

**The Honorable Karen L. Haas
Clerk of the House of Representatives**

**Statement before the House Appropriations Subcommittee
on the Legislative Branch**

March 27, 2012

Chairman Crenshaw, Ranking Member Honda, and Members of the Subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you about the operations of the Office of the Clerk and our Fiscal Year 2013 budget request. With your support and guidance, the Office of the Clerk has been entrusted with the resources we need to meet our duties and responsibilities to the House of Representatives. I thank the Subcommittee for its support over the past year.

As the Subcommittee is aware, the Office of the Clerk oversees a broad range of services for the House. At the heart of our mission, the Clerk's Office supports the core legislative functions of the House of Representatives.

SUPPORT FOR THE HOUSE FLOOR

Legislative Operations

On the House Floor, the Office of the Clerk ensures the integrity of the legislative process from start to finish. Bill clerks manage the introduction of bills and measures in the House. Official Reporters report and transcribe House Floor proceedings for the daily *Congressional Record*. Our tally clerks and Legislative Computer Systems staff operate and maintain the Electronic Voting System. Journal clerks prepare the constitutionally required *Journal of the House of Representatives*. Enrolling clerks prepare legislation that has been considered by the House for transmittal to the Senate or the White House. From gavel to gavel, our staff are hard at work on the frontlines and behind the scenes to make House Floor operations run smoothly.

Improved Transparency and Accessibility of House Floor Proceedings

The Office of the Clerk is developing and deploying new technology as part of a continuing effort to improve the efficiency and transparency of House Floor proceedings. The Clerk's Office has completed three major initiatives on that front. First, our Legislative Computer Systems staff developed and launched a new centralized website—docs.house.gov—to provide public access to the text of all measures scheduled for House Floor consideration, a major component of House Leadership's transparency initiative for the 112th Congress. The Clerk's Office also upgraded HouseLive.gov to deliver live-streaming video of Floor proceedings to mobile devices and provide video-clipping capabilities. Finally, the Office upgraded the House Floor Activities interface on the Clerk's main website, which allows Members, staff, and the public to track proceedings throughout the legislative day. This year, our Legislative Computer Systems staff will further enhance the Clerk's website and provide additional functionality to the HouseLive system, all in an effort to improve transparency and ease of use.

Our Legislative Computer Systems staff also will soon begin the third and final phase of a multi-year project to update the Legislative Information Management System (LIMS). This electronic system is used to process and track all legislation from its introduction on the House Floor to its signing by the President. It also provides the mechanism by which the minute-to-minute activity on the House Floor is compiled and made available to the public online. This modernization project began in 2000. The final phase of the LIMS project will include upgrades to the Legislative Activity Guide, a compilation of each Member's voting record; the Floor Action Reporting System; and the Legislative House Action Calendar System. These improvements will preserve the integrity of the legislative process while enhancing our

efficiency in managing legislative documents and making them available to the public through the Library of Congress' THOMAS system.

This year, the Office of the Clerk also will re-compete its closed-captioning contract for televised Floor proceedings. The House's current contract for closed-captioning services will expire at the end of the calendar year. The new contract will be a substantial but important expense that will keep House Floor proceedings accessible to the many Americans who rely on closed captioning.

Additional Support Services

Through our Capitol Services Group, the Office of the Clerk also supports the Members and Family Committee Room, the Lindy Claiborne Boggs Congressional Women's Reading Room, the Congressional Prayer Room, and attendant services for Floor operations. In addition, our Art and Archives staff curate the House's collection of historic art and artifacts displayed on the House Floor and throughout the Capitol complex.

SUPPORT FOR HOUSE COMMITTEES

The Office of the Clerk also supports House Committees in fulfilling their legislative responsibilities. Official Reporters from the Clerk's Office report and transcribe Committee hearings and markups. Information on hearings and markups is compiled by our staff and entered into the Legislative Information Management System, which in turn is used by the Library of Congress for its THOMAS bill tracking system. Our archival staff assist Committees with the proper management of their records, which must be permanently retained and archived in accordance with House Rules. Our curatorial staff manage and care for the portraits and other fine art on display in Committee hearing rooms.

Our Legislative Computer Systems staff will undertake a significant new project this year to design and develop a centralized website for Committee documents. This website will expand on the docs.house.gov Web portal that already provides an online repository of legislation scheduled for consideration on the House Floor. When the project is completed, House Committee documents will be made available in one location in open formats such as searchable PDFs and XML. This project represents the second phase in the House Leadership's transparency initiative.

Our Legislative Computer Systems staff are also responding to numerous requests from Committees for technical support to assist them in making their reports available in XML. The Clerk's Office expanded the deployment of XMetaL, a cutting-edge XML-authoring tool, to Committee offices and has continued to collaborate with the Senate and the Government Printing Office on setting consistent standards for authoring in XML. Committee demand for our staff's expertise in this area is likely to grow.

MEMBER SERVICES

The Office of the Clerk directly assists Member offices in fulfilling their numerous responsibilities as well.

House Library

The Clerk's Office continues to leverage our resources House-wide to assist Member offices that are tightening their belts. For example, in January, the House Library made a powerful research tool—ProQuest *Congressional Basic*—available to all House offices, including district offices. The House Library, a legislative, law, and general reference resource, also offers research and reference services to assist House staff in providing timely information and advice to their Members of Congress.

In the coming year, the Office of the Clerk will explore additional opportunities to expand the accessibility of House Library resources to Member offices. For example, the Library will continue its efforts to preserve and digitize its existing collection, which dates back to 1792. The Library recently digitized a large volume of historic Member voting records that had previously been stored on microfiche, and it will continue digitizing these and other original House documents frequently requested by Member offices. Finally, the Clerk's Office will continue to look for a suitable space for a functioning House Library Reading Room. Our goal is to provide a one-stop research facility for Members, their staff, and the staff of the Parliamentarian, General Counsel, Legislative Counsel, and Committees who rely on the House Library's services to fulfill their legislative responsibilities.

House Employment Counsel

The Office of House Employment Counsel provides Members, Committees, and other House employing offices with employment law assistance on a strictly confidential basis. In addition to providing legal representation, the Office of House Employment Counsel provides training and advice to assist offices in complying with the Congressional Accountability Act.

House Telephone Directory

This year, our Legislative Computer Systems staff are developing a Web-based system for creating the House telephone directory, an essential resource for Members and staff. When completed, this system will improve the ease and efficiency of compiling and updating the directory on an ongoing basis, saving both time and money.

Records Management and Archival Services

The Clerk's Office also provides Members with assistance in archiving their papers. Under House precedent, a Member's personal legislative records remain the property of the

Member even after the Member leaves office. Our archivists provide Members with consultations and assistance with deeding their papers to universities or other research facilities upon their departure from the House, should they choose to do so.

Management of Vacant Member Offices

When a Member office becomes vacant during a Congress, the Office of the Clerk administers that office until a successor is elected. During the 112th Congress, the Clerk's Office has managed seven vacant Member offices (New York 26th, California 36th, Nevada 2nd, New York 9th, Oregon 1st, Arizona 8th, and New Jersey 10th). Administration of these offices is a statutory responsibility of the Clerk, requiring time and other resources to ensure appropriate operation and management consistent with public law and House Rules.

MANAGING PUBLIC DISCLOSURE

Another significant area of responsibility within the Office of the Clerk is the management of an extensive public disclosure system for the House. Our Legislative Resource Center administers the numerous disclosure requirements of the Lobbying Disclosure Act and the Ethics in Government Act.

Lobbying Disclosure

Under the Lobbying Disclosure Act, the Clerk's Office operates an electronic filing and disclosure system for new lobbying registrations, quarterly lobbying activity reports, and semi-annual lobbying contribution reports. Our Legislative Resource Center and Legislative Computer Systems staff administer and maintain this filing and disclosure system on a continuing basis throughout the year. Nearly 5,000 lobbying registrants representing approximately 17,300 clients and 15,000 individual lobbyists are currently registered with the Office of the Clerk. The Office processed more than 140,000 lobbying disclosure filings last year.

In January, we began the planning process for developing Web-based filing systems for lobbying registration and quarterly disclosure reports with our partners in the Senate. Once completed, this upgrade should significantly improve the ease of filing and enhance the disclosure capabilities of the lobbying disclosure system.

Financial Disclosure

Under the Ethics in Government Act, the Clerk's Office receives and compiles all financial disclosure reports that must be filed with the House, provides them to the Committee on Ethics, and makes them publicly available. In light of House and Senate consideration of the Stop Trading on Congressional Knowledge ("STOCK") Act, the Office of the Clerk soon may be required to design and develop an electronic filing and disclosure system for all financial disclosure forms filed with the House by Members, Officers, candidates, and staff. If enacted, this new mandate would require the Clerk's Office to expend significant additional labor, software, and hardware resources to complete the project within the required timeframe, currently 18 months under both the House and Senate versions of the bill.

Additional Disclosure Responsibilities

The Office of the Clerk also administers the public disclosure process for foreign travel reports and expenditures, gift and travel filings, post-employment notifications, and all other disclosures, as required by law or House Rules, through our Legislative Resource Center.

PRESERVING THE HERITAGE OF THE HOUSE

With the support of this Subcommittee, the Office of the Clerk continues to fulfill our mission to meet the House's archival, historical, and curatorial needs. The official records of the House, under the Clerk's care since 1789, continue to grow in quantity and complexity. In the 111th Congress, we experienced a 30 percent increase in the number of archived House records

for a total of 3.4 million records. This was accompanied by a marked increase in electronic records that is likely to expand in the 112th Congress. We are planning to allocate resources accordingly, particularly to meet the growing demand for managing electronic records and media (such as photographs, DVDs, and video and audio recordings).

The Clerk's Office is also the custodian of art and historical artifacts in the House. Last year, our curators cared for the House's fine art collection in the aftermath of the earthquake that affected Washington, DC, moving 88 paintings from seven Committee hearing rooms that suffered damage. The Clerk's Office also supports the staff of the Office of the House Historian and their ongoing effort to make the House's treasury of primary resources available online to researchers, educators, and the public.

CONTINGENCY PLANNING

The Clerk's Office works closely with the other House and Senate Officers to ensure we are prepared for any emergencies that may confront the Legislative Branch. The recent earthquake in Washington underscored the importance of continuous review and improvement of our emergency planning with all of our partners in the legislative process.

PERSONNEL

To fulfill this wide range of responsibilities, the Office of the Clerk relies on our highly professional, diverse, and experienced staff. As the Office continues to reduce our budget, relatively few new hires have been made in the Clerk's organization. The Office has focused on affording professional development opportunities to its current workforce by providing training, a collegial and supportive environment, and opportunities for advancement within the organization.

Three notable changes to our staff structure occurred over the past year. First, we transferred five positions from the Office of Publication Services to our Legislative Resource Center, which streamlined our printing and customer service. The Office of Publication Services was subsequently reorganized into the Office of Communications, which provides creative services to the Clerk's Office and other House organizations. This reorganization improved our services to the House at a lower overall cost. The Office also coordinated the closure of the House Page Program. As part of that process, the House Historian's staff worked to carefully document the history of the program. In addition, we completed the process of merging the staff of the Office of the House Historian with the Clerk's history staff. This combined staff reports to the House Historian but benefits from the administrative support of the Office of the Clerk. This merger successfully met our goal of eliminating overlapping responsibilities while promoting greater efficiency with budget savings.

FY2013 BUDGET REQUEST

As we review the operations of the Office of the Clerk, we continuously look for innovative ways to reduce costs without compromising quality. By strategically investing our more limited resources in technology that supports our organization—such as upgrading the Legislative Information Management System, moving to a Web-based telephone directory system, developing a fully Web-based lobbying disclosure system, and digitizing House records—we are achieving our goal of significantly improving operational efficiency in a way that brings down costs. In this way, we truly can do more with less.

We have diligently looked for ways to reduce printing costs this past year by shifting to an electronic distribution of Legislative Activity Guides, saving 120,000 pages of paper per Congress. We halted the automatic distribution of printed bills and resolutions from the House

Document Room. And we reduced the printing of official Member and Committee lists by 13 percent. The migration from printed to electronic documents remains a priority.

We have also looked to reduce our technology expenses. For example, we have delayed our normal workstation lifecycle replacement schedule by a year from FY2013 to FY2014, thereby achieving cost savings for the House.

At the same time, we anticipate that demands on our Floor, Committee, and Member services resources will grow. And we will play an integral role in the continuing effort to make House proceedings more transparent and provide immediate access to electronic documents in a more open-data format. At the same time, we will continue to work diligently to contain costs and be wise stewards of taxpayer dollars. For FY2013, we are requesting \$22,370,252 to carry out our operations. This is \$3.7 million less than our current budget allocation, a 14.3 percent budget reduction.

I appreciate the opportunity to appear before the Subcommittee today. I am ready to assist you in any way throughout the development of the FY2013 spending bill for the House, and will be more than happy to answer any questions you may have.