

# OVERSIGHT OF OFFICE OF THE CLERK

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## HEARING

BEFORE THE

## COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION

## HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

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MAY 8, 2024

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# C O N T E N T S

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	Page
OPENING STATEMENTS	
Chairman Bryan Steil, Representative from the State of Wisconsin .....	1
Prepared statement of Chairman Bryan Steil .....	3
Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Oversight Norma Torres, Rep- resentative from the State of California .....	3
Prepared statement of Ranking Member Norma Torres .....	5
WITNESSES	
Kevin McCumber, Acting Clerk of the House of Representatives .....	6
Prepared statement of Kevin McCumber .....	9
QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD	
Kevin McCumber answers to submitted questions .....	34



## OVERSIGHT OF OFFICE OF THE CLERK

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May 8, 2024

COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION,  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
*Washington, DC.*

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:15 a.m., in room 1310, Longworth House Office Building, Hon. Bryan Steil [Chairman of the Committee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Steil, Loudermilk, Griffith, Murphy, Bice, Carey, D'Esposito, Lee, Torres, Sewell, and Kilmer.

Staff present: March Bell, General Counsel and Parliamentarian; Annemarie Cake, Professional Staff Member and Deputy Clerk; Daniel Durak, Professional Staff Member; Kristen Monterroso, Director of Operations and Legislative Clerk; William Neitzel, Deputy Director of Member Services; Michael Platt, Staff Director; Elliot Smith, Director of Oversight; Khalil Abboud, Minority Deputy Staff Director; Jamie Fleet, Minority Staff Director; Kwame Newton, Minority Oversight Counsel; and Matt Schlesinger, Minority Senior Counsel.

### **OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. BRYAN STEIL, CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION, A U.S. REP- RESENTATIVE FROM WISCONSIN**

Chairman STEIL. The Committee on House Administration will come to order.

I note that a quorum is present.

Without objection, the chair may declare a recess at any time.

Also, without objection, the meeting record will remain open for 5 legislative days so Members may submit any material they wish to be included therein.

Thank you, Ranking Member Torres, and Members of the Committee and our witness for participating in today's hearing.

Every 2 years, when the House organizes a new Congress, the majority and minority conferences nominate candidates for Clerk of the House. This Congress, we were a few days delayed, but we got the job done.

The Clerk of the House has an incredibly important role. The Clerk's Office manages a wide range of responsibilities, with 215 staff members in 9 divisions. These roles include managing day-to-day operations on the House floor, managing the House Office of Employment Counsel, and preserving the art and history of the House.

We have the privilege of having Acting Clerk of the House Kevin McCumber joining us today.

Mr. McCumber and I spent a lot of time together this past January as we were tallying votes for Speaker, along with Mr. Loudermilk and Mrs. Torres and the Ranking Member of the full Committee, Mr. Morelle, as well. I learned more about the great things the Clerk's Office is doing to make our institution more effective and efficient.

Today, the Committee on House Administration will have its first oversight hearing over the Clerk since 2019.

Since the start of the 118th Congress, the Clerk's Office has worked with the Subcommittee on Modernization on implementing several useful tools. These include the new Comparative Print tool, collaborative drafting tool, and the lobbyist disclosure unique identifier.

Most recently, the Clerk's Office began the process to create a new Committee portal, a one-stop shop to help publish hearings and markup details and assist our Committee clerks.

One of the Clerk's main responsibilities includes managing what we refer to as the "hopper," where Members of Congress introduce legislation.

Over the years, there has been a steady increase in the number of bills introduced by Members of Congress. Over 8,000 bills were introduced during the first session of this Congress. This is a 10-percent increase in what we saw from the first session of the last Congress.

Recently, a new eHopper feature was created by the Clerk's Office in coordination with the Subcommittee on Modernization. This online portal will help streamline the bill introduction process.

The Clerk's team processed over 100,000 cosponsorships in the first session of this Congress and recorded over 700 roll call votes. Now, the eHopper tool will help legislative staff and the Clerk's Office collect cosponsorships more easily and efficiently.

The Clerk's team also posted over 5,500 Committee actions on Congress.gov, and nearly 150,000 Committee meetings were transcribed—all during the first session of this Congress. It is safe to say, we keep the Clerk's Office busy.

As we continue to see a higher volume of legislative work, this Committee remains committed to working with the Clerk's Office. We must ensure we are providing accountability and transparency for the American people in the legislative process.

This hearing will also look at the Clerk's engagement with the House community, vacant-office management, and the capacity to meet modern legislative demands.

From what I have seen, the Clerk's Office is an invaluable part of this institution and works tirelessly on behalf of the American people.

I look forward to hearing from you, Mr. McCumber, in your testimony today.

I now yield 5 minutes to the Ranking Member for an opening statement.

[The prepared statement of Chairman Steil follows:]

**PREPARED STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE  
ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION BRYAN STEIL**

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**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. NORMA TORRES, RANKING  
MEMBER OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT, A U.S.  
REPRESENTATIVE FROM CALIFORNIA**

Mrs. TORRES. Thank you, Chairman.

Thank you, Mr. McCumber, for being here with us today. The Office of the Clerk ensures the efficiency and effectiveness of legislative operations in the House, and we appreciate the hard work that you have shown and the hard work of all of your employees.

We are here today to conduct oversight of the Office of the Clerk and discuss the operational changes and modernization initiatives underway to enhance the services provided to Members, staff, and the American people. It is our responsibility to ensure that the

Clerk's Office has the authorities and support to carry out its duties effectively.

To start, I would like to highlight the Clerk's commendable efforts in supporting the House through the disruptions that Congress and the country have faced in the last few years. The institution endured a once-in-a-generation pandemic that prevented us from physically gathering in large numbers, not to mention the major disturbance of the January 6th insurrection.

Through it all, the dedicated staff within the Office of the Clerk worked with grace, resilience, and professionalism. I thank you for that.

Thank you for your direction and that of your predecessor, Cheryl Johnson. Under the most difficult circumstances, the legislative process continued and Members continued to perform their duties on behalf of their constituents back home.

As is often the case, from these challenges came lots of innovations. For instance, the launch of the eHopper system allows Members and our staffs to electronically submit legislative documents for the first time, making our legislative process more resilient and efficient.

Mr. McCumber, as a fellow former 911 dispatcher, I know that you understand the importance of a reliable, robust information-sharing environment. This mentality is evident in the solutions your office brings to the House operations, and it is crucial that we build upon lessons learned by your office and continue to improve accessibility and efficiency.

The Office of the Clerk has also made significant strides in enhancing day-to-day House operations through projects like the Comparative Print Suite. By leveraging smart AI policies and machine learning to display language changes and differences between bills, this tool empowers staff to rapidly understand and analyze critical details in the legislative process so that we here are able to better connect the changes that happen and what goes on and we are able to discuss that information back with our folks in the district.

Looking ahead, the development of the collaborative drafting tool and the Committee-votes portal holds great promise for streamlining legislative workflows and improving access to critical information. As these projects progress, it is essential that the Clerk's Office collaborates closely with key stakeholders to ensure compatibility, security, and user-friendliness.

Finally, as we discuss the funding of modernization initiatives through the dedicated account, we should recognize the progress that has been made on a range of the Modernization Committee's recommendations. Streamlining bill drafting/amending/tracking, electronic access to Committee reports, and a lobbying disclosure tool are just among the few things—or, many things of the recommendations that the Clerk's Office has advanced during your time.

While we celebrate the innovations that the Clerk's Office has helped deliver to the House, we recognize that the office must be strategic in identifying projects that yield the greatest benefits to the House while mitigating potential risks to the House operations and our service to the American people.

I look forward to hearing from Acting Clerk McCumber about the progress his office has made and his plans for the continued modernization and improvement of legislative operations. I am sure that, together, working with this Committee, we will advance the work of all 215 employees.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I yield back.

[The prepared statement of Ranking Member Torres follows:]

**PREPARED STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER OF THE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT NORMA TORRES**

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Chairman STEIL. The gentlewoman yields back.

Without objection, all other Members' opening statements will be made part of the hearing record if they are submitted to the Committee clerk by 5 p.m. today.

Chairman STEIL. Today we have one witness. We welcome Mr. Kevin McCumber, the Acting Clerk of the House.

Mr. McCumber began his long tenure with the Office of the Clerk starting as a House page in 1996 and becoming Deputy Clerk in 2021.

Mr. McCumber was sworn in as Acting Clerk of the U.S. House of Representatives by Speaker Kevin McCarthy in 2023.

We appreciate you being with us today and look forward to your testimony.

Pursuant to paragraph (b) of Committee rule 6, the witness will please stand and raise his right hand.

Do you solemnly swear or affirm that the testimony that you are about to give is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

Mr. MCCUMBER. I do.

Chairman STEIL. Let the record show the witness answered in the affirmative.

We appreciate you being here today and look forward to your testimony.

I will remind the witness that we have read your written statement and it will appear in full in the hearing record.

I will now recognize you, Mr. McCumber, for 5 minutes for the purpose of giving an opening statement.

#### **STATEMENT OF KEVIN MCCUMBER, ACTING CLERK OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

Mr. MCCUMBER. Thank you, Chairman Steil, Ranking Member Torres, Members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

My written testimony details our work supporting the House, so today I would like to focus on two themes I think are front of mind for all of us: first, our support for the House's modernization efforts; and, second, how our forward-thinking and mission-driven staff meet increasing legislative demands.

I am especially proud of our team's work with this Committee and the former Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress to modernize processes and create new products while maintaining the traditions and practices of the institution. To that end, I would like to update the Committee on the status of some of our major modernization efforts.

We are working with the Secretary of the Senate's Office to modernize the lobby disclosure system, including creating unique lobbyist ID capabilities based on identity verification, a recommendation by the former Select Committee. We decided to build the system on top of the Senate's recently revamped portion of the system, creating cost savings and efficiencies. This work is a top priority for us and the Senate, and development work is underway.

We also look forward to the upcoming launch of an extensive legislative drafting study examining the nature of collaboration, the effectiveness of current tools, and reviewing potential alternative tools in the marketplace. We are excited to partner with the Office

of Legislative Counsel to create a truly collaborative drafting tool and plan to issue an RFP midsummer.

We are extremely proud of the success of the Comparative Print Suite, which was recognized internationally just last week for its transformative and innovative additions to the House's existing legislative tools. We are currently creating additional features, such as an upload feature to the Bill to Bill Differences tool in the basic edition to enable all staff to compare different versions of drafts provided by legislative counsel. We also plan to expand staff access in the Congressional Budget Office, ideally reducing the time needed to produce cost estimates.

Additionally, the Committee recently approved a procurement abstract we submitted at the end of April to begin work on a centralized Committee portal. The portal will feature several modules, the first being a referral management module which will enable Committees to more easily track the bills referred to them.

In addition to these ongoing projects, we are considering options to use existing technology to assist offices with gathering cosponsors. We look forward to working with the Committee as we continue developing creative solutions for modernizing the legislative process.

Now I would like to turn to our staff, our most important resource. They provide the support for our modernization efforts and the House's day-to-day operations, and we recruit and retain mission-driven, public-service-oriented individuals for our team.

We remain flexible to be able to fully support both the House and Senate's legislative schedules. For example, the House has not adjourned for more than 3 days since 2016. While pro forma sessions are only a few minutes long, the generated workload routinely matches that of a full legislative day. Additional flexibility is required to support late-night legislating in the Senate, requiring numerous Clerk staff onsite to facilitate the enrollment of legislation and delivery to the White House well after the House has adjourned for the day.

The volume of legislative work has also increased. 11,252 measures have been introduced as of May 1st, and we have supported 55 Committee field assignments so far this Congress, with 10 more scheduled through May. We are on pace to see more measures introduced this Congress than last Congress, which also surpassed the 116th Congress, which was a milestone that had not been achieved since 1978, the last year before unlimited additional cosponsors were allowed.

Increased field Committee assignments, bill introductions, and late-night floor activity requires us to reprioritize our resources away from other projects, but also offers us opportunities to modernize our processes, like eHopper workflow management, and cross-train staff in heavily affected divisions. Cross-training also allows us to offer staff opportunities to grow within our organization and pursue long-term careers with us.

Given this workload, we strive to offer staff work-life balance without sacrificing the quality of service and high standards we hold ourselves to in supporting the House. Doing so has helped us successfully recruit top-level talent, particularly in the technology field.

I want to thank our legislative-branch partners and Clerk staff. We are especially appreciative of our close collaboration with GPO, the Office of Legislative Counsel, the Secretary of the Senate, and the other House officers, and certainly the excellent work of Clerk staff, whose work across divisions exemplifies their shared commitment to our mission.

Chairman Steil, Ranking Member Torres, Members of the Committee, we are committed to service in support of this great institution. Thank you again for your continued support and for the opportunity to testify, and I welcome your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. McCumber follows:]

**PREPARED STATEMENT OF KEVIN MCCUMBER**



**STATEMENT BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON HOUSE  
ADMINISTRATION**

**The Honorable Kevin F. McCumber, Acting Clerk of the U.S. House of  
Representatives**

**May 8, 2024**

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED BY THE COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION

Chairman Steil, Ranking Member Morelle, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify about the operations of the Office of the Clerk. It is a true privilege to represent our team and highlight our many areas of service to this institution. I appreciate our close working relationship with you and your staff and the opportunity to update the Committee on our organization.

As I'm sure we can all agree, staff are our most valuable asset. To that end, I would like to center my testimony on both the work Clerk staff do to support the House, and what we as the Clerk's organization do to support our staff.

## CLERK OPERATIONS

The Office of the Clerk was established in 1789; the House's second official act, after electing the first Speaker, was electing the first Clerk. Since then, we have been enmeshed in the history and traditions of the House.

Today, our Office comprises 215 staff in 9 divisions. In addition to the Official Reporter supporting this Committee today, we support the House's legislative business, Members and the institution, and transparency and public disclosure.

### Supporting the House's Legislative Business

The Office plays a vital role in the House's daily legislative activities. We facilitate House proceedings; operate the Electronic Voting System; produce the constitutionally mandated *House Journal*; transcribe Floor proceedings for the *Congressional Record* and hearings and depositions for Committees; process submissions of legislative documents; oversee the recording of Roll Call Votes; maintain Chamber technology and provide streaming video; prepare messages to the Senate about legislation that has passed the House; read bills, resolutions, amendments, motions, and presidential messages on the Floor; and make legislative activity updates publicly available via the Office of the Clerk website ([clerk.house.gov](http://clerk.house.gov)).

During the First Session of the 118th Congress, we processed 8,036 bills for introduction—a 10 percent increase over the First Session of the 117th Congress. We hand-keyed the names of 103,231 cosponsors. We recorded 724 Roll Call Votes, supported 685 hours of legislative activity, and transcribed, proofread, and edited 7,021 pages of Floor proceedings for inclusion in the *Record*. Further, we assisted Committee staff in publishing 1,211 Committee meetings on the U.S. House of Representatives Committee Repository ([docs.house.gov/Committee](https://docs.house.gov/Committee)) and transcribed 147,121 pages of Committee activity.

Beyond those numbers are the countless hours our team spends supporting the House well after its time in session. It is not uncommon to find the lights on in many of our divisions late into the night to complete our work after the House has adjourned. For example, our Bill Clerks routinely work two or more hours after adjournment, processing the day's introduced measures; our team in the Office of Official Reporters

spend an equal amount of time putting the finishing touches on items for the *Record*, which they send to the Government Publishing Office (GPO) for publication. Our commitment to getting the details right, day in and day out, is a hallmark of our service to this institution.

Our capacity to nimbly meet various legislative demands is intrinsically related to the pace of legislative activity on the Floor. The House has not adjourned for more than three days since October 2016. While pro forma sessions are short in duration, the generated workload routinely matches that of a full legislative day, requiring us to re-prioritize our resources away from other projects.

In addition to supporting the day-to-day operations of the House, our forward-thinking staff are actively engaged with you and your teams to support the House's modernization efforts. This includes developing the Comparative Print Suite ([compare.house.gov](https://compare.house.gov)), working with the House Office of Legislative Counsel (HOLC) to facilitate collaborative legislative drafting, and improving the electronic submission of legislative documents, primarily through the eHopper ([eHopper.house.gov](https://eHopper.house.gov)). I am extremely proud of our team for remaining on task and on target to complete these projects, especially in light of growing legislative demands.

The Comparative Print Suite is an internationally recognized set of applications that allows House staff and others to create on-demand, point-in-time comparative prints between legislative texts and between legislative text and the law. All House staff have access to the Basic Edition and can take on-demand training to access the Advanced Edition. We recently released two new features for the Advanced Edition. First, the How an Amendment Changes a Bill tool allows staff to upload amendments drafted by HOLC and view a track changes-like outline of how the amendment would change the underlying bill or resolution if the amendment is adopted. Second, the Bill to Bill Differences Provision Select feature, part of the Bill to Bill Differences tool, allows staff to select a provision to compare across two bills, for example, a Title or Division in a large bill, to a stand-alone, smaller bill. This allows for isolated comparisons of larger texts. We are also working on adding an upload feature to Bill to Bill Differences in the Basic Edition, which will enable all staff to compare different versions of drafts provided by HOLC. We expect to continue hosting open houses on campus to showcase the tool and answer staff questions. Additionally, we will extend access to the Senate through a pilot program and develop plans to expand staff access in the Congressional Budget Office, with the goal of reducing the time necessary to produce cost estimates for bills.

We are also looking forward to the results of the market review of available collaborative drafting tools, funded by the Modernization Initiatives Account. Through our partnership with HOLC, we are excited to get started on addressing recommendations as part of the House's overall modernization effort. We requested funding in our fiscal year 2025 budget to allow us to move forward with the results from the study and begin building and implementing solutions.

We continue streamlining internal processes through the ongoing modernization of the Legislative Information Management System (LIMS). This is a mission-critical system

we use to manage House legislative operations, record legislative activities, and exchange data with our legislative branch partners. Nearly all House legislative activities are recorded in LIMS. Our efforts include updating several modules, including the Floor Action Reporting System, and redesigning and integrating the Member Information System (MIS) into LIMS. To give a recent example of how our efforts harmonize with our support for Housewide modernization efforts, earlier this year we rolled out an upgrade to the eHopper's cosponsor system. Member staff can now add cosponsors with a few clicks. Internally, a soon-to-be-released feature in LIMS will recognize those cosponsors as data, eliminating the need to hand-key hundreds of thousands of entries, dramatically increasing accuracy and efficiency.

In addition to ongoing projects, we anticipate tackling new modernization efforts in fiscal year 2025. This includes creating a centralized Committee portal. Initially, the portal will provide the infrastructure to track legislative histories of bills referred to a Committee. We submitted a procurement abstract to begin that work at the end of April. Long term, the portal will feature several additional modules, including a replacement for the applications that Committees use to publish meeting information on the Committee Repository and add draft meetings to the Deconflict Committee Scheduler. We look forward to working with the Committee as we develop these products.

Our modernization efforts are not limited to technology. We are actively engaged with this Committee and Leadership, the Senate, and the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) to sunset the thirty-year-old Advisory Committee on the Records of Congress (ACRC). The ACRC was established to advise Congress and NARA on the management and preservation of congressional records before the House and Senate had professional archival staff. It has outlived its purpose and sunseting it will save taxpayer dollars and valuable staff time. Draft legislation calls for replacing the ACRC with an annual reporting requirement for NARA and mandatory meetings for current stakeholders.

### **Supporting Members and the Institution**

In addition to supporting the House's primary legislative functions, Clerk staff support Members and this institution in myriad ways.

For example, support staff in the Cloakrooms prepare and serve food and drinks, field questions from Members, track Floor proceedings, and collect Members' remarks for the *Record*. We also welcome Members to the Congressional Prayer Room, the Members and Family Committee Room, and the Lindy Boggs Congressional Women's Reading Room. Clerk staff provide administrative, communications, and technical support to the Chaplain, including the coordination of guest chaplains.

We support Member offices in the event of a Member's resignation, death, or expulsion. During the 118th Congress, we have supported ten vacant offices, including six at present. When a Member office becomes vacant, the Office of the Clerk is both the certifying and employing authority, stewarding the vacant office until a successor is elected. These responsibilities are derived from statute, House Rules, and longstanding

practice. To fulfill these duties, the Clerk's Office—with the cooperation of the remaining Member office staff—acts to preserve the integrity of the vacant office's operations. We assist staff with nonpartisan functions of the vacant office, such as administering new and existing casework, responding to constituent inquiries and concerns, and responding to tour, flag, and other requests. Our staff also coordinate with the departing Member and their staff on the proper disposition of the office's records and work with staff to prepare for the transition to the successor by communicating with state election officials, preparing the DC and district offices for new occupancy, coordinating with the district offices' property managers about leases, and reviewing and updating the office supply inventory. Our staff ensure all computers are reimaged and work with the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to verify that equipment meets technological standards. In addition to technology and equipment support, we work closely with the CAO and her team on administrative and finance matters, and to ensure staff in both the DC and district offices are aware of the many resources available to them. We greatly appreciate the CAO's commitment to supporting us in our management of these offices.

Office of House Employment Counsel (OHEC) attorneys advise clients about employment and labor issues under the Congressional Accountability Act. For example, during the First Session of the 118th Congress, we conducted 78 required Workplace Rights and Responsibilities training sessions for Members. OHEC's practice also includes investigating claims and interviewing witnesses, responding to demand letters and motions at the trial and appellate stages of litigation, resolving claims, engaging in discovery, and participating in Office of Congressional Workplace Rights hearings and conferences.

Our Office of Communications supports Clerk initiatives and provides services to Members and the institution. We work closely with the Speaker's event staff and GPO to produce invitations, programs, tickets, and other items for ceremonial events—12 in 2023. Additionally, we provide Housewide presentations, including the *Staffer's Guide to the Clerk's Office* and Committee Clerk training, in partnership with the Congressional Staff Academy, and print Member constituent correspondence in braille on behalf of the Office of Congressional Accessibility Services. The Office of Communications converts Word documents to braille, prints messages on heavy cardstock, and compares copies to written transcripts to ensure accuracy. Just this year we upgraded to a printer with features designed to present content with complex formatting, improving accessibility of information to the public.

Staff in our Legislative Resource Center (LRC) process thousands of stationery orders, franked envelope requests, and related requisitions. Established in 1792—eight years before the Library of Congress—the LRC's House Library is professionally staffed with librarians and researchers who use specialized research databases to answer reference questions for Members, staff, and the public. In 2023, staff answered 9,014 reference requests and disseminated 13,147 documents to Members, Committees, staff, federal agencies, and the public. Staff in the Library also archive, catalogue, and digitize congressional records and Clerk publications, adding materials to the publicly available online catalog ([ushr.on.worldcat.org](https://ushr.on.worldcat.org)).

Curatorial staff in the Office of Art and Archives (OAA) are responsible for preserving the art and artifacts in the House Collection and making the collection accessible to the public. To that end, we have created a Downloadable Images Portal ([bit.ly/ushouseart](https://bit.ly/ushouseart)), where Members, staff, and the public can access high-resolution images and reproductions of artwork. Our History, Art & Archives website ([history.house.gov](https://history.house.gov)), with content organized by Institution, People, Exhibitions, Collections, Oral History, Education, and Research, offers the public a wealth of information about the House. Curatorial staff also provide educational materials to teachers across the country. In addition to expanding access to the House Collection, OAA staff ensure that the historic objects and records are preserved for decades to come.

Our professional archivists also advise Members and assist Committees as they comply with their records retention obligations and help them research and retrieve archived records from previous congresses. During the First Session of the 118th Congress, we transferred more than 29 terabytes of electronic records and 700,000 pages of physical records to NARA.

This year marks the twentieth anniversary of our Oral History program. In addition to researching the institution's history and working with OAA to curate content for the website, staff with the Office of the House Historian conduct interviews to document the House's history through firsthand accounts of the people who lived it, including former House pages, staff, Officers, and Members. One interviewee I'd like to highlight is the late Pat Kelly. She was a dedicated staffer whose storied career spanned 54 years, including time spent as a legislative aide to her mother, Representative Edna Kelly, as well as Representatives Martha Griffiths and Matthew McHugh and the Rules Committee before joining the Clerk's Office. I had the privilege to work with her in our Legislative Operations division, where she served for 32 years as the editor of the House Daily Digest and was responsible for compiling information on Committee subject matter, witnesses, meetings, and legislative actions.

To prepare for an interview, the oral historians spend weeks researching the career of the interviewee. After they conduct the interview—an individual session can last up to two hours—the audio file is transcribed for publication on the History, Art & Archives website ([history.house.gov/oral-history/](https://history.house.gov/oral-history/)). The finished oral history products available online, including 10 digital oral history exhibits, more than 90 transcripts, and nearly 1,000 media clips, represent a team effort: OAA provides objects, records, and photographs to accompany the oral history, and the Office of Communications edits each transcript, creates video clips with closed-captioning files for accessibility, and assists with other audiovisual material production.

Beyond supporting efforts to preserve the House's history and records of its past, we also support incoming Members-elect during the transition from one Congress to the next. In close collaboration with other House Officers, Leadership, Committees, and institutional partners, our Office has already started preparing for the 119th Congress. We work closely with states and territories to ensure the timely and accurate transmittal of their election certificates to the House. With those certificates, we finalize the official roll of the House, determine Members' official names and pronunciations, produce tally sheets,

update legislative IT systems, and create and distribute voting cards. Our organization also prepares and disseminates House directories and supports Committees in archiving official records.

### **Supporting Transparency and Public Disclosure**

In addition to supporting the legislative process, Members, and the institution, we provide information to the public and process numerous required disclosures.

We administer the filing and public publishing of all financial disclosures and periodic transaction reports. In 2023 alone, we processed more than 5,700 disclosures and reports. We maintain the online filing system for these reports and work closely with the Ethics Committee to continue to improve both the filing system and public access to the records on our website ([disclosures-clerk.house.gov](https://disclosures-clerk.house.gov)).

Additionally, we administer lobbyists' disclosures and contribution forms pursuant to the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995. In 2023, we processed and published 116,771 lobbying disclosures, supported 4,047 new lobbyist registrations, and facilitated 556 registration amendments. We make these filings available online in a searchable, sortable, and downloadable format ([disclosures.house.gov](https://disclosures.house.gov)).

In addition to other modernization efforts supporting the House's legislative business, we are actively working with the Senate to modernize and harmonize the chambers' lobbying disclosure systems. Together, we established the Lobbying Disclosure Act Executive Decision Board, which reviewed proposals and decided on the next steps. The Senate is leading development and will build the modernized lobbying disclosure system on top of the Senate's existing framework, which was completed last year. We will ensure all tasks and outcomes align with House needs and requirements. These upgrades will improve the user experience, provide more efficient processing and automation, integrate the two chambers' systems, and allow for greater transparency. To solve the issue of duplicate accounts, we are working with the Senate to develop a system to assign unique identifiers to lobbyists and will build out protections for personally identifiable information as part of that effort.

Other transparency efforts include those required by law, such as the public disclosure of gift travel (1,594 documents published online in 2023) and official foreign travel (104 documents published). We also directly engage with the public and provide information to constituents, academics, researchers, and students. During 2023, LRC staff assisted nearly 7,000 people by phone, and the House Library disseminated more than 13,000 documents and answered more than 9,000 in-person, phone, and email reference questions.

### **SUPPORTING CLERK STAFF**

None of this work would be possible without the diligent and dedicated professionals who make up the Clerk's organization. We prioritize recruiting and retaining the best and brightest public service-minded individuals to join our organization. Our mission-

oriented and collegial work environment attracts talented professionals and maintaining our workplace culture is a top priority for our Office.

### **Staff Recruiting and Retention**

Our senior leadership team is laser-focused on recruiting and retaining staff. We think about these priorities holistically, with long- and short-term planning across divisions.

First, we prioritize recruiting mission-driven, public service-oriented staff. Through attendance at conferences and meetings with delegations from state legislatures, we foster relationships with nonpartisan professionals across the country whose skills match those we look for in many of our positions. Additionally, staff like the Official Reporter here today serve as ambassadors for our organization, participating in national competitions and showcasing the skills they have honed here. And finally, while we cannot offer private sector-level compensation, our emphasis on public service and on our mission helps us recruit many staff, especially in software development and technology.

We recognize that institutional knowledge is paramount: we prioritize helping Clerk staff pursue long-term careers within our Office and ensuring the next generation of institutional staff are prepared to carry out our mission. To facilitate this, we work with staff to identify cross-training and professional development opportunities. I am a product of our Office's strong investment in our staff from the moment they walk in the door. And my journey through this organization is not unique; many of us started out as House Pages or in entry level positions within the Office and have been able to pursue opportunities for advancement in each of our divisions.

In addition to working with staff on long-term career planning, we are equally focused on the everyday staff experience. As an organization with more than 200 staff with diverse roles and responsibilities, we host cross-divisional and Clerk-wide events to ensure Clerk staff get to know their coworkers and learn about the range of opportunities in our Office. Additionally, we are continually assessing our ability to offer staff improved work-life balance without sacrificing the quality of service and the standard we hold ourselves to in supporting this institution.

We strive to do more with less, identify efficiencies, and improve transparency while we continue to provide top-quality service, products, and information to Members, staff, and the public. We enjoy our longstanding collaboration with the other House Officers and look forward to continuing to work with their organizations and this Committee to support the House community. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I welcome your questions.

Chairman STEIL. Thank you, Mr. McCumber.

I will begin our questions today, followed by the Ranking Member. We will then alternate between parties.

I will now recognize myself for the purpose of asking questions.

Off the cuff, first, to say thank you to all of your staff. I know you have over 200 men and women on your staff who work diligently every day. Sometimes people toiling in the weeds here do not get enough appreciation, and so if you would share my and I think the entire Committee's appreciation for everyone that's working so diligently.

You spoke, I think very eloquently, about the volume of work that is being done by the Clerk's Office to keep the House of Representatives open and operational and transparent to the American people.

I want to dive in just a little bit where Congress, time and again, seems to push right up to deadlines. Not a surprise to anybody, the institution has challenges. You have to navigate that.

You commented a little bit about the late nights. Could you just add a little more color about what is going on behind the scenes when legislation comes right up to that deadline and then there is a push to get that legislation either over to the Senate or, if it is from the Senate to us, over to the White House for signature, what that looks like, provide a little color there?

Mr. MCCUMBER. Certainly.

As you mentioned, there are a lot of, especially recently, legislation going right up to the deadline. We are in regular communication with the leadership staff, Committee staff, of tracking the progress not only through the House Chamber but through the Senate Chamber, trying to prepare enrollments, the enrollment on parchment, to head down to the White House, assuming it does not get amended over in the Senate.

There is just a lot of tracking involved outside of the regular day-to-day legislative processing of regular introduced bills and cosponsors.

Once the enrollment—once we get the papers back from the Senate that it is passed clean, the enrollment's prepared, and we send it around for signature and—

Chairman STEIL. Provide a little color on that enrollment process, because I think sometimes the American people are—

Dr. MURPHY.

[Inaudible.]

Chairman STEIL. Thank you, Dr. Murphy.

Provide a little more information, maybe, or a little color, as I just said, on what that actually looks like. Because I know sometimes the American people look and say, the House passed it or the Senate passed it, why is it not law 3 minutes later?

Mr. MCCUMBER. We have four very talented enrolling clerks in the Clerk's Office. They take the bill as it is passed, both the House and Senate, print it on parchment, and then they read it character by character to ensure complete accuracy, down to the dashes and the commas and the semicolons. Once that is matched up, then it is released and sent around for signature.

We also—for the big, big bills, GPO will do team-reading. We will prepare the enrollment to send down to GPO for them to team-read

overnight, most of the time, and have it back by 9 a.m. the next day so that it is ready to move the minute the Senate takes action and we have the final, final bill.

Chairman STEIL. Thank you.

Let me jump back out from that into another area where I think we have done some actually great work on the modernization side. I know Mr. Kilmer and Mrs. Bice have done great work on modernization. A little bit, as you described that, it makes me think that we have a moment there where we could look at a little bit of modernization there.

Let me come back to where I think we have done some great modernization to the Clerk's Office—in particular, the eHopper, bill introduction. Can you just provide a little more information as to the work that the Clerk's Office has done in the modernization of that process?

Mr. MCCUMBER. Certainly.

We took it out of the email-based, where you would send an email to a dedicated email address; we moved it to an online application, where it is a lot easier. There is step-by-step processing.

In February of this year, we introduced the ability for Members and staff to add cosponsors electronically.

Then, just this past Friday, which will certainly improve the bill clerk and our internal efficiencies, we have supplied the ability for the system to automatically ingest cosponsors as they are added by you.

Pre-Friday, we would have to hand-enter all of the cosponsors that were submitted—so upwards of nearly 200,000 this Congress, we are anticipating. We would have to hand-key those entries into LIMS for that to be processed. Now, we print it out. There is a little code at the bottom. We put the code in the system, and it paints the screen with all the cosponsors.

That is a huge win for us, which will certainly speed up the processing and efficiencies.

Chairman STEIL. Appreciate that.

I think we have continued room for improvement in the modernization and efficiency of how the institution works. I appreciate the steps you have taken, appreciate the work Mr. Kilmer and Mrs. Bice have done on the Subcommittee on Modernization.

I think there are still areas where we could look to improve, and appreciate your willingness to be innovative in that space. Because we have a real opportunity, I think, both to not only cut cost, to improve transparency, but mostly, I think, to improve the speed of the throughput on some of the processes that we see ongoing here on a regular basis.

Final question: You referenced the work that is being done in a pro forma session. Sometimes, a pro forma session, people do not even—maybe, in the broader public, do not even recognize it is going on, because they feel like it is going on in the background. You said the workload is similar. Briefly, could you explain why? Is there an area for improvement there?

Mr. MCCUMBER. The pro forma sessions usually are 2 to 3 minutes long. The eHopper, as you know, makes it a lot easier for bills to be introduced, and so we are seeing 30, 40 bills introduced during a pro forma session, where previously we would see a handful.

That takes time to enter, for the parliamentarians to refer them, and then for us to finish the processing. It is Members' ability to do that, and we process them as received, so——

Chairman STEIL. Thank you for your testimony today.

Again, I know there are over 200 people that do a lot of great work behind the scenes. We appreciate—for any of them here or who are listening, we appreciate the work you do. If you would share our appreciation with them, that would be appreciated by me.

Again, on the modernization side, I think we have done some great work. I think there is more work to be done. Mostly, appreciate your willingness to engage to find areas to improve efficiency.

I yield back.

I will now recognize the Ranking Member, Mrs. Torres, for 5 minutes for the purpose of asking questions.

Mrs. TORRES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. McCumber, our offices have had a lot of challenges in the 118th Congress, including 15 vacancies, 2 Speaker votes.

Can you talk a little bit about the challenges that your office faces in having to oversee those offices, given the lack of staff, often, left in that office and the large number of correspondence that comes through from constituents, as well as casework? How is your office able to manage all of that?

Mr. MCCUMBER. Thank you for the question.

Currently, we have three Clerk staff who support vacant offices. As you know, we can have upwards of 10 offices at a time; right now, we have 6—5.

We work with the existing staff in the offices to ensure both they are supported as well as the constituents receive the casework assistance that they deserve and that they require. We interact with the staff to fulfill anything from regular office supplies to constituents emailing me directly looking for assistance, and we get them in touch with the right folks.

Right now, our staff is adequate to support the needs of the vacant offices. Again, we just provide the assistance and support that the vacant offices need in order to do their work. We rely a lot on the existing staff to continue their day-to-day services. We do not come in and take over. It is—the same policies that were in place at the time of the vacancy remain in place. We just offer the assistance that they need to be able to continue their service.

Mrs. TORRES. Quite a few of us on this Committee are authorizers as well as appropriators. Are there any changes or additional support—you said that the three staff is sufficient, but is there anything else that we can help provide so that, you know, the constituents back home for those offices do not see a big change in a vacant office?

Mr. MCCUMBER. I do not think so, in terms of vacant offices. Certainly in the modernization area, there is opportunities there.

Mrs. TORRES. OK.

Then, how does the office handle the records, the transition records from one—from the outgoing office to the incoming new Member that gets sworn in, like the one that was sworn in last night?

Mr. MCCUMBER. At the time of the vacancy, we communicate with the existing casework to see if they would like that casework to remain with the vacant office, to be turned over to the successor, or if they would like the case closed and returned to them. The casework is up to the constituent as to how they would like that to proceed.

Then the Member's papers are up to them as to how they would like to, you know——

Mrs. TORRES. Who communicates with the constituent? Is it the staff that is left in that vacant office or your office directly?

Mr. MCCUMBER. It is a letter from our office, but it is sent through the vacant office.

Mrs. TORRES. OK.

Mr. MCCUMBER. It is a communication from me.

Mrs. TORRES. Utilizing the staff that is left behind——

Mr. MCCUMBER. Exactly.

Mrs. TORRES [continuing]. in that office. OK.

What are some of the other challenges that you are having? Would you say that this is a historical number of resignations that we have seen? Or, you know, is it feast or famine? Does it happen in every Congress?

I mean, I have been here five Congresses. I have never seen this many vacancies happen in one Congress.

Mr. MCCUMBER. I would say, recently, it is pretty average.

Mrs. TORRES. OK.

Mr. MCCUMBER. We had none for a 24-hour period in December, and then within 4 months we have six, and so it really is kind of a feast or famine. We just roll with it as it comes.

Mrs. TORRES. Great. As a former 911 dispatcher, you certainly know how to balance multiple balls in the air.

Thank you, Chairman. I am going to yield back.

Mr. LOUDERMILK.

[Presiding.] The gentlelady yields.

I now recognize myself for 5 minutes for questions.

Mr. Clerk, thank you for being here. We appreciate the time.

It has been since 2019 that the Clerk's Office has come and testified to us. Since then, I know your team has been very busy and acted on several of the Select Committee recommendations and added new tools to help Member offices upgrade the systems used by the House community.

Can you briefly just touch on some of the more significant changes that have been made to improve the legislative capacity of your office?

Mr. MCCUMBER. Certainly.

The eHopper has been the, I think, biggest achievement, also the biggest change to the way the legislative process works in the House.

It was designed over a weekend at the start—in April 2020. Those of us who are used to working full-time in the office 5 days a week suddenly found ourselves having to learn how to use Teams and laptops that we were recently provided. We came up with the eHopper, as it was originally designed, to help meet the needs of the Congress to ensure that bills and cosponsors could be introduced when the Members wanted them.

I think the eHopper is the biggest change that we have seen and certainly is a contributor to the amount of bills that we see introduced.

The Comparative Print Suite I think is also a game-changer for those that utilize it. It was a long project, but the product itself is excellent and provides a much-needed comparative tool for both Members and staff to be able to more easily do their work and understand the changes in bill texts.

Mr. LOUDERMILK. OK. I appreciate that.

I want to kind of follow a little bit of the questioning of Mrs. Torres regarding the transition and records and all this, but I want to ask you—because we have run into some issues, and I want to get a better understanding of how you handle records from, let us say, one Committee or a select Committee on to the next Congress.

What records are deemed that should be preserved, maybe hearing records or any investigative stuff, versus—you know, who makes the decision of what to be preserved and what is not? Are there guidelines for that? Can you kind of give us an idea of how you handle that?

Mr. McCUMBER. There are House rules. There are certainly guidelines, recommended documents that should be preserved. However, we archive what the Committee decides to give us for recordkeeping. We are not policing anything or—

Mr. LOUDERMILK. Right.

Mr. McCUMBER [continuing]. following up on that, but—

Mr. LOUDERMILK. Do you have specific guidelines that, you know, as a Subcommittee Chairman, that at the end of this Congress you would provide to the Chairman or the staff to specify what I should be preserving?

Mr. McCUMBER. Yes. Our Office of Art and Archives will come and meet with you and others on what documents should be—

Mr. LOUDERMILK. OK. Ultimately, it is the Chairman's decision on what should be preserved and what not?

Mr. McCUMBER. Right.

Mr. LOUDERMILK. Can you, then, tell me what happens to those documents that are preserved?

Mr. McCUMBER. They are kept on the Hill, available for two Congresses, before they are sent down to the Legislative Archives, so they are more easily retrievable, for no—

Mr. LOUDERMILK. Right.

Mr. McCUMBER [continuing]. really, no other reason.

Mr. LOUDERMILK. Is there a particular time period that you keep the records in-house?

Mr. McCUMBER. Two Congresses, so I believe 4 years.

Mr. LOUDERMILK. Oh, OK. Yes, about 4 years, they are here, they are easily archivable.

If there was something that, let us say, another Member or a Committee Chairman was looking for, they could come to your office and request—

Mr. McCUMBER. Correct.

Mr. LOUDERMILK. Yes. OK. I appreciate that. It helps clarify some things.

Back to your role, are there any particular steps that this Committee can take to help improve the function of your office that are not already being undertaken?

Mr. McCUMBER. I will say that I really enjoy the close collaboration that we have with the staff, and we certainly have the support that we need to be able to continue to meet the needs that you guys are requesting.

I think just the continued support for our ongoing projects and certainly the flexibility that we have to be able to meet any changing needs that you have.

Mr. LOUDERMILK. OK.

Well, thank you. I appreciate the work that you do. I know it is overwhelming at times, but it is very important and very critical.

At this time, I recognize the gentlelady from Alabama for 5 minutes.

Ms. SEWELL. Thank you.

Thank you so much, the Clerk and your whole staff, for all the work that you do. When you think about the fact that this office has been around since 1789 and really has had to flow with the current changes that have happened over that time, I can only imagine that the day-in and day-out function can be daunting at times.

Having served as a teller recently, I never thought counting votes would be so hard. I have newfound respect for that particular task that you all undertake.

You know, during the first session of the 118th Congress, you mentioned in your testimony that the Clerk's Office processed 8,036 bills and hand-keyed the names of over 103,000 cosponsors.

How do you ensure that you are capturing accurately all of that information?

Mr. McCUMBER. Prior to the rollout of the new feature that we unveiled on Friday, our staff has a thorough proofreading process. We trust that what Members send in to us is what they intend to have added to a bill as a cosponsor.

Ms. SEWELL. Uh-huh.

Mr. McCUMBER. We enter it, we proof it on our side, and then we proof it the next morning when the record is produced to make sure that it was captured accurately.

The rollout Monday was the first day of the new ingestion tool that we have. It is a game-changer and certainly has made the process a lot more efficient on our side and leaves no room for our human error that might enter into the mix.

Ms. SEWELL. How hard was that rollout? Any lessons learned of how you can improve it?

Mr. McCUMBER. Our team works under a 2-week-sprint cycle, along with our vendor, so every 2 weeks we have improvements to the products that we are working on.

Friday's release had updates to the Comparative Print Suite as well as the eHopper, that any sort of issues that we experienced, let us say, the bill clerks would have experienced on Monday, that can be addressed quickly and released either in a hot release or in the next sprint cycle.

It is a way for us to be able to address any unintended consequences of a rollout—

Ms. SEWELL. Yes.

Mr. McCUMBER [continuing]. very quickly instead of waiting until the product is completed.

Ms. SEWELL. Have you guys foreseen any advancements in eHopper that this process of reviewing every 2 weeks—have you—are there some ways that we can enhance the process?

I know it has been a game-changer in a lot of ways, but I am sure that there are things that we could do to enhance it.

Mr. McCUMBER. There are certainly additional opportunities we have. Right now, your staff are completing Single Subject Statements and Constitutional Authority Statements as separate documents and uploaded and submitted to the eHopper. We are discussing ways that we can make that an in-app-generated document, as well, so that you are no longer having to scan and upload, it is just part of the process, as if you are introducing a bill or adding cosponsors. Making that a little more seamless.

There are endless opportunities, and certainly welcome feedback from you and your staff on what you would like to see in the tool.

Ms. SEWELL. Very good.

Talk to us a little bit about the Committee portal and voting. You know, I know that you are in the midst of developing a Committee portal to provide a central location for Committee documents and tasks. Where does that process stand? What key features and functionalities will be included in the initial release?

Mr. McCUMBER. Right now, we are working on—we just received the funding for it.

There are a lot of opportunities within the Committee portal that we see to help Committee clerks do their work. All of the effort that went into this morning's hearing—scheduling the Official Reporters and the House Recording Studio—making that part of the Committee portal.

The first tool out of the gate is going to be the Committee referral management tool, which will allow Committees to better track legislation that was referred to them.

We are also preparing to do a Committee votes data base, which addresses one of the Select Committee's recommendations, where the Committee votes are then created as data and more accessible and easily uploaded online.

We have goals to rewrite docs.house.gov and—

Ms. SEWELL. That is a very ambitious goal.

Mr. McCUMBER [continuing]. include that as part of the Committee portal, which, again, will help with a lot of the data entry that Committee staff are doing.

Witness management tools. Just managing all the Committees' needs through that portal—a one-stop shop, if you will, for that.

Ms. SEWELL. Well, we look forward to working with you on trying to make that process more efficient and getting a portal system that really would work.

Again, I want to thank you and your staff for all that you do. Thanks.

Mr. McCUMBER. Thank you. Thank you.

Ms. SEWELL. I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LOUDERMILK. The gentlelady yields back.

I now recognize Dr. Murphy for 5 minutes.

Dr. MURPHY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Mr. McCumber, for coming today. You have a job that I do not envy anybody, trying to keep a bunch of cats running in the right direction, but I think it is great.

I just want to give up some of my personal experience. I am not a prolific bill writer, but we try to make our substance quality, not quantity. I have had some problems, still, regarding getting bills written. One of my healthcare proposals took about 4 months to come back from the House Office of Legislative Counsel.

It is my understanding there has been a substantial increase in the number of requests as in bills and stuff. Is that correct?

Mr. McCUMBER. That is my understanding, yes, sir.

Dr. MURPHY. All right. I am going to—I would like to show a little—because I asked my chief and I asked my LD, what is going on here? Where are all these bills coming from?

I have got a little poster here. I found out that—yes, bring it over here—that most of the people have just a few—I would say a few. It is under 50 or 60, 70 bills. We have one person that likes to write a bill every other day or every day. I won't name that person, other than it being—well, I will be nice. It is a Republican Member, and I am not sure why he thinks the whole world needs to be re-written in time.

I think this is an abuse of the system, personally. I would be very interested to know, does he have, like, a legislative staff or two assigned directly to him? Does he write his own bills or whatever?

I would think that this person would be a major outlier and an extreme burden to your legislative staff. Is that fair? Is it—do you ever see this discrepancy?

Mr. McCUMBER. That was a unique situation there. My understanding, if we are talking about the same instance this Congress, the 500 bills were introduced on 1 day, and none of them were used—none of those bills utilized the Office of Legislative Counsel.

Dr. MURPHY. He wrote his own bills?

Mr. McCUMBER. Correct. Those were all submitted in Word documents, which then—

Dr. MURPHY. In 1 day?

Mr. McCUMBER. Correct.

Dr. MURPHY. I am going to let everybody try to figure out who that is.

OK, all right, thank you. I just was shaking my head, and I said, this is ridiculous. I am glad to hear that you guys were not—had to be involved.

How many legislative staff do you guys have writing bills?

Mr. McCUMBER. Just to be clear, for the Office of Legislative Counsel, that is outside of the Clerk's Office.

Dr. MURPHY. Yes.

Mr. McCUMBER. I would defer to that team—

Dr. MURPHY. OK.

Mr. McCUMBER [continuing]. for how many staff they have. We have 22, 23 folks on our Legislative Operations team who just process everything—

Dr. MURPHY. Yes.

Mr. McCUMBER [continuing]. once it has been introduced or managed on the floor.

Dr. MURPHY. Well, you know, our job here—some people think the only job is to write bills. I do not. I personally think we have a lot of other duties to attend to.

I would ask one other question. I think, you know, with Chairman Steil's and Mr. Kilmer's work on trying for efficiency in everything in the House, I think we are going to really need to—good, bad, or indifferent—really embrace artificial intelligence when it comes to looking at some of these documents.

You were talking about how you have people that are literally reading word for word, dash for dash. I am not here to replace anybody, but, boy, adding efficiencies to the system. I look in medicine, and I look at pathology, I look at radiology; there are going to be absolute efficiencies that will be gained with that.

I am just interested, do you guys have any thought about that? Has that been on your plate at all?

Mr. McCUMBER. I think we can certainly use AI as a tool in our toolbox—

Dr. MURPHY. Tool. Tool.

Mr. McCUMBER [continuing]. but the need for everything that we—we are producing law and sending the bill down to the President for signature, and so it has to be right all the time. There are certainly ways that we could, you know, teach the AI tool to be able to look for certain things, but, at the end of the day, the human has to be involved.

Dr. MURPHY. Yes. Absolutely.

Mr. McCUMBER. Certainly, we would take baby steps with it, but—

Dr. MURPHY. Yes.

Mr. McCUMBER [continuing]. me and my team, we are certainly open to it. We have discussions quite regularly about how we can utilize tools—

Dr. MURPHY. Sure.

Mr. McCUMBER [continuing]. to make us more efficient.

Dr. MURPHY. You know, it is just literally a word-formatting document of just looking for grammar and those kind of things. It is something, I think, that we are going to have to deal with.

I do not like the whole term—and I have said this now a thousand times, and I will say it 10 million more—of the human “in the loop.” I do not like that. We are holding the loop, and we get to control what it does for us.

Mr. McCUMBER. Yes, sir.

Dr. MURPHY. Anyway, congratulations on your job. Not that I want this one, but I do not want yours either. Thank you.

I will yield back.

Mr. McCUMBER. Thank you.

Mr. LOUDERMILK. The gentleman yields.

I now recognize Mr. Kilmer for 5 minutes.

Mr. KILMER. Thank you, Chairman.

Thank you, Mr. McCumber, for being with us.

I really want to thank you for the work of you and your team in implementing a lot of the recommendations from the Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress: you know, the

deconfliction tool, in hopes of making it a little bit easier for Members to show up and have one hearing at a time rather than having to invite their clone to work. The Comparative Print Suite to allow comparison of different draft pieces of legislation I think is valuable. You have talked about the eHopper function and what that will mean in terms of just ease of getting cosponsors signed on and bill introduction.

Thank you for that. I think it really matters.

I want to touch on a few other outstanding Select Committee recommendations in your purview. First, I want to talk about the work you have been doing on collaborative drafting.

The Select Committee recommended a tool that would allow Members and Committees and their Senate counterparts and other stakeholders to jointly work on draft legislative text together.

Earlier in the year, in partnership with the Clerk's Office and the Office of Leg. Counsel—or, I am sorry, in partnership with the Clerk's Office, the Office of Leg. Counsel sort of rolled out basically a Word document where they could use track-changes features to achieve some of the goals in the interim.

Just, any update on where things stand with the development of a tool in this regard? Any feedback you have received so far on the Word version change?

Mr. McCUMBER. Right now, we are preparing for procurement and to issue an RFI for that collaborative drafting tool. We plan to schedule a vendor day soon—

Mr. KILMER. OK.

Mr. McCUMBER [continuing]. to discuss the opportunities that we have there.

I have not received any direct feedback. I know Wade and his team appreciate the collaborative nature of the Word doc. It makes their final work product easier to do.

Mr. KILMER. Yes.

Mr. McCUMBER. I will say that, when rolling out that Word document and locking down the PDF to further edits, that has saved time on the processing end. GPO is no longer having to do that comparison against—the PDF versus the electronic file—

Mr. KILMER. Yes.

Mr. McCUMBER [continuing]. because we are sure there are no changes. It has all been a positive there.

Mr. KILMER. Good.

I know Ms. Sewell mentioned the Committee portal, and I think we have high hopes that that can address several of the open Select Committee recommendations.

You know, I know you touched on this already, but I am just curious if you can give an update both on where things stand in that regard, but also I think it is valuable for the Committee to hear some of the different features that you envision the portal having and explain how they will impact congressional Committees' work.

Mr. McCUMBER. Currently, we are in the final procurement stages for the Committee portal. Once the vendor has been notified about the award and the purchase order has been cut, we can hold a kickoff meeting with them.

We have a lot of ideas, as I mentioned a little bit earlier, about the uses of the Committee portal. Certainly, the list of bills that

have been referred is the first module out of the gate that we have planned.

Collecting Committee votes for data—we envision the portal to become a replacement for the data entry the Committee staff have to do.

We see, long-term, it being a place for Committee staff to coordinate the meeting logistics and information with both our office and the CAO for the Recording Studio, Official Reporters, et cetera.

Then, eventually, see it as a place for the Committees to manage their Subcommittee membership and other legislative business, such as witness management.

The interactions that are currently taking place right now between the Committee staff and our Legislative Resource Center staff to get the Committee actions up on Congress.gov—

Mr. KILMER. Yes.

Mr. MCCUMBER [continuing]. eliminating that email traffic and just giving folks the tools to be able to do it when they need to to ensure that it is online and in a timely manner.

Mr. KILMER. Great.

I am hoping, in the time we have left—you know, both the Committee portal and the collaborative drafting tool are, I think, really important projects, and I think you have done a good job of explaining why they matter.

Can you comment on the role of the Modernization Initiatives Account in terms of progress on these projects and other things that are in your purview that you are trying to get done?

We are in appropriations season, and I want to make sure we underscore the role that the Modernization Initiatives Account plays in supporting both those projects and others.

Mr. MCCUMBER. This specific account has been critical for us to be able to fund these initiatives.

These are Member-driven projects that we are able to address outside of the regular budget preparation request that we have. That initial money to be able to get these projects kicked off and then build out-years into our budget going forward is how we approached it in this budget preparation cycle.

It has been really critical for us to be able to have those funds available to be able to initiate these projects when we were able to.

Mr. KILMER. Thanks.

Mr. MCCUMBER. It has been a real positive.

Mr. KILMER. We will keep fighting to see that account populated so you can do more good for the institution.

Thank you.

Mr. MCCUMBER. Thank you.

Mr. KILMER. I appreciate it.

I yield back.

Chairman STEIL.

[Presiding.] The gentleman yields back.

Mrs. Bice is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. BICE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Following up on my colleague on Appropriations as well, we had a great conversation in the Leg. Branch Approps hearing week before last as it relates to the Modernization Initiatives Account, but I want to follow up.

You mentioned in that hearing that the largest increase is in the line item for modernization projects, some of which have received that initial funding from the MIA account. What projects are these funds being used for, either to continue the projects or to maintain those projects that are currently under process?

Mr. McCUMBER. For our LIMS work, that is a continuation of funding; as well as the Comparative Print Suite, that is sustainment and modification, user requests and other modification requests that we receive, the maintenance piece.

The funding for the initial start of the project is the Committee portal, the collaborative drafting tool, and that is really where those funds are set for.

Mrs. BICE. Perfect.

You requested \$800,000 from the MIA account to conduct research and analysis to determine the next steps for XMetaL.

Can you share what an upgrade of XMetaL will provide to the House community? This may have sort of been touched on, but I would love a little bit more.

Mr. McCUMBER. Certainly. It will offer the better collaborative tools we envision for both Members to talk to each other, Members and staff, Members and outside organizations.

Really, XMetaL, if you have used it, it is clunky and outdated. We use it in the Clerk's Office, and when we are producing big bills, it's a time-waste and it is challenging. Certainly, Appropriations Committee uses it a lot when they are under deadlines to create big bills.

The goal is to have a more efficient and faster system that will enable everybody to do their work better. It is not a big, shiny object project, but it will make a world of difference to the underlying foundation of how we do work.

Mrs. BICE. Perfect. Thank you.

I want to also just mention, you have done, I think, a tremendous amount of work already on some of the initiatives that the Select Committee had put forward and then certainly what we are looking to do this Congress and hopefully next.

Thank you for your interest in—I think the Committee deconfliction tool was mentioned by my colleague Mr. Kilmer. I hope that clerks in other Committees will utilize this tool so that those of us that have several Committees and even more Subcommittees are not having to run from place to place to be able to testify and/or question witnesses in hearings. That is a shout-out to all the clerks out there.

Last, I want to talk a little bit about AI and data governance, which is something I know that your office has been looking into. We both agree that we need some sort of formal governance framework.

You mentioned the potential use case for AI with legislative drafting and management of some data sets. Can you share a bit more about testing that should be taking place before the implementation of that technology?

Mr. McCUMBER. We would want to make sure that it is—everything is thoroughly tested before it is introduced into the legislative process. Certainly, we do not want anything to be—any damage to be done based on any sort of tool.

Like everything, we would make sure it fits into the legislative ecosystem appropriately and has gone through the thorough vetting and testing that is necessary for it to be able to be useful to everybody.

Mrs. BICE. I think in a roundtable we had, one of the things that I think stuck out the most to me is the fact that it is sort of input in, input out, and the data sets that are being utilized need to be vetted carefully so we make sure that everything that is being used is factually correct, is accurate, has, sort of, resources to back it up. Thank you for mentioning that.

The last thing I want to ask is about staff. Can you talk a little bit about how many staffers you believe to be maybe 5 years out from retirement? What are you doing for, sort of, succession planning for those key roles that you may have looking for retirement in the future?

Mr. McCUMBER. We have identified the mission-critical staff and have succession plans in place. We utilize cross-training and place a big emphasis on cross-training, as well as documentation.

One of the projects that a former Clerk embarked on was making sure we had job manuals for each of our jobs so that we could reference them when we lose staff who have been here 35, 40 years, if they walk out with all of that institutional knowledge. The ability for us to capture that and make it available.

I use those manuals from time to time, especially when it comes to enrolling-type issues that come up. They have been extremely valuable and something that we place a big emphasis on still.

Mrs. BICE. Acting Clerk, thank you for being with us this morning. I look forward to continuing to work with you on these modernization initiatives with my colleague across the aisle.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I yield.

Chairman STEIL. The gentlewoman yields back.

Mr. Carey is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CAREY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and also to the witness.

I want to tell you up front, your testimony—when you are looking at me, I am actually not crying, but the hay-fever season is really amongst me. You are not saying anything that is really disappointing me.

I do want to transition a bit, because this is a very big area for me—I know your testimony touched on it—the Office of Art and Archives.

Can you share a little bit about—since we are hitting the 20th anniversary of the Oral History Program within the Office of House Historian, are there any actions that you are planning to recognize this benchmark?

Mr. McCUMBER. We have talked about a recognition. We have not ironed out any details yet. We certainly do not want the opportunity to pass us by in the recognition of that.

Mr. CAREY. Maybe can you just expand on what that Oral History program is? Because I think it is very interesting.

Mr. McCUMBER. As do I. I actually find myself—when we have new staff in the office, I refer them to some of those videos—

Mr. CAREY. Yes.

Mr. McCUMBER [continuing]. to be able to hear from their colleagues of the past on what their experiences were and, certainly, how they can build on the work that has been done.

The Historian and the Office of the Historian identify key figures from the House's history that they believe the House would benefit from institutionally from having their experiences recorded and made available. They do all of that preliminary work, and then they schedule interviews. They have the professional staff that do it and document their experiences. It is a——

Mr. CAREY. Can you also maybe share a little bit about what kind of public access there is to those resources?

Mr. McCUMBER. Certainly. They are all available on the Historian's website, [history.house.gov](http://history.house.gov), under the "Oral History" project. They are available to everyone.

Mr. CAREY. I would just say to all my colleagues, if they have not had the opportunity to do that, it is kind of like voices from the past.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. McCUMBER. I agree.

Chairman STEIL. The gentleman yields back.

Mr. D'Esposito is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. D'ESPOSITO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning, sir. Thanks for being here.

I wanted to talk briefly about your role in vehicle management on the campus. What vehicles are under the management of your office?

Mr. McCUMBER. Currently, we have eight vehicles that we hold the leases for. Six are under the purview of the Sergeant at Arms, and the Clerk's Office uses two vehicles.

Mr. D'ESPOSITO. OK. The use of those vehicles, the responsibilities of those assigned are?

Mr. McCUMBER. The one vehicle is for the Clerk's daily use to and from campus. The other one is reserved for deliveries to the White House for legislation as well as the Federal Register for other pieces of legislation.

Mr. D'ESPOSITO. OK. Those are the only vehicles that you oversee?

Mr. McCUMBER. Correct.

Mr. D'ESPOSITO. Eight total?

Mr. McCUMBER. Two, really. We hold the leases for eight. Six are given to the Sergeant at Arms under his vehicle-use policies, and then two fall under—it is just an administrative management——

Mr. D'ESPOSITO. OK.

Mr. McCUMBER [continuing]. holding the lease.

Mr. D'ESPOSITO. Just a question, because we have dealt with this in the past in other agencies. The vehicle policy that you have in your office states that they are only available for official use. Can you just explain exactly what official use is?

Mr. McCUMBER. Certainly.

For the Clerk vehicle, it is to and from the office, Monday through Friday.

The other vehicle is specifically for official business use—going to the White House, going to the Federal Register. The Clerk's Office is charged with getting appraisals for certain foreign gifts that are

received and need appraisals, and so the vehicle is driven to the appraiser for that purpose.

We do have a vehicle log that captures the date, who, time, mileage in, mileage out. That is tracked and regularly recorded.

Mr. D'ESPOSITO. Great.

I know that you also handle, as you just mentioned, the gift appraisal process. I am not sure if it was touched upon already.

Members are allowed to accept gifts of up to, I believe, \$415. The Clerk does the appraisal of the gifts, and if the appraisals are under, the item is then returned to the Member.

Mr. McCUMBER. That is right.

Just last year—the minimum value is assessed every 3 years, and it is up to \$480 now.

Mr. D'ESPOSITO. OK.

Mr. McCUMBER. When Members receive a gift overseas, if they believe the value might be approaching that amount, we are available for appraisals, as you mentioned, and we provide them with the appraisal.

Then it is between the Member and the Ethics Committee as to how they—if they want to turn it over to us for us to dispose of or if they want to receive permission to be able to display it in their office.

Mr. D'ESPOSITO. OK. How is that value set?

Mr. McCUMBER. The \$480 value?

Mr. D'ESPOSITO. Yes.

Mr. McCUMBER. It is set by the GSA.

Mr. D'ESPOSITO. OK.

Mr. McCUMBER. Yes.

Mr. D'ESPOSITO. How many—do you know offhand how many gifts from foreign dignitaries Members received last year?

Mr. McCUMBER. I do not have that number in front of me, but—

Mr. D'ESPOSITO. OK.

If you can, just for us to understand, can you provide what an appropriate gift for a Member overseas would—would accept?

Mr. McCUMBER. It is not really for me to decide what—

Mr. D'ESPOSITO. Well, examples that you see.

Mr. McCUMBER. Oh, examples? Certainly. Rugs, pottery, jewelry, art, plates. It kind of runs the—

Mr. D'ESPOSITO. Right.

Now, the gifts that are not able to be taken by the Member, you guys take control of, correct?

Mr. McCUMBER. If the Member wishes to dispose of them, they do it through us—

Mr. D'ESPOSITO. Right.

Mr. McCUMBER [continuing]. correct.

Mr. D'ESPOSITO. Now, how—what is the process then for the Clerk's Office?

Mr. McCUMBER. Then we work with GSA, and excess inventory or—not “excess inventory”—but we work with GSA to drop off the gifts, and they take it from there.

Mr. D'ESPOSITO. OK.

Have there ever been any proposals to display items that are of cultural or historical significance?

Mr. McCUMBER. The Ethics Committee would be the ones who would have that exchange with the Member as to what they wish to do. We just simply provide the appraisal.

Mr. D'ESPOSITO. Excellent.

Well, thank you very much for your service.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman STEIL. The gentleman yields back.

Mrs. Bice is recognized for 5 minutes—I apologize. Ms. Lee is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. LEE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. McCumber, I would like to return to a discussion about artificial intelligence. I serve as one of the members of the bipartisan Artificial Intelligence Task Force, and I am particularly interested in how your team is using artificial intelligence in the tools that you provide to the House community.

I would like to start with the Comparative Print Suite. Can you share more with us about the guardrails you have in place to protect the House data that is used for the Comparative Print Suite?

Mr. McCUMBER. Certainly.

The only use case that we currently have for artificial intelligence is within the Comparative Print Suite. The Suite uses natural language processing, which better assists it to be able to do what it was intended for. That is the only use of AI that we currently have in practice.

The Suite is certainly equipped with the appropriate guardrails to ensure that none of the data that is uploaded is accessible or—it is fully secure and stays within the network itself. That has been thoroughly tested through all the CAO's cybersecurity and all of the appropriate avenues there.

Ms. LEE. Can you share with us a little bit more about the new features that are there and how they are helping staff?

Mr. McCUMBER. Bear with me here. We did—pardon the—if I can find my notes here, so I can make sure I do not miss anything about it.

All House staff have access to the basic edition. Then they can take the advanced training course to be able to get the advanced edition.

It allows for how an amendment changes a bill. It allows staff to upload amendments drafted by HOLC, view track-changes of how the amendment would change the underlying bill or resolution.

The Bill to Bill Differences Provision Select feature, which is part of the Bill to Bill Differences tool, allows staff to select a provision to compare across two bills, so a title or a division in a large bill to a standalone smaller bill. It allows for the isolated comparisons of the larger texts.

Then, as I mentioned, we are working on adding an upload feature to the basic edition so that all staff have that ability to upload texts—draft texts that they receive from Legislative Counsel.

Ms. LEE. Your office also has several ongoing projects to streamline internal processes, including a redesign of the Legislative Information Management System and an update of the floor Action Reporting System.

What impact will these updates and changes have for our House community?

Mr. McCUMBER. The LIMS project is a multiyear project which is modernizing a system that will allow for additional modules and features and requests to, what we like to say, will fall—all be able to fall under the LIMS umbrella.

It is built in a way that the old—or, the current LIMS system makes it very difficult to add new features and new ideas that come out of the—whether from this Committee or the former Select Committee or from Members themselves. It makes it very difficult to add new features.

The LIMS 2.0 is built in a way that additional modules and features and requests can be added much more easier and, kind of, live all under that umbrella. It will better enable us to meet the Committee's requests for new products and features in a more timely manner.

Ms. LEE. Do you see artificial intelligence or any other type of emerging technology as potentially playing a role with future updates for these services? Any ideas that you might have about how emerging technology could help improve the back-end systems on how you deliver these types of services to the House?

Mr. McCUMBER. Certainly.

There is a lot of opportunity that AI presents. If the data set is built in a controlled way that allows us—gives us the tools that we need to ensure that the work is accurate, it increases our efficiencies, whether it is in the bill drafting or the bill processing end, the enrolling clerks comparing texts and—whatever the case may be, there are certainly opportunities there.

We are in the initial stages, along with the CAO, on the AI Task Force, in those discussions on how we can kind of all move forward together and make sure that we are advancing the House but also protecting the vital role that is necessary for that legislative process to make sure that integrity stays intact.

Ms. LEE. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman STEIL. The gentlewoman yields back.

I would like to thank our witness for appearing before us today. It has been very helpful.

Members of the Committee may have some additional questions for you, and we ask that you please respond to those questions in writing.

[The questions for the record follow:]

**QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD**

**RESPONSE TO THE COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION ON QUESTIONS FROM  
THE FULL COMMITTEE HEARING HELD MAY 8, 2024: “LOOKING AHEAD SERIES:  
OVERSIGHT OF THE OFFICE OF THE CLERK”**

**The Honorable Kevin F. McCumber, Acting Clerk of the U.S. House of Representatives  
May 30, 2024**

Majority Questions for the Record

1. The Advisory Committee on the Records of Congress (ACRC) was established in 1990 and has served the purpose of advising Congress and NARA on the management and preservation of congressional records. As you mentioned in your testimony, efforts are underway to sunset the Advisory Committee.
  - a. In lieu of this advisory committee, draft legislation calls for an annual reporting requirement and meetings with stakeholders. What topics would be covered by this reporting?

Since its creation in 1990, the ACRC has reviewed and considered a wide range of topics regarding records management and preservation. The list below represents the general scope of topics which we believe would be beneficial and reasonable for inclusion in an annual report to Congress. This list is not necessarily exhaustive, but in our experience, these topics would provide Congress the information necessary for regular oversight and administration of congressional records management and preservation.

Ongoing Projects

- The Government Publishing Office (GPO) records storage project. Specifically, the report would include information on Phase II of this ongoing construction project, which is aimed at providing additional Congressional records storage space at GPO.
- The Congressional Video Preservation and Access Working Group. The report would focus on House, Senate, Library of Congress, and National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) ongoing collaboration efforts to identify and create potential solutions for the long-term preservation, storage, and access for congressional floor and committee hearing footage.
- The Congressional Web Archive. Specifically, the report would focus on the harvesting of congressional websites as managed by the Center.

Records Management and Services

- Information related to ongoing practices for electronic records preservation, storage, and access at the Center for Legislative Archives (the Center) and NARA, including processes for the description of and access to congressional records generally.
- Information on efforts related to the documentation of accessions, loans, and transfers of congressional records in both textual and electronic formats.
- Information related to the Center's congressional records reference services provided to researchers of all sectors.
- The process for declassification of congressional records, including the status, storage, preservation and release of such records.
- Information related to the exhibition of congressional records at various locations.
- Information related to the Center's use of and need for any resource support within NARA.

**b. What would coordination on archives and records between the House, Senate, and NARA look like without this advisory committee?**

Without the ACRC, coordination would simply be a continuation and formalization of the current long-standing practice of informal collaboration among the Center and House and Senate staff regarding shared projects and collective issues related to congressional records. Ideally, it should include a regular meeting calendar with the following: monthly meetings between the Center and House archival staff, quarterly or bi-annual meetings of the Center and House and Senate archival staff, as well as meetings on an as-needed or project specific basis. Additionally, coordination should include an internal briefing of the Clerk of the House, House Historian, Chief of the Office of Art and Archives, and House Archivist upon the Center's delivery of the annual report to Congress.

**c. What cost-savings are you expecting with a sunset of the advisory committee?**

In total, we expect sunsetting the ACRC to result in calculable savings of appropriated funds for operating costs of the committee, as well as an inestimable amount of savings attributable to Center, House and Senate staff hours related to the preparation and planning for ACRC meetings. In April 2024, \$42,000 was allocated for operating costs, which primarily consists of travel expenses for appointees.<sup>1</sup>

**2. In your testimony, you mention your Office's role in operating the Electronic Voting System (EVS) on the House floor.**

**a. Can you share more about the upgrades to the electronic voting displays that were made last summer?**

The EVS Main and Summary display boards were due for a lifecycle replacement and were upgraded in August 2023. The four panels of the Main display and the two Summary boards were upgraded to the latest LED technology, providing greater reliability. In addition, the Display Driver modules used to control the displays were upgraded. We worked closely with the Architect of the Capitol (AOC) to dismantle the old units, prepare the Chamber wall with new framing, and install the new LED units.

**b. How many electronic voting stations are currently on the House floor?**

There are 54 voting stations on the House floor.

**c. Is there capacity to expand the number of voting stations on the House floor, and what is the normal timeframe you would need for installation of additional voting stations?**

Yes, there is sufficient capacity to install up to 16 additional voting stations. There are two locations prewired and ready. Additional cabling will be required for further expansion. We estimate the associated costs to be approximately \$15,000, which would provide for cabling and network hardware for the 14 additional stations. In addition to the cabling work, work on the chairs would be required to accommodate

<sup>1</sup> ACRC Charter, 4-29-2024 from FACA Database: <https://gsa-geo.my.salesforce.com/sfc/p/#/t0000000Gyj0/a/3d000002sahD/yclz1RCgZTeJ2nxtoXzYCS4tV8ejEPqAvBWxcojnSfo>

the additional stations. We estimate that the time required to install more than the two preidentified voting stations would be approximately four months.

**3. The current minimal value for foreign gifts is \$480.00. We understand that your office appraises gifts that are received from foreign dignitaries that are suspected to be of significant value.**

**a. Can you describe the process your team follows for appraising gifts received from foreign dignitaries?**

The receipt of gifts by Members from foreign governments and international organizations is governed by the Constitution, federal statutes and the House Ethics Manual. The Clerk's office is primarily responsible for appraising the gift.<sup>2</sup> Once the value is determined, our office then disposes of or returns the gift as directed by the Member.

When Members or staff request an appraisal from the Clerk for a gift, the Clerk's Office retains the services of a private appraiser. Those appraisals are performed for a per-item price based on the research done, which is paid for by the Clerk. Once that appraisal is complete, the Clerk informs the Member of the results in writing. If the Member cannot retain, or chooses not to retain, the item under the conditions of the relevant statutes and rules, the Clerk will transfer the item to the General Services Administration (GSA) for disposal.

**b. On average, how much staff time and resources does your team dedicate to the appraisal process and dispensing of gifts that are over the minimal value?**

On average, each gift takes about 2-4 hours of staff time to receive, appraise and either return or dispose. Once a gift is received from a Member, staff time is generally spent as such: 1) one to two hours getting the gift appraised, 2) one to two hours documenting the gift and appraisal, and 3) approximately one hour returning the gift to the Member or disposing of the gift, depending on the value and the Member's decision.

**c. Can you share an estimate as to how many gift appraisals your office had to conduct over the past year?**

Our office processed 52 foreign gift appraisals in 2023. This year, our office has completed 11 gift appraisals with another 6 currently in progress.

**d. Do you find that most gifts appraised fall above, or below, this minimal value?**

While about 30% of foreign gifts that are turned over to the Clerk by Members for appraisal are at or above the current threshold, the majority of gifts appraised are of nominal value. Books and plaques are examples of nominal value gifts that are turned over to the Clerk for appraisal.

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<sup>2</sup> House Ethics Manual, p. 48, "...[i]f you [the Member] are unsure of the value, the Office of the Clerk can appraise the item."

- 4. The Office of the Clerk manages the leases for vehicles that are utilized by the Chief Administrative Office and House Sergeant at Arms.**
- a. Can you share the specific responsibilities your office has in the management of fleet vehicles, especially for those operated by the House Sergeant at Arms and Chief Administrative Officer?**

Our office manages the administrative aspects associated with the procurement and leasing of six vehicles used by the House Sergeant at Arms (SAA). We no longer administer vehicle procurement or leasing for the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO). Our office's responsibilities associated with the SAA leased vehicles are limited to the administrative procedures necessary to procure the vehicles, maintain and service the vehicles as necessary during the duration of the leases, maintain insurance policies on the vehicles through an outside vendor, and to return the vehicles at the end of the lease term. The Clerk's office has no authority over, nor insight into, how those leased vehicles are utilized by the SAA in the execution of his official duties.

- 5. Your testimony mentioned an ongoing market review of collaborative drafting tools available for the House, funded by the Modernization Initiatives Account.**
- a. What evaluation will your office conduct of available drafting tools to ensure House data remains protected if this tool is utilized by offices?**

We intend to work with industry and academic experts to better understand technologies and processes relevant to drafting legislation in the House and to review current practices with respect to collaboration across various stakeholders within the legislative process. Many of the technologies and toolsets we currently use are from specialized vendors and require highly specialized user skills to both draft legislation and produce documents for publication. Our evaluation of the potential toolsets will include a careful assessment of the data storage and its security apparatus such as encryption and file locking within the application. In addition, the integrity of all documents and their associated data must be preserved as we exchange these documents with our Legislative Branch partners.

We will be looking for both technical and process improvements to achieve these goals. As we undertake this work, we must ensure that the developed capability can successfully: 1) support the existing workflow and responsibilities of the offices of the Clerk and the House Office of Legislative Counsel (HOLC), GPO, the Library of Congress (LOC), and the Senate, 2) preserve document integrity and security, and 3) improve collaboration across stakeholders (including Member staff, Members, legislative counsel, and others).

- 6. Your office has several ongoing projects to streamline internal processes, including a redesign of the Legislative Information Management System (LIMS) and update of the Floor Action Reporting System.**
- a. What impact will these updates bring to the House community?**

The LIMS software is mission critical to House operations. It is the primary system Clerk staff use to manage House legislative operations, record legislative activities, and produce and disseminate data to our legislative branch partners. With the modernization projects we aim to bring about even greater

efficiencies and accuracies in our operations, as well as streamline processes both internally within the House and externally with our Legislative Branch partners.

Now that LIMS is deployed in the Cloud, we continue to work closely with our partners in the CAO to improve its stability and security. We also work closely with our vendor partners to ensure that all our cloud systems and operational procedures use industry best practices. We continue to fine tune our cloud infrastructure to improve performance, security, and resiliency.

We are committed to providing the House with a robust, stable, secure, and reliable LIMS solution based on state-of-the-art technologies. The new LIMS architecture will allow for greater flexibility in terms of future enhancements and refinements, including process alterations necessitated by changes to House Rules or other directives.

**b. How do you think artificial intelligence (AI) and emerging tech can improve the back-end systems that help you deliver for the House community?**

Clerk staff perform highly specialized tasks to ensure that all information and data associated with House legislative business is processed and disseminated in a timely and accurate manner. We do not anticipate AI tools to replace any of these processes or create any related data currently managed by Clerk staff in the near term; however, we will continue to look for opportunities where AI and other emerging technologies can play a supporting role in our existing processes. We will work closely with our partners at the CAO-Chief Information Security Office to adhere to security and safe usage guidelines set forth for the implementation of AI in our environment.

**7. Through quarterly reporting and oversight meetings, you have communicated to House Administration the ongoing work with Senate counterparts to improve the lobbyist disclosure unique identifier tool.**

**a. What timeframe can you share with us for the Lobbying Disclosure Act Executive Review Board to determine a path forward?**

The Lobbying Disclosure Act (LDA) Executive Decision Board has determined a path forward for the LDA modernization effort, to include addressing the need for unique lobbyist IDs. The LDA Executive Decision Board has agreed to leverage the recently built LDA platform by the Senate and incorporate identity verification and identity management capabilities. The estimated completion date for the modernization effort is May 2026.

**b. How do you plan to use the appropriated \$1,400,000 for this project to carry out this project?**

The appropriated funding will be used to outsource development resources to augment the in-house development team. The funding will also be used to pay for costs associated with identity verification.

**8. The Office of the Clerk has received Modernization Initiatives Account funding for several projects that address modernization recommendations.**

**a. Can you provide a brief listing of each project currently in progress that includes their estimated timeline, major milestones, and related reporting?**

*Lobbyist Disclosure Modernization*Major Milestones

- July 2023: the Lobby Disclosure Act (LDA) Executive Decision Board (EDB) formed.
  - Purpose of the Executive Decision Board (EDB): to oversee and make decisions on the LDA collaborative effort between the Senate and the House.
  - EDB holds monthly meetings.
  - A decision was made for the Senate to lead the LDA modernization effort, building on top of its recent upgrade of the Senate LDA system. House will participate and provide support throughout the development lifecycle.
- March 2024: Senate LDA Modernization kick-off.
- Future: Clerk staff to draft an RFP, select a vendor to outsource the Identity verification/management module which will ensure unique lobbyist ID and improve user management. Modernization Initiatives Account (MIA) funds, already approved, will be used for this work.

*Committee Portal and Committee Votes as Data*

Minimal viable product (MVP) for the committee portal is anticipated to be deployed and ready for use by committee staff one year from the project kick-off date (below).

Major milestones

- July 2023: RFQ issued (procurement).
- September 2023: vendor selection (procurement).
- March 2024: MIA funding approved.
- April 2024: vendor award (procurement).
- June 2024: anticipated kick-off date.
- August 2024 to March 2025: User discovery and high-level requirements gathering; UX/UI design and wireframe creation.
- February 2024 to June 2025: design and implement System Architecture.
- March and April 2025: application development; build prototype (alpha) and MVP.
- May 2025: testing and refinement.
- June 2025: production release (v.1.0).

*Collaborative Drafting Study*Major milestones

- March 2024: MIA funding approved.
- June and July 2024: release RFI and hold a vendor day.
  - To solicit vendors of interest, introduce the topic and hold question & answer sessions.
- July/August 2024: release RFP
  - Upon completion of the vendor day, draft/release an RFP and select a vendor.
- September/October 2024: Project Kickoff.
- September/October 2025: Project completion.

**b. How does your team measure the success and impact of Modernization Initiatives Account funding?**

Our team measures success by the metrics and qualitative measurements listed below. Having Committee and Leadership support for these projects is critical for our staff and enables them to identify clear priorities, conduct user discovery and complete other related tasks with users and stakeholders. We appreciate the Committee's support in our efforts to complete these modernization projects.

- Stakeholder and user satisfaction;
- Stakeholder and user engagement;
- The value delivered to all involved after each sprint or release of a product; and
- Product quality (with high quality evidenced by low amounts of product defects and technical debt).

**Minority Questions for the Record**

1. **The E-Hopper was a critical innovation implemented by the House during the pandemic, as it allowed Members to file legislative documents and carry out their constitutional duties safely and efficiently.**
  - a. **What lessons has the Office of the Clerk learned about managing the E-Hopper service since its launch?**

We are proud to have been able to launch the eHopper and provide the House with a significant modernization tool during a time of seismic shifts in the use of technology for work. The eHopper continues to provide opportunities for us to learn new ways to modernize the legislative process for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Since the initial launch, we have learned several lessons and have either adjusted our internal processes or updated the eHopper infrastructure accordingly.

The eHopper has created a new ease with which Members and their staff can file legislative documents. This ease resulted in an increased volume of daily submissions on both regular and pro forma session days. Our staff subsequently had to learn new ways of being flexible to successfully manage those workloads. With the traditional floor hopper, the volume of work for our Bill Clerks would fluctuate predictably and regularly based on the floor schedule and legislative activity. But since the introduction of the eHopper, pro forma session days now see as many or more legislative submissions than regular session days. This change in submission patterns disrupted the previous variable workflow and created an increased and more consistent volume of work across all session days, both regular and pro forma. We have adjusted our internal processes to both expect increasing levels of legislative submissions (electronic and traditional) and are prepared to continually adapt to changes in workflow that electronic filing methods encourage.

Introducing new technology into the legislative process also taught us lessons in how to make the technology as useful as possible and new ways to track the progress of a measure. We have learned that innovative uses of the technology can expand the capabilities of our staff, allowing our team to more easily and efficiently track the progress of a measure throughout the entire introduction process. Originally, the eHopper was created using an email based process. While it was helpful to be able to use email to quickly deliver the eHopper, our Bill Clerks were limited to the tools available within Microsoft Outlook for tracking the progress of a measure, tools which were not compatible with our existing software structures like LIMS. We responded by modernizing and formalizing the application to its current iteration. Staff can now see in real time the progress of each measure or cosponsor and can easily verify the authenticity of each submission (i.e. submitted by an authorized Member or committee staff). Lastly, staff are now able to improve their archiving methods as they adapt to working with digital filings of legislative submissions through the eHopper.

We have also learned that communication with users is key to the successful use of the eHopper as it helps us to minimize submission errors and allows for greater efficiency in processing. At the outset, the eHopper was often perceived by Congressional staff as an informal supplemental tool when compared to the traditional hopper. This was demonstrated by countless incomplete submissions that our team was unable to process, causing delays in the progress of many measures. Incomplete submissions often lacked required signatures, were submitted in an untimely manner (i.e. outside of the 15-minute window pre- and

post-session) or included resubmissions of “revised” text or additional cosponsors. We responded to this phenomenon by both improving the application and communicating with users in various formats to train them in the proper use of the system. Since then, we have seen a significant reduction in these technical errors. There are always new ways to use technology to innovate our legislative process and we look forward to continuing to work with the Committee on maintaining and improving this product.

**b. Has your office measured the usage of the E-Hopper, such as the number of bills, resolutions, and co-sponsorships submitted through the system?**

Yes. We track every submission including bills, resolutions, and cosponsor forms submitted through the eHopper as well as those submitted through the traditional hopper. Since the introduction of the eHopper, 22,459 bills and 95,845 cosponsor forms have been submitted through the eHopper; in the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress, 8,978 bills and 37,331 cosponsor forms have been submitted; and in 2024 to date we have seen 1,972 bills and 12,178 cosponsor forms submitted.

**2. Please describe the collaboration between the Office of the Clerk and the Congressional Staff Academy in creating training materials, such as videos, for the updated E-Hopper?**

Since the formation of the Congressional Staff Academy (CSA), we have partnered with our colleagues at the CSA to develop and offer training materials and events for several products and resources, including the eHopper. We routinely make these materials available to the entire House community. One partnership we are quite proud of is a short video announcement we made regarding eHopper submission functionalities with CSA using AI voice narration capabilities.

Additionally, CSA staff continually helps us refine and improve our Committee Repository training material, resulting in improved end-user training and ultimately leading to lower product support calls from the committees. We also worked with CSA to develop the Comparative Print Suite (CPS) and the eHopper online training courses. These courses have been very instrumental in bringing quality instructions and tutorials to the end-users of these products and services.

**3. You reported that three staff members from the Office of the Clerk are currently managing as many as ten vacant offices at a time.**

**a. Are these staff working on vacant operations full-time or tasked on an as-needed basis?**

Historically, the Clerk’s office has not had a position dedicated solely to serving vacant offices. The nature of vacant office work is not necessarily suited to having a single full-time employee (FTE) dedicated to the work as offices do not become vacant on any regular or predictable basis. Therefore, our staff have traditionally been tasked with vacant office operational support on an as-needed basis and generally are dedicated to other duties in a full-time capacity. At times, the support required does amount to what one FTE would provide or more, as in the case when several vacancies occur at the same time or in overlapping sequence. At other times, there are no vacant offices to support. We are currently reviewing the overall needs and strategies of supporting vacant offices, as well as the other duties of staff typically

tasked with vacant office support and will reassess whether a FTE solely dedicated to vacant office support is warranted.

**b. Are there any legislative or regulatory changes that would enhance the Clerk's ability to serve constituents during vacancy periods?**

The Clerk's office has the necessary legislative and regulatory authority to ensure services to constituents are maintained during a vacancy. Staff in the vacant office maintain important constituent relations and directly support casework and other services in the otherwise ordinary course of business of a Congressional office. Our staff operate in the background, assisting staff as they continue to perform the duties of maintaining constituent services, closing the vacant office, and preparing the office for an incoming Member. However, our office is open to working with the Committee to enhance constituent service in vacant offices.

**c. You also stated that there are opportunities for improving the efficiency of vacant office operations via modernization, can you provide an example?**

In collaboration with the CAO's office, the Clerk's office has leveraged our respective strengths and implemented strategies that we believe will drive operational excellence across the board. In our discussions, we have identified the overlap of procedures and implemented certain best practices that will enhance the oversight we provide to vacant offices. Specifically, a core team of staff from the CAO's office will provide assistance when called upon for vacant office support (e.g., Telecom, Asset Management and Administrative Counsel). In addition, the Office of Employee Assistance will continue to partner with the Clerk's office to provide outreach for counseling support, and various office training when needed.

**4. The Comparative Print Suite has been a significant development in displaying legislative changes and differences between versions of proposals.**

**a. How does the Clerk's office plan to engage with the user community to gather feedback and improve the suite? What sort of future engagement is planned?**

Soliciting user feedback is a top priority for us as we work to improve the Comparative Print Suite (CPS). Currently our office engages with the user community through the following three channels: HOLC, the Pilot Group, and product support interactions with users (e.g. via product support/helpdesk, FAQs, CSA on-demand course). We regularly receive feedback through these channels and often rely on them for improvements to the application. With our next fiscal year funding, we plan to hold a series of focus groups, one-on-one interviews, and release a questionnaire or survey to gather feedback on additional features and enhancements.

**b. Is the Comparative Print Suite capable of analyzing legislation not drafted by House Legislative Counsel? For example, can staff upload a bill drafted by Senate Legislative Counsel to see how it would change current law?**

Yes, the CPS is capable of analyzing legislation not drafted by HOLC. The CPS can analyze legislation that is publicly available on govinfo.gov as well as any draft legislation produced using the HOLC/Senate Office of Legislative Counsel tools.

**5. The Clerk's office is developing a Committee Portal to provide a central location for committee tasks and legislative history tracking.**

**a. How will the Clerk's office standardize and integrate committee vote data into the portal to improve transparency and accessibility?**

We plan to create tools that allow committee Clerks to collect committee vote data either in real-time or as part of their existing vote management processes. Committees can adopt these tools in ways that meet their needs and are consistent with their committee and House Rules. The current vote information is posted on the Committee Repository and included in Committee reports. We plan to use a combination of existing systems, such as the Committee Repository and Congress.gov, and new applications to make enhanced committee vote data available to the public.

**b. Can you discuss the long-term vision for the Committee Portal and potential future enhancements or integrations with other legislative systems?**

We plan to build the Committee Portal as a “one stop shop” for staff to manage their work. The initial focus will be on activities related to the legislative process such as bill referrals, roll call votes, and general tracking of legislative activities. Beyond core legislative features, we also plan to have the Committee Portal support the complex logistics of planning a committee meeting such as requesting Official Reporters and House Recording Studio resources, reporting committee activity to the Clerk’s public information specialists and the Committee Digest Clerk, managing witnesses, and collaborating between committees. We continue adding potential features to our project list and look forward to working with this Committee to identify future enhancements.

**c. Can you discuss the project proposal and timeline for delivering the Committee Portal and the Minimal Viable Product for committee votes as data?**

We awarded a vendor contract in April this year and are currently planning for the project kickoff. The contract period of performance is May 9, 2024, through May 8, 2025. We plan to complete by the end of this summer the initial discovery process and have both user experience and technical designs substantially completed for the minimal viable product (MVP) deliverables. We plan to work closely with committees during the discovery phase to better understand how we can deliver a solution that best meets their needs. We will seek feedback from multiple stakeholders, including this Committee, and will present project progress, such as user interface mockups and system roadmaps, at regular intervals.

**6. Do you expect the Committee Portal to include any nonpublic data? If so, how will the Clerk's office ensure the security and confidentiality of such information within the Committee Portal?**

The Committee Portal is primarily a tool for committee staff. We expect staff to largely follow the practice established by the Committee Repository—meaning only committee staff authorized by each

committee can add or change data and committee staff control access privileges. For data that is accessible to the entire House or to the public, such as vote data, we anticipate having separate applications or user interfaces to search and view. Based on current best practices, we will rely on existing House identity infrastructure to authenticate and authorize users to the system. We will work closely with the committees to identify non-public data and ensure it remains secure and confidential.

**7. How does the Clerk's office assess the short-term and long-term budgetary impacts of projects currently funded through the Modernization Initiatives Account?**

Funding available through the Modernization Initiatives Account (MIA) was critical for beginning activity on our current modernization projects. Our annual budget cycle makes it difficult to budget effectively for urgent initiatives, so this funding allowed us to immediately start work on these projects. In the long term most development projects, and especially substantial ones like our modernization initiatives, require additional continued funding to support ongoing improvements and maintenance. We routinely assess the long-term budgetary impacts for maintaining and improving these projects and incorporate those projected impacts into our annual funding requests.

**8. The Clerk's office has requested funding from the House Modernization Initiatives Account for several projects, including the Collaborative Drafting Tool and the Committee Portal.**

**a. How does the Clerk's office balance fiscal responsibility and promoting innovation in its use of the Modernization Initiatives Account funds?**

We follow the same approach with the use of MIA funds for Committee-directed projects as we do with our annual funds; we carefully examine the marketplace and make project decisions based on how we can make the most efficient use of official funds. Innovation requires financial support and effective management of those funds is key to achieving success. We carefully review proposals and select vendors who can best achieve our stated project goals and technical objectives in a financially responsible way. We stay engaged throughout the project to ensure the contract deliverables are satisfied and all requirements are met.

**b. Can you discuss the Clerk's approach to identifying and mitigating potential risks associated with projects funded through this account?**

For each project we undertake and for each product we maintain, potential risks (positive or negative) are identified and discussed routinely. We do this by using industry best practices for project and product management to include, but not limited to, identifying and mitigating business value and usability risks via design thinking and/or user centered design and addressing operational and technical risks. To help mitigate potential risks, we employ staff who hold certifications in PMP (Project Management Professional), CSM (Scrum Alliance Certified ScrumMaster), SPOC (Scrum Alliance Scrum Product Owner Certified), and other industry-standard certifications.

**c. Does the Clerk collaborate with other House and/or Legislative Branch entities on projects funded by the House Modernization Initiatives Account? If so, please provide an example.**

The Clerk's office collaborates with other House and Legislative Branch partners on MIA projects. Below are the current MIA funded projects on which we are collaborating with our partners.

**Legislative Branch-wide Online Staff Directory:** Prior to receiving funding for this project and at the request of the Committee on Appropriations, we submitted a report in collaboration with the CAO on the feasibility of a congressional staff directory (June 30, 2023). Additionally, the Congressional Data Task Force agreed to create a working group on a Legislative Branch-wide Online Staff Directory, which was led by House CAO and Senate Sergeant at Arms staff. The creation of the working group has helped facilitate cross-organizational meetings with the Senate, Congressional Budget Office, LOC, and GPO. The working group has also highlighted the Committee's prioritization of this work. Our staff continue to work with CAO and Senate staff by participating in monthly meetings on the project and providing data from the House Telephone Directory for the initial alpha version of the product.

**Committee Portal:** Prior to receiving funding for this project, we initiated brainstorming and ideation sessions with CAO and staff from this Committee to identify the potential features and modules that could be included in a future committee portal. This work identified the list of the Select Committee on Modernization's recommendations that could be fulfilled. Now that the project has been funded, we plan to have House Digital Services assist our vendor partner in user discovery (interviews/meetings with Committees) and maintaining the product backlog. We anticipate working with GPO and LOC when building the Committee Votes as data module tool. The work anticipated with GPO will involve the exchange and printing of votes in the Committee report (currently roll call sheets are often scanned making it difficult to search). The work anticipated with LOC will likely be related to issues regarding posting committee votes as data, if the decision is made to post vote data on Congress.gov.

**Collaborative Legislative Drafting:** We work weekly, if not daily, with HOLC primarily in support of the XMetaL drafting tool and our ongoing partnership related to the CPS. HOLC is a frequent contributor to our reports submitted to this Committee on legislative data standards. We submitted a March 2022 letter and an October 2022 report to the Committee on Appropriations on collaborative legislative drafting. Together, we requested funding for this project and are currently in the procurement phase regarding the collaborative legislative study.

**Unique IDs for Lobbyists:** We are working with the Senate to modernize the Lobbyist Disclosure system. This work was one of the first projects to be funded with MIA funds.

**Electronic Voting Tools for Committees:** Alongside this Committee and staff in the CAO's office, we participated in user interviews and discovery activities around how committees utilize the Meridia voting system. Together, we collaborated on writing the now-adopted guidance document for this Committee related to purchasing and using the Committee Voting system.

9. If the Clerk had unlimited Modernization Initiatives Account funding and money were no object, what are the top 3 projects you'd like to undertake?

*Development of a Member Portal*

We would like to create a Member portal that would ideally provide a “one-stop-shop” for staff for all legislative matters related to their Member. This would include features such as the following: 1) better document exchange between HOLC and member offices, 2) better collaboration between committees and Member offices (with those committees the Members sits on), 3) a cosponsor management feature for Member offices, 4) better management of Member’s legislative record, including access to their Roll Call votes (floor and committee), 5) integration of the eHopper into the Member portal, 6) add features to submit extensions of remarks and general leave statements more efficiently, and 7) continual refinement of the eHopper to include in-app generation for additional documents including the Single Subject and Constitutional Authority statements. We acknowledge that some of these features could be addressed with the new Housenet platform, but we believe a general Member Portal, to mirror the Committee Portal in many ways, would be a beneficial tool for Members and staff alike.

*Additional Committee Portal Features*

We have several additional modules we would like to create within the Committee Portal to add several additional features or services that are not included in the current project. These include items such as rewriting the repository, refreshing the public website sooner than currently anticipated, working with GPO on the production of Committee Reports, building an eHopper submission-like process for Committee Reports and reported measures, and retiring the current ad hoc email process for scheduling the House Recording Studio and Clerk-related services.

*Additional Investment in LIMS2*

We would like to be able to add new features to the LIMS2 system. Ideally, we could create tools to improve the exchange of data between the Parliamentarian’s office and the Clerk, particularly regarding committee referrals for bills and resolutions as well as executive communications. We would also like to work with the Parliamentarian’s office with respect to the Congressional Research Service Text Analysis Program (CRS TAP) product to improve the speed with which the Parliamentarians can recommend referrals to the Speaker’s office and make deliveries to Clerk staff (Bill Clerks).

Chairman STEIL. Again, appreciate your willingness to continue to engage in the modernization of the Clerk's Office, and, again, share our appreciation for all the men and women that work with you to keep this place open and operational.

Without objection, each Member will have 5 legislative days to insert additional material into the record or to revise and extend their remarks.

Chairman STEIL. If there is no further business, I want to thank the Members for their participation.

Without objection, the Committee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:17 a.m., the Committee was adjourned.]

