysis on policy and legal matters. In order to position CRS and its staff to best serve a 21st century Congress, CRS continually examines its operational capabilities and processes, including identifying staffing needs and key initiatives.

Strategic Planning. In fiscal year 2018, the Service engaged in strategic and directional planning in coordination with the Library. The CRS directional plan was informed by insightful feedback from congressional users of the Service. Further, the Service used an inclusive process to ensure staff from throughout CRS had the opportunity to provide meaningful input during the development of the directional plan. Approximately 130 CRS staff, including CREA representatives, participated in 12 working groups. Additional input was solicited from both managers and staff in a variety of venues including: senior management and first-line supervisor meetings, brown bag lunch dialogues, all-staff meetings, and focus group sessions. The resulting five-year directional plan includes updated mission and vision statements, confirms CRS's core values, recognizes the Service's guiding principles, and identifies the Service's priority initiatives going forward. The plan is aligned with the goals and objectives identified in the Library's strategic plan for 2019-2023. The directional plan identifies two major goals: (1) enhance service and access for all of Congress and (2) optimize resource utilization. Nested under these goals are specific objectives and key initiatives that emphasize CRS priorities, such as advancing diversity and inclusion efforts, evaluating and aligning the CRS work model to meet Congress's needs and tracking user satisfaction with CRS products and services.

Workforce. The directional plan goals reflect CRS's focus on its most valuable resource—the corps of dedicated professionals who work in concert across the organization to carry out its mission to serve the Congress. As I had the pleasure to reaffirm at our annual staff appreciation

ceremony last week, I continue to be most proud of the CRS workforce and privileged to call them my colleagues.

CRS is committed to engaging employees in a collaborative and inclusive work environment. In addition, professional development of the Service's workforce is a priority, which is reflected in the directional plan. CRS must ensure that its staff hold the necessary expertise and skillsets, and that it is organized in a manner that facilitates collaboration and integration of the relevant disciplines to fully inform the legislative debate. To that end, the Service has undertaken initiatives to enhance and expand development and training opportunities, support diversity and inclusion with strategic recruitment and increased awareness, improve internal communications, and recognize exemplary staff performance.

CRS continues to strengthen its research and analytical capabilities to ensure that it is able to provide the requisite mix of skills and expertise across the breadth of public policy areas that Congress will confront in the coming years. With Congress's generous support for this effort in the fiscal year 2019 budget, CRS has successfully addressed coverage gaps in a number of the policy areas targeted in its fiscal year 2019 request. In fiscal year 2020, the Service will continue to bolster its workforce with recruitment of additional expertise and identify areas of potential need as part of its ongoing assessment of resources in alignment with the evolving congressional agenda.

Work Model. Another focus of the directional plan addresses CRS's work model, consistent with the goals to enhance service and effectively utilize resources. Accordingly, CRS is engaged in a multi-faceted process to test and implement potential alternatives to components of the current CRS work model, such as organizational structure and processes. I established a CRS working group to address these issues, which includes staff engaged in direct support of Congress, a CREA representative, and managers, to ensure that comprehensive perspectives are represented.

Information Technology. Information technology is a critical tool CRS uses to create, deliver, and showcase CRS's work for Congress. CRS continues to support Library-wide efforts to centralize information technology activities. I and members of my staff meet on a regular basis with colleagues in the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO). We are continually

identifying means to improve communication to ensure that this transition period is seamless and that IT issues are addressed in a timely manner.

Moreover, CRS, in partnership with OCIO, has undertaken modernization of the Service's IT systems. This critical five-year initiative, Integrated Research Information Systems (IRIS), will improve efficiency and foster innovation in CRS operations, while continuing to protect the security and confidentiality of congressional data. With the initial year of funding provided in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018, CRS, in collaboration with OCIO, has made progress in the effort to modernize its information technology systems. During the first phase, the focus of the IRIS initiative is to modernize an environment that will support CRS's work for Congress in four key areas: information research, policy and data analysis, content creation, and product delivery. CRS continues to engage stakeholders through various venues throughout the development and implementation phases. The Service is scheduled to test a prototype of a new content management system, before the end of the fiscal year, which will inform future development efforts.

Knowledge Management. In fiscal year 2018 CRS also embarked on a knowledge management initiative. Activities included the development of the CRS Research Portal, which consolidates research materials and identifies best practices used by analysts to respond to selected policy issues. By the end of fiscal year 2018, 18 research sites containing approximately 20,000 documents were added to the portal. Other activities included digitization of critical or one-of-a-kind research materials. This ongoing initiative also captures the institutional memory of CRS staff, a unique and valuable contribution of the Service.

Finally, on behalf of my colleagues at CRS, I would like to express my appreciation to the Committee for its continued support. CRS looks forward to the Committee's input as we seek to improve products and services and strengthen operational capabilities in our ongoing effort to be Congress's foremost resource for the highest quality of public policy research and analysis.