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GPO – Issues and Challenges: How Will GPO Transition to the Future?

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Mr. Chairman, Representative Lofgren, and Members of the Subcommittee on Oversight, it is an honor to be here today to discuss the U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO) – Issues and Challenges: How will GPO transition to the future?

Background

With just 2,200 employees, GPO is the Federal Government's primary centralized resource for producing, procuring, cataloging, indexing, authenticating, disseminating, and preserving the official information products of the U.S. Government in digital and tangible forms. The agency is responsible for the production and distribution of information products for all three branches of the Federal Government, including U.S. passports for the Department of State as well as the official publications of Congress, the White House and other Federal agencies, and the courts.

Along with sales of publications in digital and tangible formats to the public, GPO supports openness and transparency in Government by providing permanent public access to Federal Government information at no charge through its Federal Digital System (**www.fdsys.gov**), which has more than 250,000 Federal titles online and sees more than 25 million documents downloaded every month, and through partnerships with approximately 1,220 libraries nationwide participating in the Federal Depository Library Program. In addition to GPO's Web site, **www.gpo.gov**, we communicate with the public routinely via Twitter **twitter.com/ USGPO**, YouTube **www.youtube.com/user/gpoprinter**, and Facebook **www.facebook.com/ USGPO**.

We first opened our doors for business 150 years ago, on March 4, 1861, the same day Abraham Lincoln was inaugurated as the 16th President. Our mission can be traced to the requirement in Article I of the Constitution that each House shall keep a journal of its proceedings and from time to time publish the same. Representative Robert A. Brady put a statement in the *Congressional Record* recognizing GPO's anniversary, which I'm pleased to attach to this statement.

Since President Lincoln's time we have produced every great American state paper and an uncounted number of other Government publications, including the Emancipation Proclamation, Social Security cards, Medicare and Medicaid information, census forms, tax forms, citizenship forms, military histories ranging from the *Official Records of the War of the Rebellion* to the latest accounts of our forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, emergency documents like the ration cards and the "Buy Bonds" posters used during World War II, the Warren Commission Report on President Kennedy's assassination, the Watergate transcripts, the 9/11 Commission Report, Presidential inaugural addresses, Supreme Court opinions, and the great acts of Congress that have shaped our society. All these as well as millions of other documents from the historic to the humble have been produced by GPO on their way to use by Congress, Federal agencies, and the American public.

For the Clerk of the House, the Secretary of the Senate, and the committees of the House and the Senate, we produce the documents and publications required by the legislative and oversight processes of Congress, including the daily *Congressional Record*, bills, reports,

legislative calendars, hearings, committee prints, and other documents, as well as stationery, franked envelopes, and other materials such as memorials and condolence books, programs and invitations, phone books, House and Senate Journals, inaugural materials, the *U.S. Code*, and the other products needed to conduct business of Congress. The printing we produce for Congress ranges from 5.5 cents per page on our high speed digital duplicating systems to a penny or less on our offset systems, compared with nearly 7 cents per page for documents printed from the kind of office printers typically used through the Government and Capitol Hill. We also detail expert staff to support the information product requirements of Senate and House committees and congressional offices such as the House Office of Legislative Counsel.

The production of the *Congressional Record* alone is a remarkable job, averaging about 170 pages per issue but ranging in size from a few pages to hundreds of pages per night depending on the amount of business transacted. No matter the size, each issue of the *Congressional Record* is formatted, paginated, proofed, corrected, uploaded for online access, printed, and delivered overnight, every night Congress is in session. The history of our Nation as revealed in the proceedings of Congress is preserved for generations to come in the permanent edition of the Congressional Record and in the *Congressional Serial Set*, containing all the numbered reports and documents of each Congress and published continuously since 1817, both produced by GPO.

Since taking office in early January, I've met with the Clerk of the House and the Secretary of the Senate and various Members and staff, and have heard repeatedly about the utility of the products and services we provide for Members and staff in performing the work of their offices and their committees. Ensuring that utility—supporting Congress in carrying out its constitutional legislative function—is our most important job. In addition, with the Library of Congress and the National Archives, the work we perform is a basic part of governmental openness and transparency, and an integral part of the creation and preservation of the record of our Government for the American people.

GPO and Digital Information Technologies

As Archivist of the United States David Ferriero recently said, GPO has not rested with drums of printer's ink and rolls of paper measured by the ton. Our present and future are clearly being defined by digital technology, and digital technology itself has radically changed the way printing is performed today.

This is especially true where the information products used by Congress are concerned. GPO's conversion to digital databases for the composition of congressional publications occurred more than a generation ago. Today the activities associated with creating congressional information databases comprise the majority of the work we perform for Congress. In addition to using them to produce printed products as required by Congress, we upload them to the Internet via our online information systems, known previously as *GPO Access* and today as GPO's Federal Digital System (FDsys). Since we first went online with congressional information in 1994, these systems have provided Congress and the public with the definitive source not only of legislative but executive and judicial information online, in real time, and free of charge to the user.

Our creation of digital databases of congressional information from which we can print and provide online public access has dramatically increased productivity and dramatically reduced costs to the taxpayer. Our digital production systems have reduced the cost of congressional printing by more than two-thirds in constant dollar terms since 1975 while expanding our information capabilities exponentially.

GPO's congressional database systems also form the basic building blocks of other information systems supporting Congress. We provide our congressional information databases directly to the Library of Congress where they are used in its THOMAS system as well as the legislative information systems the Library makes available to congressional offices. GPO and the Library are also collaborating today on the digitization of previously printed documents, such as historical issues of the *Congressional Record* and the *Statutes at Large*, to make them more broadly available to Congress and the public, and we are jointly developing a new process for updating the digital edition of the *Constitution Annotated*.

GPO's digital systems support other key Federal publications, including the *U.S. Budget* and, most importantly, the *Federal Register* and associated products, which we produce. Through GPO's efforts, the online *Federal Register* is being made available in extensible markup language (XML) to support bulk data downloads via www.data.gov, and with the Office of the *Federal Register* we developed the online *Federal Register 2.0*, an innovative approach to making information on Federal regulations and related documents available to the public. Our advanced authentication systems, supported by public key infrastructure (PKI), are an essential component for assuring the digital security of congressional and agency documents.

Other major products that GPO produces include U.S. passports for the Department of State, the premier component of our secure and intelligent documents business unit. At one time no more than a conventionally printed document, passports today incorporate a chip and antenna array capable of carrying biometric identification data, which with other security features has transformed this document into the most secure identification credential obtainable. We have also developed a line of secure identification "smart cards" to support the credential requirements of the Department of Homeland Security for certain border crossing documents and by other agencies, including the U.S. Capitol Police. Our secure credential unit has been certified as the only government-to-government provider of credentials meeting the requirements of Homeland Security Presidential Directive 12 (HSPD-12).

GPO in Partnership with Industry
Other than congressional and inherently governmental work such as the *Federal Register*, the *U.S. Budget*, and secure and intelligent documents, we produce virtually all other information product requirements via contracts through a longstanding partnership with the private sector printing industry. Our procurement operation handles approximately 75% of all work sent to GPO for production, amounting to $450 million to $500 million annually. This system is one of the Government's longest running and most successful programs of utilizing the private sector, which is represented by more than 16,600 individual firms registered to do business with us, the vast majority of whom are small businesses averaging 20 employees per firm. Contracts are awarded on a purely competitive basis; there are no set-asides or preferences in contracting other than what is specified in law and regulation, including a requirement for Buy American. This partnership provides great economic opportunity for the private sector.

GPO and Open, Transparent Government

Producing and distributing the official publications of our Government fulfills an informing role originally envisioned by the Founders, when James Madison said:

> A popular Government without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a Prologue to a Farce or a Tragedy, or perhaps both. Knowledge will forever govern ignorance, and a people who mean to be their own Governors, must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives.

A key mechanism for this purpose is the Federal Depository Library Program, which today serves millions of Americans through a network of some 1,220 public, academic, law, and other libraries located in virtually every congressional district across the Nation. These libraries are critical links between "We the People" and the information provided by the Federal Government. GPO provides the libraries with information products in online or tangible formats, and the libraries in turn make these available to the public at no charge and provide additional help and assistance to depository library users. One of the other programs we operate is in fulfillment of an international treaty. Under it, we distribute certain Federal publications to other governments abroad as designated by the Library of Congress. In return, they send the Library their official publications, which the Library then makes available for the use of Congress and the public. This helps maintain the universal nature of the Library's collections, as Librarian of Congress James Billington recently pointed out.

Along with these programs, we provide public access to the wealth of official Federal information through public sales featuring secure ordering through an online bookstore for GPO sales publications and a partnership with the private sector to offer Federal publications as e-Books. We also operate effective and efficient information distribution programs for other Federal agencies on a reimbursable basis, including the General Services Administration (GSA) Consumer Information Center publications.

Recent Actions

Since taking office on January 3 this year, my management team and I have worked to reduce spending and ensure that GPO's finances remain sound in the face of ongoing constraints on the Federal budget. We cut our appropriations request for FY 2012 by more than $5 million from what was originally submitted to OMB late last year. We cut GPO's annual spending plan as previously submitted to the Joint Committee on Printing by $15 million and implemented controls on hiring, travel, certain contractual services, and related discretionary accounts. We realigned GPO's organization so the Chief Financial Officer reports directly to me rather than through subordinate officers, and created a task force on recovery of outstanding payments from Federal agencies. We have developed a strategic plan which has been posted to our Web site. We inaugurated a Facebook page for GPO, implemented a new project to make Federal court opinions publicly available online, and expanded our partnership with Google Books to include Federal consumer-oriented information made available by the GSA. We have surveyed GPO's buildings and identified additional space we can make available for the use of legislative branch entities such as the Architect of the Capitol, which will help relieve the pressures on space Congress is experiencing in its own buildings, or the U.S. Capitol Police.

We are continuing ongoing initiatives such as the development of FDsys, support for our Oracle suite of business enterprise services, and planning for continuity of operations (COOP). These activities are essential to carrying out our mission to *Keep America Informed*, support our business operations, and assure essential support to Congress, the White House, and Federal agencies in the event of an emergency. We are pursuing additional revenue opportunities, particularly in the field of secure credentialing. We intend to expand utilization of our printing procurement capability by Federal agencies and have had preliminary discussions with the private sector on how best to accomplish that. In the Federal Depository Library Program, approximately 97% of publications are available in digital form. Our library partners make a significant investment to participate in the Program, viewing it as their civic responsibility for an informed citizenry. We are working with the Depository Library Council to the Public Printer and the community to reach consensus on how to bring more flexibility to the Program while ensuring that it is sustainable and more robust in the 21st Century.

My meetings with the Clerk of the House, the Secretary of the Senate, Members and staff of the Joint Committee on Printing, and other Members and staff have been to discuss how GPO can best assist them in supporting the needs of Congress. We are familiar with the proposals to reduce the printing of bills and the *Congressional Record*. While our analysis of these proposals has concluded that the savings will be more modest than projected, we understand completely the intention to ensure that the level of information products provided to Congress is what is required for the conduct of legislative and other congressional operations. Accordingly, we are currently administering an online survey of all congressional offices and committees to determine the volume of products they require today. This is the first survey of its kind and we appreciate the support of the House and the Senate in this process. We have created a customer service unit to assist with the completion of the survey and followup with offices on their need for GPO products and services. In addition, we have been meeting with both staff and Members of the appropriations committees and cooperating with them in the effort to achieve their funding objectives. We fully understand the intention of Congress to control its spending and we are cooperating in meeting this goal.

Within the limits of available funding, GPO has a well-established practice of relying on a balanced approach when investigating next-generation technologies for its production operations. This practice applies to the identification of the appropriate niches for digital and high-efficiency offset printing, including a cost/benefit analysis of the effectiveness, efficiency, and dependability of the technologies under the often-punishing demand schedules that typify GPO's production workload. For example:

- High-efficiency offset technology offers the highest print quality and throughput capability; but has the steepest upfront capital requirement, requires larger crew sizes than digital production lines and is intricate to operate.

- Electro-photography (i.e., xerography) is the least expensive technology for very low impression counts; but offers limited output speed and paper sizes. Additionally, this technology prints materials which cannot be mailed to Government buildings because irradiation screening for inbound mailed packages upon building entry melts the toner particles and fuses the pages together; thus making the documents unusable.

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- Inkjet is a high-speed digital technology which has positioned itself as a serious competitor for offset production in throughput and initial quality. However, there is an unresolved issue of permanence associated with inkjet inks, making this type of ink potentially unsuitable for trusted Government documents destined to be used as reference materials many years in the future and/or archived.

- Inkjet and electro-photography are ideal to support print-on-demand operations with limited warehousing of consumables. This is a pay-as-you-go approach that eliminates the process of making plates. On the downside, the unit price of consumables such as paper and inks is more expensive than their offset counterparts. Unlike the offset supply market, digital consumables are often manufacturer-specific and proprietary, which limits supply chain flexibility and robustness.

- When selecting inkjet and electro-photography print engines the user will probably be bound to purchase click-charges and annual maintenance agreements from the original equipment manufacturer as long as the user owns the equipment because each print engine is proprietary. Such service agreements limit the amount of internal troubleshooting and maintenance the user can perform, so machine uptime is more dependent on 24-by-7 vendor support availability. In contrast, a much larger share of maintenance activities can be performed in-house for offset equipment.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, throughout its history GPO has been front and center in providing Congress with the information products it needs to conduct the legislative process, and in GPO today you have the Government's sole information platform for meeting your online and conventional requirements. GPO is singular in the changes it has undergone over the past generation — and indeed, throughout its history — in providing increasingly effective, economical information services to Congress and Federal agencies, for the past generation shrinking in staffing and growing in technology to meet the changing information needs of the Government. We have set a leadership record in the employment of technological solutions to Congress's information needs and we are continuing to do so, based on the efficiency, effectiveness, and dependability of the available technologies and the funds to acquire them. We look forward to working with you to ensure that we continue in this singular technology leadership role serving Congress, Federal agencies, and the public.