

MAKING CONGRESS WORK BETTER FOR THE
AMERICAN PEOPLE: A RECOMMENDATION STA-
TUS REPORT

HEARING
BEFORE THE
SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE
MODERNIZATION OF CONGRESS
OF THE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS
SECOND SESSION

JANUARY 20, 2022

Serial No. 117-14

Printed for the use of the Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress



Available via <http://govinfo.gov>

U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

WASHINGTON : 2022

48-606

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MAKING CONGRESS WORK BETTER FOR THE AMERICAN PEOPLE: A RECOMMENDATION STATUS REPORT

Thursday, January 20, 2022

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE
MODERNIZATION OF CONGRESS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to call, at 9:02 a.m., via Zoom, Hon. Derek Kilmer [chairman of the committee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Kilmer, Perlmutter, Phillips, Williams, Timmons, Latta, and Joyce.

The CHAIRMAN. I will bang the virtual gavel, and the committee will come to order.

Without objection, the chair is authorized to declare a recess of the committee at any time.

I now recognize myself for 5 minutes for an opening statement.

First off, I just want to wish everyone a happy new year and Representative Phillips a happy birthday. We apologize for the early morning singing.

This is our first hearing of 2022, and what better way to kick things off than with a look at how the committee's recommendations are actually making Congress work better for the American people.

Our implementing partners have done an amazing job of putting the committee's ideas into action and making sure that our hard work lives well beyond our tenure. That is important and so central to the mission of this committee.

I say this because change isn't possible without action. We can talk about fixing Congress and come up with great ideas until we are blue in the face. That is the easy part. The hard part is figuring out how to bring those great ideas to life. And it definitely takes a village. And I am so grateful for the tenacity and creativity that our partners bring to the table. We could not do this important work without them.

And I also want to just take a moment to acknowledge the groundbreaking work this committee has done not only to pass recommendations but to ensure that our recommendations are implemented. In assigning these responsibilities equal weight, the committee, according to the Congressional Research Service, might very well be the premier example of a reform committee that managed to both recommend and implement during its tenure.

We should all be proud of that. And by “all,” I mean this committee’s members and its staff as well as our implementing partners and their staff. Listen, Congress can be a tough place to get things done, but I think we are proving that it is possible.

To date, the committee’s passed a total of 142 recommendations to make Congress a more efficient and effective institution. Over 60 percent of the 97 recommendations passed in the 116th Congress have been implemented or have seen meaningful action toward implementation. Twenty-four have been fully implemented, and 15 more are nearing full implementation.

That is a tremendous accomplishment, and we are just getting started. There is so much work currently underway on a bunch of new projects to get off the ground. And I am really looking forward to hearing from our witnesses today about the great work they have done and have planned.

I also want to hear about how the committee can support your work and any modernization ideas you have that we haven’t already thrown at you.

This is a little tricky in a virtual format, but we are going to try to use the committee rules we adopted last year that give us some more flexibility in the Q&A portion of a hearing. Our goal is to encourage thoughtful discussion and the civil exchange of ideas and opinions.

So, in accordance with clause 2(j) of House rule XI, we will allow up to 30 minutes of extended questioning per witness. And, without objection, time will not be strictly segregated between the witnesses, which will allow for extended back-and-forth exchanges between members and witnesses.

Vice Chair Timmons and I will manage the time to ensure that every member has equal opportunity to participate. Any member who wishes to speak should just raise their virtual hand, and either Vice Chair Timmons or I will make sure you can jump in.

Additionally, members who wish to claim their individual 5 minutes to question each witness pursuant to clause 2(j)(2) of rule XI will be permitted to do so following the period of extended questioning.

Okay. I would like to now invite Vice Chair Timmons to share some opening remarks as well.

Mr. TIMMONS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to thank everybody for joining us for the first hearing of 2022. And I want to thank our witnesses for being here to provide an update on their progress in implementing this committee’s previous recommendations.

In my view, our hearing today has two purposes: first, to give our witnesses, our partners in implementation, an opportunity to discuss the good work that is being done to improve the House and help us better serve our constituents; second, to hear about the recommendations that still need some attention, to identify obstacles, and to learn how we can work with you to begin to move those recommendations forward.

It is important to highlight here that our committee doesn’t make recommendations merely for the purpose of building a historical record. Rather, we are here to make actual change to improve how Congress works. And we can do that by following up on the

recommendations we have made and by doing what we can to ensure that they are implemented.

Indeed, this has been one of the distinguishing aspects of this select committee, and I believe it is an advantage that the committee's extension through the entirety of this Congress has afforded us. I give the chairman and our fellow committee members credit for making implementation a priority as we have continued our other work.

I also want to say that, while we have seen some implementation success thus far, that does not mean it is time to rest. The committee is authorized for 1 more year, and we intend to run through the finish line. There is much left to do to make Congress work better for the American people.

In that vein, we have been discussing what the committee's agenda for this year, our final year, will look like, and I am also looking forward to learning today if our witnesses have any ideas for other recommendations and topics that we might consider as the committee moves forward.

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

The CHAIRMAN. Thanks, Vice Chair Timmons.

I am pleased to welcome our witnesses who are here to provide status updates on the select committee's recommendations.

Before introducing our witnesses, I just want to quickly acknowledge that Brett Blanton, the Architect of the Capitol, was unable to join us after some last-minute committee scheduling hurdles. We tried to move this committee meeting up as a consequence of votes. You all have the written testimony that he submitted, and that will be part of the record for this hearing as well.

[The statement of Mr. Blanton follows:]

Statement of J. Brett Blanton
Architect of the Capitol



**Making Congress Work Better for the American People:
A Recommendation Status Report**

**Statement before the Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress,
United States House of Representatives**

January 20, 2022

Chairman Kilmer, Vice-Chair Timmons and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I welcome the opportunity to share how the Architect of Capitol (AOC) is implementing the Committee's recommendations as well as to highlight our ongoing work and initiatives.

Through resilient and unwavering efforts, AOC staff ensure that Congress and the Supreme Court can function. The Capitol campus is home to 30,000 daily occupants with more than 2,200 AOC employees serving around the clock in diverse roles to maintain and preserve the buildings and grounds.

The size and scope of the AOC's responsibility is more than the early architects could have ever imagined. Yet, we are committed to doing the difficult work that leads to transformational growth. Consistent with this Committee's focus and recommendations, this testimony summarizes many of our current efforts to maintain and improve operations and facilities across the Capitol campus.

I. Architectural Modernization

At the AOC, we are committed to a forward-looking vision of the Capitol campus that will serve Capitol Hill and the American people well into the future. To begin, I would like to update you on the AOC's strategic planning, including an initiative called Vision 2100.

Vision 2100 and a new campus Master Plan will provide an opportunity for stakeholders to provide input on plans for the Capitol campus over the next century. Vision 2100 will incorporate a broad range of innovative ideas and best practices. As a starting point, our staff recently engaged in over 40 interviews with campus stakeholders, including this Committee's staff, to gain a better understanding of future needs of Members of Congress, staff and visitors. As this process continues, we welcome further participation by Members and staff of this Committee.

Already, conversations with Members and staff highlighted the many roles the campus has for our capital city and the nation: as an office, a museum, a legislative forum, a civic stage, a neighborhood park and so much more. The conversations also highlighted many of the Committee's recommendations, making it clear there is a desire to create a more connected and engaged campus for all who work at and visit this special place. Several of the themes we heard during our interviews are consistent with the Committee's recommendations.

They include:

- Exploring how technology can better connect the campus to lawmakers, staff and constituents and support stronger collaboration as an in-person and virtual workplace
- Fostering a greater sense of well-being throughout the campus and for the people who work and visit here
- Considering new ways to preserve our nation's historic buildings while making them more accessible, safe and engaging to everyone

- Ensuring the U.S. Capitol is an enduring showcase for the innovation and ingenuity of Americans and democracy

As Vision 2100 and the Master Plan advance, the AOC will continue to engage this Committee and others across campus to ensure the vision and planning meet today's needs while planning for the future. This effort reflects our commitment to serve, preserve and inspire all who visit and work here. Collectively, these two initiatives will provide a tool kit for the AOC to align resources and prioritize decisions that preserve and enhance the Capitol campus.

II. Enterprise Asset Management

As resources permit, the AOC plans to launch a new initiative that will utilize technology in order to enhance our efficiency and operations. A new Enterprise Asset Management (EAM) system will provide a thorough asset management strategy to inform our work priorities and provide for data-driven fiscal decision-making and project prioritization. Specifically, EAM will establish a new tool to aid decision-making about operating, maintaining and renewing building and infrastructure assets such as buildings, machinery, vehicles and construction equipment. Should sufficient resources be provided for ongoing implementation, EAM will allow the AOC to proactively manage maintenance-based strategies, mitigate obsolescence, restore reliability, reduce long-term costs and forecast resource requirements.

To be good stewards of our facilities, while managing a significant backlog of deferred maintenance requests, the AOC requires a comprehensive solution to track and monitor our assets, optimize performance and reduce operating costs. EAM will also maximize return on investment, while enhancing decision-making priorities. As we exercise a disciplined, consistent approach in response to annual inspections and key infrastructure lifecycles, we will mitigate costs associated with deferred maintenance requirements. We will continue to keep Congress updated on our efforts to launch and implement this new system.

III. Space Utilization Recommendations and Accessibility

Consistent with the Committee's recommendations, the AOC is prepared to support the Committee on House Administration with evaluation of spaces and address identified needs. At the same time, the AOC is engaged in an ongoing review to determine any accessibility challenges for individuals with disabilities.

The agency is committed to improving accessibility across campus. We are actively incorporating accessibility requirements into new projects, conducting accessibility surveys and inspections of the completed projects and the existing facilities for Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance, providing ADA training to AOC staff, and addressing the Office of Congressional Workplace Rights (OCWR) reports on the ADA. Working with the House Sergeant at Arms, the AOC was part of efforts to address the Committee's recommendation in this area through the submission of a joint report submitted in November 2020.

In addition, we are currently undertaking two efforts that will improve our planning and result in a targeted and strategic approach to ensure compliance with the ADA. First, the agency is developing a Transportation and Mobility Study that seeks to identify the existing challenges and potential opportunities in key areas including accessibility as identified through the study's stakeholder engagement process.

For example, at the U.S. Botanic Garden, the AOC is planning to install automatic door openers on one of the monumental exterior doors into the lobby and one of the doors from the lobby to the Garden Court.

A. House Office Buildings

As Members of the Committee may know, the Cannon Renewal Project incorporates many accessibility improvements within a historic building. As part of Phase 1 of the Cannon Renewal, the ADA-accessible building entrance located on New Jersey Avenue was relocated and the door widened to accommodate wheelchairs and electric scooters. The same increased doorway width will be applied to the new ADA-accessible entrance now under construction as part of Phase 3.

For all entrances, the building lobbies have been designed to increase the amount of space for access and security needs. In addition, the reconfigured public restrooms within each wing of the Cannon Building's first through fifth floors will include an accessible restroom stall, and both the second and fourth phase of the project will include the construction of a total of six family restrooms. The drinking fountains will also comply with accessibility requirements.

Furthermore, the House Committee on Homeland Security and the House Budget Committee hearing rooms, located in the completed west wing, expanded accessibility at the dais for Members of Congress. Four additional elevators in the west and north wings now service the fifth floor, and accessibility upgrades to the remaining elevators and from the parking garage into the Cannon Building were also incorporated. As part of ongoing assessments and planning, the AOC will continue to implement similar measures across campus, as resources permit.

B. Making the Capitol Visitor Center More Accessible

The AOC worked closely with the Office of Congressional Accessibility Services (OCAS) to provide a range of services to visitors with disabilities, including:

- Accessibility of all public tours
- Audio tours
- Sign language interpretation
- Family restrooms
- Public teletype (TTY) large print, braille and HTML publications
- On-demand shuttle service for individuals who use manual wheelchairs or who need mobility assistance

In addition, the AOC is in the process of implementing technological tools for blind and low vision individuals via the Artificial Intelligence Remote Assistance (AIRA) system. This service connects people who are blind or have low vision to highly trained, remotely located agents. Currently available at all Smithsonian museums in Washington, D.C., and the National Zoo, AIRA allows visitors to download an app to their smartphone at no cost to the user. Visitors then get connected to sighted live agents who can see what is near the user. The agent then helps the visitor navigate the area. This technology will provide blind and low vision visitors a way to get descriptions of the art and architecture on display at the Capitol Visitor Center, enhancing their experience and strengthening efforts to meet accessibility goals.

C. Development of Online Programming

During the pandemic, the agency pivoted to developing robust virtual programs that have engaged and captivated audiences around the world. The U.S. Botanic Garden utilized new technology that has increased engagement on virtual platforms. The Capitol Visitor Center successfully expanded virtual tours, programs, lectures, workshops and field trips. Through these efforts, people all over the world are now able to learn about the U.S. Capitol through these interactive and educational programs.

IV. Pandemic Response

As this Committee has taken into consideration the Congressional response to the pandemic, we wanted to update you on how the AOC has continued to support the pandemic response efforts of the legislative branch. Since March 2020, AOC has implemented pandemic protocols and procurement of bulk pandemic supplies across the Capitol Complex.

As the Congress labors day and night to do its work, AOC employees are working nonstop to keep the campus clean and sanitized to enable Members of Congress and congressional staff to do their jobs safely. The AOC team continues to meet campus needs by serving as the legislative branch purchasing agent for personnel protective equipment (PPE), managing the specialized cleaning of spaces identified by our partners and assessed by the Office of Attending Physician, and ensuring the facilities and utilities are well maintained for ongoing and future congressional needs. In addition, AOC is now involved with the procurement of at-home test kits for the House, Senate, Capitol Police and AOC staff. As you know, these demands have only gone up over the past month as the entire country has experienced a tremendous surge in cases.

As resources permit, AOC will continue to meet any needs as they arise. We know our efforts are critical to the safety of Members and the staff working on the Capitol campus and are proud of the role we play in ensuring the continuity of operations.

V. Conclusion

Looking ahead, we can succeed with these initiatives if adequate resources are available. Yet, as this Committee has recognized, significant investments are necessary to modernize the Capitol campus infrastructure in a manner that adheres to the requirements associated with historic preservation.

The AOC's Fiscal Year 2023 budget will illustrate a renewed emphasis to support the operational needs of Congress, the Supreme Court as well as the entire Capitol campus. Our request will also highlight the need to reimburse project funding that was reallocated to support urgent security needs and repairs. In addition, future budget submissions will reflect agency-wide efforts to transform the agency by adopting a more predictive approach to facilities maintenance. Taken together, these important, long-term initiatives will improve our efficiency and will also contribute toward a more secure and well-functioning environment across the Capitol campus.

As I have testified previously, delayed funding for projects has consequences, and we need adequate, consistent funding for ongoing improvements. Otherwise, we may face vulnerabilities associated with the deterioration and deferred improvements of these historic buildings and treasured grounds.

We need to work together to adopt a multi-year approach for planning, design and execution of major projects. In doing so, we can continue to achieve and implement many of the recommendations by this Committee. Thank you for the invitation to testify, and I look forward to answering your questions.

The CHAIRMAN. Witnesses are reminded that your written statements will be made part of the record.

Our first witness is Cheryl Johnson. Ms. Johnson is the Clerk of the House, a role she has held since 2019. Previously, she served as the director of the Smithsonian's Office of Governmental Relations.

Ms. Johnson has had a long career on Capitol Hill, having served in numerous offices for nearly 20 years, including as chief education and investigative counsel for the House Committee on Education and the Workforce and as director and counsel for the Committee on House Administration's Subcommittee on Libraries and Memorials.

She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in journalism and mass communication from the University of Iowa and a Juris Doctorate from Howard University.

Ms. Johnson, you are now recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENTS OF CHERYL L. JOHNSON, ON BEHALF OF THE OFFICE OF THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES; AND CATHERINE SZPINDOR, ON BEHALF OF THE OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

STATEMENT OF CHERYL L. JOHNSON

Ms. JOHNSON. Thank you. Good morning, Chair Kilmer, Vice Chair Timmons, and members of the committee. Thank you for inviting me to testify.

The Office of the Clerk pursues numerous and diverse goals and priorities. Primary is supporting the day-to-day operations of the House. I have submitted my written testimony, and I will highlight some of it now.

To start, one of the recommendations made by this committee has been implemented already. With this Congress, the House rules continued the policy adopted last Congress that allows committees to electronically submit committee reports and related material electronically. Clerk staff implemented and maintain a secure, email-based solution. This change in process was welcomed and has had no negative impact.

Related to the electronic submission of committee reports is the electronic submission of bills and resolutions. Members and staff can do this via the eHopper, a secure, email-based alternative to the historic wooden box on the House floor. The eHopper is now the House's primary way of introducing bills.

Currently, my staff is working to deliver an improved eHopper experience for Members and their staff. This updated solution will meet the needs of the bill clerks as they process an increasing number of bills, while improving the user experience for Members and staff.

As the committee is aware, my staff, along with the Office of Legislative Counsel and contractors, continue to build a suite of software programs that will create comparisons between legislative texts. Understanding legislative text changes is critical to making decisions on pending legislation.

As part of our pilot program, more than 160 individuals from across the House committees have access to the software. Their col-

lective feedback about the system's usability, learnability, and accuracy of the system is positive and helpful.

Currently, the project team is working on operational tasks related to House-wide deployment, including migrating the application to a cloud environment. We are looking forward to delivering the Comparative Print suite House-wide pending the completion of the migration to the cloud and the required security audits.

A critical but often dry topic to discuss is standard-setting. However, it is a delight to know that a small, dedicated group of staff from my office, the Senate Secretary Office, GPO, and the Library of Congress and others are doing just that. The United States Legislative Markup standard will allow for a more modern production and exchange of our congressional legislative documents.

This standardization work is important and a required foundation for modernizing the lawmaking process. We value this committee's continued support of this project.

Additionally, my written testimony mentions the work we are doing around the lobby disclosure system. Given the system's age, we recommend that the system be redesigned and built anew. A contemporary system will improve the user experience, provide more efficient processing, and provide strategies for maintaining a single account for lobbyists regardless of a job or name change.

In addition to the work I have already mentioned, Clerk staff are researching two potential projects that impact the committees: a central location to share committee vote data and the creation of a common scheduling tool for committees.

To assist in our analysis and scoping of this work, we are working to release two RFIs, requests for information, for the purpose of gathering information and investigating possible solutions, and we expect that the RFIs will be released later this month.

Finally, I want to lend my support to other recommendations that this committee has made—namely, the recommendations to improve staff recruitment, diversity, retention, compensation and benefits, and to improve accessibility. I fully support these recommendations.

Thank you again for this opportunity to speak before the committee, and I look forward to your questions.

[The statement of Ms. Johnson follows:]



**STATEMENT BEFORE THE HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE
ON THE MODERNIZATION OF CONGRESS: OFFICE OF
THE CLERK OPERATIONS AND PRIORITIES**

THE HONORABLE CHERYL L. JOHNSON

January 20, 2022

Chair Kilmer and Vice Chair Timmons, Members of the Committee:

Thank you for inviting me to testify about the priorities and operations of the Office of the Clerk as well as the work related to the recommendations made by this Committee to make Congress more effective, efficient, and transparent on behalf of the American people. My staff and I are thankful for the opportunities we have had to discuss new ideas and recommendations adopted by the Committee.

From the introduction of bills on the House Floor to the delivery of enrolled bills to the White House for presentation to the President, our staff is integral to the legislative process. The Clerk's Office is a nonpartisan organization that provides procedural assistance and support necessary for the orderly conduct of official business of the House of Representatives, its Members, and Committees. Over time, the duties of the Office have expanded to include disseminating organizational information, preserving the history of the House, and supporting technological advancement. The Office is composed of 227 full-time equivalent positions spread across nine offices.

My Office pursues numerous, diverse goals and priorities. My staff and I routinely seek ways to improve our work and welcome the opportunity to be a trusted partner of this Committee. I specifically wish to recognize the efforts of my staff, who have unique jobs supporting legislative activities and House operations. Their skill, commitment, and energy are critical to the maintenance and modernization of the work of this great institution. The success of many of the Committee's recommendations will rely on the skills, knowledge, and innovation of Clerk staff, and I wish to reaffirm my commitment to supporting them and providing a workplace that allows them to flourish.

ADOPTING STANDARDIZED FORMATS FOR LEGISLATIVE DOCUMENTS

One of the first recommendations that this Committee made related to the creation and implementation of standardized formats for legislative documents. More specifically, the recommendation was to fully adopt the standard called United States Legislative Markup (USLM). This XML format allows for a more modern production and exchange of our congressional legislative documents, including the U.S. Code and statutes. This work is a joint effort undertaken with our partners in the Senate, the Government Publishing Office (GPO), and the Library of Congress.

In October 2021, the Legislative Branch XML Working Group released version 2.0.10 of the USLM XML to the public on GPO's USLM GitHub Repository at github.com/usgpo/uslm/tree/proposed. The USLM GitHub repository also contains all prior versions, user guides, presentations, and sample files. The XML Working Group, which is

co-chaired by staff in my office and the Secretary of the Senate's office, plans to move the USLM 2x schema out of beta in conjunction with the production launch of GPO's XPub Program.

It is important to note that there is a cross-organizational set of systems that utilize the USLM schema, requiring a great level of coordination. Each project builds upon the tools and successes of previous projects. The XML Working Group, in consultation with the Bulk Data Task Force, continues to analyze and recommend next steps that build on the work that has already been accomplished. As with any data standardization efforts, interoperability is a key goal, and project work must address any potential impacts on those documents and systems currently in production.

This standardization work is important and necessary for modernizing the lawmaking process, as it will allow for the creation of a more coherent and collaborative system for Members and staff, a simpler drafting system, improved tools for collaboration, instant comparison of proposed bills to current law, and the automatic display of approved changes made by amendments to bills. This Committee's support of this ongoing work is significant and valued.

Roadmap for Publishing Legislative Documents in USLM XML Format¹

Completed	U.S. Code
Completed	Enrolled bills, public laws, and the Statutes at Large
Completed	HOLC/SOLC statute compilations
IN PROGRESS <i>Initiated</i>	Remaining bill/resolution versions (introduced, reported, engrossed, all amendments, et. al.)
C	Committee Reports
D	House portions of the <i>Congressional Record</i> , including the <i>Daily Digest</i>
E	Hearing record
F	House Calendar
G	<i>Precedents of the U.S. House of Representatives</i>
H	<i>House Journal</i>

¹For more information about this roadmap, please see page four of the initial report at <https://cha.house.gov/sites/democrats.cha.house.gov/files/documents/Adopting%20Standardized%20Formats%20for%20Legislative%20Documents.pdf>.

More details about the USLM standard and the projects mentioned are available in the reports submitted to the Committee on House Administration (CHA) as required by House Resolution 756 of the 116th Congress. Most of the reports are publicly available online at CHA's website (cha.house.gov).

TRACKING OF AMENDMENTS AND THEIR IMPACT ON CURRENT LAW

The comparative print project team, led by my staff in the Legislative Computer Systems (LCS) division, and in partnership with the Office of the Legislative Counsel and our vendor partners, continues to develop features and prepare for a wider deployment. The Comparative Print Project is a suite 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. Specifically, the Comparative Print System displays how a bill might change current law, how two versions of a legislative proposal differ, and how an amendment proposes to change a bill. Understanding these changes is critical to making decisions on pending legislation. Accurately displaying these differences in text (in print or online) is key to helping users understand proposed changes and potential impacts.

Comparative results are shown in two ways: an online, dynamic, interactive report and a PDF that can be printed or downloaded. Users access these results through a key feature, the Toolbox View.

As part of our pilot program, more than 160 House Committee staff have access to the Comparative Print System. In the last quarter, a small group of staff from the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) and the Congressional Research Service at the Library of Congress joined the pilot group. Their collective feedback about the system's usability, desirability, learnability, and accuracy continues to be positive and helpful.

The project team is working on several operational tasks related to House-wide deployment, including moving the application to a cloud environment. My staff is working with our cloud vendor and our internal partners in the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to ensure a stable and secure cloud infrastructure. When complete, this infrastructure will pave the way for more robust, accelerated deliveries of products, features, and change requests.

The project team has been working with the CAO's Congressional Staff Academy to develop on-demand and instructor-led courses. Some system features, such as Changes to Existing Law and the Inbox, will be made available to users only after they receive required training. Other features, such as Bill Viewer and Bill-to-Bill Differences, which are simpler and more straightforward to use, will be made available to all House staff without training.

We are looking forward to releasing the Comparative Print System House-wide upon completing migration to the cloud and the required security audits. Our goal is to deploy the suite of applications in the first quarter of 2022.

More details about the Comparative Print System are available in the reports submitted to CHA as required by House Resolution 756 of the 116th Congress. Most of the reports are publicly available online at CHA's website.

COMMITTEE VOTE DATABASE AND SCHEDULING TOOL

My staff continue to research technical solutions to address the Committee's recommendations for establishing and maintaining a database of votes taken in Committee. As the recommendation acknowledges, individual votes and vote results are available online in at least four locations and on most Committee websites, but they are not yet available in a central online location or in machine-readable formats or searchable in ways that the legislative community and the public expect. This recommendation will allow for great accessibility and transparency in Member voting records. This project is a key opportunity for us to assist Committees in the creation, dissemination, and maintenance of voting records.

Currently, my staff are analyzing the potential scope of such a project. We want to build a solution that is based on human-centered design (HCD) principles and provides a central location to record, process, and share the voting data entered and verified by Committee staff in other places, such as the U.S. House of Representatives Committee Repository (docs.house.gov/committee) and other required publications. Furthermore, we know that across the Committees, there are several disparate systems and applications in use. Careful consideration needs to be made regarding what system designs and implementation strategies could work in each Committee's current (or near future) workflow and processes without causing unintended disruption. Project planning, development, and deployment of any tools cannot be done without input and buy-in from Committees.

To assist in our analysis of this work, my staff and I are currently working on releasing a request for information (RFI) for the purposes of gathering information and investigating possible solutions from industry, academia, other legislative bodies, civil society organizations, and advocates. I expect that the RFI will be released later this month.

A second recommendation that relates to Committees was to create a common Committee tool that will assist in the scheduling of Committee meetings and activities at times that do not conflict with other meetings and activities of Committees on which their Members serve. We all know that scheduling is no easy task in Congress. As with the database for Committee votes, my staff is also analyzing the potential scope of this project and intends to release an

RFI to investigate possible solutions and gather information from industry, academia, other legislative bodies, civil society organizations, and advocates. I expect that the RFI will be released later this month as well.

Both of these Committee topics are discussed in the reports submitted to CHA as required by House Resolution 756 of the 116th Congress. Most of the reports are publicly available online at CHA's website.

LOBBYIST IDENTIFIERS, REGISTRATION, AND DISCLOSURE

The current electronic filing system for lobbying disclosure was initiated at the request of CHA in 2003 and deployed into full production in 2006. Since then, updates have been made to maintain the system, but it remains largely the same today. It generates an individual account ID for each lobbyist; however, the current system relies on a less-than-fool-proof method to determine whether that lobbyist already exists in the system. While my staff have implemented various processes and procedures to reduce duplicate lobbyist accounts, managing 35,000 lobbyist accounts (20,000 active and 15,000 inactive) means that a few lobbyists will inevitably have multiple IDs over time.

Given the system's age, we recommend that it be redesigned and built anew. A contemporary system will improve the user experience, provide more efficient processing and automation, and allow for greater transparency. Redesigning the system will be no small undertaking, nor will deciding the strategies for maintaining a single account for a lobbyist regardless of job or name changes. There are more discussions to be had with this Committee, CHA, the Committee on Appropriations, and the Senate on the scope and desired outcomes of such a project.

To assist in our analysis of this potential future project, we continue to do research on similar systems in other jurisdictions (both public and private sectors), and we are evaluating technologies that can be leveraged in a redesign effort.

More details on this topic are discussed in the reports submitted to CHA as required by House Resolution 756 of the 116th Congress. Most of the reports are publicly available online at CHA's website.

ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION OF COMMITTEE REPORTS

Adopted at the start of the 117th Congress, Section 2(1) of H. Res. 8 (the House Rules package) continued to permit Committees to electronically submit reported measures, legislative and nonlegislative reports, and related material electronically, a practice that

began in the 116th Congress. This Rules change also fulfilled a recommendation made by this Committee.

My staff in LCS continue to maintain the secure email solution while the Tally Clerks in Legislative Operations receive and process the submissions. GPO publishes the reports online and produces printed copies. The benefit to Members and staff is an easier submission process that maintains the House's protective staffing posture. No longer do staff need to push a hand truck full of paper from one of the House Office Buildings to the U.S. Capitol. This change in process was welcomed and, so far, has had no negative impact.

ELECTRONIC COSPONSORSHIP MANAGEMENT

The Committee has recommended that Members be allowed to manage their cosponsorship of bills electronically. The current email-based eHopper system does allow Members Sponsors to submit cosponsors. The eHopper system has become the House's primary way of bill introduction and cosponsor submission. This system provides a convenient avenue for Members or their staff to submit documents electronically for processing. There was a House Rules change to allow Members to demand their name be removed as opposed to requesting unanimous consent for their name to be removed. This Rule change does not allow Members to remove their name electronically.

Currently, my staff is working to deliver an improved eHopper experience for Members, their staff, and our Legislative Operations staff. This solution will improve the user experience for Members and their staff and ensure that each submission meets the requirements for processing. Improving the quality of each submission will assist the Bill Clerks in the quality and timeliness of their work. This updated solution will also meet the needs of the Bill Clerks as they process an increasing number of bills submitted for introduction while leveraging the existing email solution for backend processing.

My staff and I are planning to deliver an initial production release in the first quarter of 2022. Additionally, we are working with the CAO's Congressional Staff Academy to develop on-demand training that would be made available at the time of release.

CONGRESSIONAL DATA TASK FORCE

One of the first hearings held by this Committee was about the work of the House's Bulk Data Task Force. The Task Force is a partnership of representatives from the various legislative branch organizations from the House, Senate, Library of Congress, GPO, and CBO. Dedicated staff from these organizations work in a cooperative manner to coordinate and accomplish openness and transparency goals and make legislative information easily

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Ms. Johnson.

Our next and final witness is Catherine Szpindor, the Chief Administrative Officer for the House. She has served in this role since 2020. Previously, she served as the Chief Information Officer for the House. She joined the House in 2011 as the Director of Enterprise Applications and was promoted to Deputy CIO before becoming CIO.

Prior to working for the House, she was the vice president of IT for Thomas Nelson Community College. She holds a Master of Science degree in information systems from Mercer University and a Certificate in Strategy and Innovation from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Ms. Szpindor, you are now recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF CATHERINE SZPINDOR

Ms. SZPINDOR. Thank you. I want to thank Chairman Kilmer, Vice Chairman Timmons, and members of the Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the progress that the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer has made in implementing recommendations made by the select committee. I am pleased to report that the CAO has made significant progress on many of the recommendations of the select committee, and I will highlight some of our efforts today.

On August 9, 2021, the CAO officially launched the House Human Resources Hub, a one-stop shop of human resources best practices. The site now contains over 90 resources, tools, and other references for employees who are responsible for hiring, developing, and retaining Hill staff. The H.R. Hub resources are designed to be used as best practices, tips, and tools, and they provide a solid foundation that offices are encouraged to utilize, adapt, and customize to meet their unique needs.

Our new staff training program called “CAO Coach” was launched in June 2021, and the response has been overwhelmingly positive. CAO Coach aims to train staff to do their jobs in a way that is relevant, efficient, and dynamic.

To date, we have hired four coaches, two experienced former chiefs of staff, and two experienced former district directors, and in the coming months, we plan to add two legislative directors.

The coaches have hosted highly attended programs featuring their colleagues as panelists. They are creating one-on-one video series for every job position in a House office—that is significant progress—and hosting staff networking events, helping to facilitate retreats, and providing customized trainings at the request of Member offices.

The coaches have had more than 485 confidential sessions with individual staffers on topics such as managing office budgets and staff, to approaching difficult casework, and to how to introduce a bill.

The CAO is implementing the select committee’s recommendation to create a Congressional Leadership Academy to offer training specifically for Members. As we prepare to roll out this new program, the CAO is currently hiring and training a diverse team of world-class leadership consultants that will work with the Mem-

bers on the leadership, management, and resiliency skills necessary in our challenging and dynamic environment.

To address the select committee's recommendation to expand the use of digital signatures for a majority of House business, CAO teams have made significant progress while launching Quill, the electronic signature system for congressional group letters, and rolling out electronic signatures for constituent casework forms, currently used on 265 Member office websites, as well as a digital privacy release form for IRS-related casework.

Additionally, we just initiated a project to modernize and simplify administrative forms requiring Member signatures, such as the Payroll Authorization Form and the Student Loan Repayment Program Enrollment Form.

The select committee recommended we improve Member access to innovative technology tools that enhance offices' operations. In response, the CAO is building a House digital service team to, one, identify and deliver solutions that improve on Member offices' most significant challenges; two, bring ideas and methodologies from the private sector into spaces within the House that have more freedom to experiment and iterate; three, leverage modern development tools to rapidly prototype and build production-grade software and to deliver better products and services to the House.

The efforts of the select committee to further modernization for the House are tremendous and commendable. The CAO is making substantial progress on these modernization efforts. To make the most use of funds established for these initiatives, we must carefully balance all requests and recommendations that we receive to ensure we provide the best services possible with the funding allocated to us.

I am honored that I and my employees—and the employees are very significant in their contribution and their desire to work on these recommendations, and we can play a critical role in implementing recommendations established by the select committee.

I want to thank the members and staff of the committee for your support. We look forward to a continued and constructive relationship. Thank you.

[The statement of Ms. Szpindor follows:]



Statement of the Honorable Catherine L. Szpindor
Before the House Select Committee on the Modernization
of Congress

The Honorable Catherine L. Szpindor
January 20, 2022

Chairman Kilmer, Vice Chair Timmons, and Members of the Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the progress that the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) has made in implementing recommendations made by the Select Committee. I would also like to thank the Select Committee for the opportunity granted to the CAO to play an active role in the modernization of the U.S. House of Representatives.

The CAO has made significant progress on many of the recommendations set forth by the Select Committee. Today, I'd like to specifically highlight the work done by the talented staff who make up the CAO on recommendations related to the House Human Resources Hub, the Transition Aides Program, the Task Force on a Diverse and Talented House Workforce, the CAO Coach program, Member leadership training, the expansion of video and technology tool offerings across the House, accessibility of House websites for those with disabilities, digital signatures, and the House Digital Service team.

HOUSE HUMAN RESOURCES HUB

On August 9, 2021, the CAO officially launched the House Human Resources Hub (HR Hub), a one-stop-shop of human resource best practices. This first-of-its-kind site, originally launched with more than 30 hiring support resources, now contains over 90 resources, tools, and other references for employees who are responsible for hiring, developing, and retaining Hill staff.

Content within the HR Hub is organized into three categories: **Hiring**, **Developing**, and **Retaining**. **Hiring** content includes resources for recruiting and selecting new staff, setting and communicating salary and benefits information, onboarding new hires, and guidance for setting up an office. **Developing** content includes performance management resources to support supervisors and managers through formal staff evaluation, and professional growth resources to foster learning, career development, and professional development. **Retaining** content includes resources for engaging and

supporting staff to foster a positive work environment, and resources for managing staff transitions to support the exit process and the retention of institutional knowledge.

We understand each Member, Committee, and Leadership office at the House is different. HR Hub resources are designed to be used as best practices, tips, and tools. They provide a solid foundation that offices are encouraged to utilize, adapt, and customize to meet their unique needs.

As of December 31, 2021, the House HR Hub had a total of 782 *unique* visitors and 5,092 total page visits. Resources from the Hub have been downloaded a total of 1,412 times, by 280 unique users. The HR Hub is a living resource, and it will continue to evolve and grow as new services and offerings are designed and deployed.

Over the next 12 months, we will continue to expand and enhance the HR Hub resources and services in partnership with Member offices, the Committee on House Administration, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, and the Modernization Committee. We look forward to our continued collaboration on this effort throughout the year.

TRANSITION AIDE PROGRAM

In support of the 117th Congressional Transition, and in accordance with the Select Committee's recommendation, the CAO launched the Transition Aide Program in November 2020 to provide each Member-elect with a CAO-paid staffer to assist with the logistics and operations needed to prepare new Members and their offices for the 117th Congress. Out of 61 Members-elect, 50 participated in the program, and the CAO's Office of Payroll and Benefits onboarded the 50 Transition Aides at the beginning of New Member Orientation.

During New Member Orientation, the Transition Aides participated in orientation briefings, including office setup briefings to learn the procedures for setting up both D.C. and district offices. Additionally, they attended a series of trainings, including two House financial curriculum trainings

offered by the Office of Finance. This training ensured Aides could assist the staff of Members-elect in completing their appointment packages for submission to the Office of Payroll and Benefits at the start of the 117th Congressional session.

Upon the conclusion of the Transition Aides' employment with the CAO, 47 of the 50 Aides were hired into various D.C. and district office roles by their respective Member offices and were able to hit the ground running at the start of the new Congress. The CAO has started planning for the 118th Congressional Transition and will be continuing this program for the next Member-elect class.

TASK FORCE ON A DIVERSE AND TALENTED HOUSE WORKFORCE

At the direction of the Subcommittee on Legislative Branch Appropriations, the CAO – in conjunction with the Select Committee, the Committee on House Administration, my fellow House Officers, and other stakeholders – established a Task Force on a Diverse and Talented House Workforce. The Task Force developed a charter establishing the high-level goals for the team with the aim of improving human resource management practices throughout the House, including improvements to how the House recruits, retains, and develops a diverse and talented workforce. By having these stakeholders and decisionmakers providing guidance and feedback to the Task Force, we are well-positioned to prioritize our efforts and focus on initiatives that have the greatest impact for House employees.

The Task Force will build on the substantial progress the House has made in a variety of areas, including the Speaker raising the maximum annual rate of pay for staff; the Appropriations Committee working to fund increased staff salaries; and the Office of Diversity and Inclusion improving access to critical compensation and diversity information about the House workforce through its Compensation and Diversity Survey. The Task Force will enlist subject matter experts from across the House, including the CAO, the Sergeant at Arms, the Office of the Clerk, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion,

the Office of Employee Advocacy, and the Office of Employment Assistance to continue this important work.

Currently, the Task Force is examining benefits, staff training, and possible improvements to data about our workforce, including compensation and diversity data. My staff and I look forward to our work with the Task Force and continuing to make the House a more open, inviting, and rewarding workplace for all staff.

CONGRESSIONAL STAFF ACADEMY – CAO COACH PROGRAM

Our new staff training program, called CAO Coach, is a branch of the Congressional Staff Academy. CAO Coach was launched in June 2021, and the response has been overwhelmingly positive. CAO Coach aims to train staff to do their jobs in a way that is relevant, efficient, and dynamic. To date, we’ve hired four coaches, evenly split between parties. On staff, we have two experienced former Chiefs of Staff and two experienced former District Directors. In the coming months, we plan to add two recent Legislative Directors and further build out the program and its offerings.

The Coaches have “walked the walk” as staff and are acutely aware of what is required to succeed at the House. They have hosted highly attended programs featuring their colleagues as panelists on topics like *Coping with Emotional Casework*, *The Chief of Staff-District Director Relationship*, *De-Escalating Challenging Situations in a Congressional Office*, and *Parenting as a Staffer*. The Coaches are also creating a “101” video series for every job position in a House office, hosting staff networking events, helping to facilitate retreats, and providing customized trainings at the request of Member offices.

They have collected and shared hundreds of best practice documents and videos with staff. A CAO Coach website that will host these materials and all of their recorded programming is currently under development.

The Coaches also do one-on-one sessions with staff. These sessions have proven to be far more popular than we anticipated. Since they began offering the sessions, the coaches have had more than 485 confidential sessions with individual staffers on topics ranging from managing office budgets and staff to approaching difficult casework to how to introduce a bill.

I appreciate and share the Modernization Committee's interest in training programs for both Members and staff. Congress will work better and we will retain more Members and staff if we train and support them. Too often, Members and staff become discouraged because they join the House without a strong understanding of Member office operations. The House has 441 offices that do the same work – work that is done nowhere outside of the offices on Capitol Hill and the districts. Time is often wasted with each office re-inventing the wheel because there's not enough institutional focus on House-specific job training.

CONGRESSIONAL LEADERSHIP ACADEMY FOR MEMBERS

The CAO is implementing the Select Committee's recommendation to create a Congressional Leadership Academy to offer training specifically for Members. As we prepare to roll out this new program, the CAO is currently hiring and training a diverse team of world-class leadership consultants to work with Members on the leadership, management, and resiliency skills necessary to thrive in our challenging and dynamic environment. Stay tuned for much more information about this program later this month.

EXPANSION OF VIDEO, TECHNOLOGY, AND TELEWORK TOOLS

The COVID-19 pandemic made robust and reliable video and telework tools critical to the operations of the House. In 2020, the CAO worked rapidly to acquire licenses for House offices to the popular, in-demand web conferencing tools Webex and Zoom. These platforms have ensured the continuity of House operations during the COVID-19 pandemic. Committees have been able to conduct hearings, business meetings, markups, and other events safely and remotely using these tools and with the support of the CAO's House Information Resources and House Recording Studio teams. Between May 2020 and December 2021, a total of 1,847 Committee events have been conducted using the Webex or Zoom platforms, including hearings, briefings, forums, official business meetings, markups, roundtables, and rehearsals.

Additionally, the implementation of the Webex web conferencing platform at the House made video counseling sessions possible for the House community, provided by the Office of Employee Assistance (OEA), starting in March 2021. This enabled staff to receive face-to-face support from OEA counselors from anywhere with an internet connection. To date, the OEA has conducted 825 video sessions, which encompasses 15 percent of its counseling sessions.

Microsoft Office 365, implemented fully across the House in August 2019, has ensured offices have access to work resources from anywhere at any time. The Microsoft Teams platform has facilitated remote meetings and collaboration for many House offices working remotely. From 2020 through 2021, nearly 475,000 Teams meetings were conducted for a total of 730,524 hours of meeting time among House Members and staff. Approximately 64 percent of those Teams meetings included video content. Over that same timeframe, more than 46.5 million messages were sent using the Teams platform. In 2021, more than 87,000 documents were shared with House staff actively collaborating on them.

IMPROVING ACCESSIBILITY OF HOUSE WEBSITES

To address the Select Committee's recommendation to improve access to Congressional websites for individuals with disabilities, the CAO's House Web Services team launched its Web Accessibility Program in September 2019 for House websites. Through the program, the Web Services team ensures that House websites are in compliance with statutory requirements aimed at improving access to Congressional websites for individuals with disabilities. Since the Web Accessibility Program launched, the team has remediated 508 Accessibility violations for the new platform on which Member websites run, as well as the underlying themes for those websites. The team has also remediated 82 Member websites and achieved a compliance score of 90 percent or above. The compliance score is determined through a third-party evaluation service that runs automated checks based on rules adopted by the Worldwide Web Consortium and determines how well websites meet international web content accessibility guidelines. A score of 90 percent is considered the equivalent of an "A" report card score, and it is our goal to meet or beat that score.

We will continue to run Member websites through accessibility remediation until all sites have been remediated for accessibility compliance. As we bring websites into compliance, they then shift into continuous monitoring via the House's third-party accessibility checker, which helps ensure the sites continue to meet or exceed our accessibility standards. To date, Web Services has enabled continuous monitoring for 138 House-managed Member, Committee, and Leadership websites and 20 vendor-designed websites.

To assist staff in House offices who manage their Member's or Committee's website, the Web Services team offered instructor-led web accessibility trainings and collaborated with the Congressional Staff Academy to design and publish an on-demand training option. In the year ahead, the Web Services and Staff Academy teams will continue to develop and improve these training opportunities, allowing

House web content editors to maintain their websites in a manner that ensures accessibility for all individuals.

DIGITAL SIGNATURES

To address the Select Committee's recommendations to expand the use of digital signatures for a majority of House business, CAO teams have made significant progress on a few different fronts: expanding the use of digital signatures for Congressional group letters, constituent correspondence, and administrative forms.

Digital Signatures for Congressional Group Letters -- Quill

In May 2021, the CAO launched Quill, an e-signature platform used to create letters, gather signatures, and track progress of letters from start to finish. Quill was originally developed by the Senate and was modified for the House by the CAO. Quill provides a robust, secure, in-House platform to support group letters for Members of Congress. As of December 31, 2021, more than 430 Member and Committee offices were enrolled in Quill.

In late 2021, the Quill team collaborated with the Senate on updates to the system and created an advisory group with staff from Member and Committee offices that helped develop feature and functionality requests to improve Quill. As the annual Appropriations cycle ramps up during the months ahead, we are very pleased to be able to offer Quill as a tool for legislative staff who will be generating tens of thousands of Member group letters.

Electronic Signatures for Constituent Casework

To simplify the workflow of submitting and receiving casework and privacy release forms, House Web Services introduced a digital signature capability in 2019 for submitting these forms on Member websites to reduce processing requirements for offices and to streamline constituents'

experiences in working with Member offices. These forms are currently used on 265 Member office websites.

In 2021, House Web Services updated the Digital Privacy Release Form for IRS-related casework to include a new section for businesses to enter their information for IRS inquiries, along with other essential updates, such as requests for tax years, additional IRS forms, and whether another elected official was contacted. Implementation of digital signature options for forms, such as the ones mentioned above, helps to simplify the casework process for constituents and Member offices alike.

Electronic Signatures for Administrative House Forms

The CAO has also initiated a project to modernize and simplify many of its administrative forms that require a Member signature, such as payroll, Student Loan Repayment Program, and inventory forms. The forms will be streamlined and simplified through a modern development platform that provides notifications and online form approval, including approval via email. Once completed, the forms – and their accompanying electronic signatures – will be stored in the system of record for the lifecycle of the form. This new administrative form system is scheduled to be implemented this year using our most-used form, the Payroll Authorization Form.

HOUSE DIGITAL SERVICE

The Select Committee has issued several recommendations related to improving Member access to innovative technology tools that enhance their offices' operations. In response to these recommendations, the CAO is building an innovative House Digital Service team of technology experts skilled in customer relations and business analysis, design, and implementation. Our intention is to leverage fellows from other agencies and the private sector – as appropriate – and expand the House Digital Service team over time.

The House Digital Service team's responsibilities will be:

- Identifying and delivering intuitive solutions that improve on Member offices' most significant challenges.
- Bringing ideas and methodologies from the private sector into spaces within the House that have more freedom to experiment and iterate.
- Leveraging modern development stacks to rapidly prototype and build production-grade software and deliver better products and services to the House.

Currently, the CAO is leading a procurement process with the intention to recommend the acquisition of an industry-leading, cloud-based Constituent Relationship Management platform (or constituent database) that provides Members with modern and innovative tools to manage their constituent engagement. Once awarded, the Digital Service team will assume a major role in the implementation and development of this new platform.

CHALLENGES TO PROGRESS

The CAO, House leadership, and our partners across the House have made substantial progress on these modernization efforts. The Legislative Branch Appropriations Subcommittee has established a modernization account that we have used to fund initiatives. We have also established very effective working relationships among decisionmakers, including the Select Committee, that informs how we prioritize our work. During the past year, the CAO has also improved our project portfolio and project management processes. We analyze initiatives based on their value to the House and whether they will advance modernization recommendations.

However, some of the recommendations require significant ongoing funding, such as modernization of the House payroll system, expanding benefits to House employees, or creating new programs or services for Members and staff. We will not be able to accomplish everything at once. In many ways, how we prioritize these recommendations is almost as important as the recommendations

themselves. In order to make the most use of the funds established in the House modernization account, we must balance all of the requests we receive to ensure we provide the best services possible with the funding allocated to us.

CONCLUSION

The efforts of the Select Committee to further modernize the House are tremendous and commendable. I am honored that I – and my employees – can play a critical role in implementing the recommendations established by the Select Committee. Finally, I would like to thank the Members and staff of the Modernization Committee for your support. We look forward to our continued constructive relationship.

The CHAIRMAN. Thanks so much to you both for your testimony. I want to now recognize both myself and Vice Chair Timmons to begin a period of extended questioning of the witnesses. Any member who wishes to speak or ask a question can just raise their virtual hand.

Ms. Szpindor, I was hoping to just start with you. Specifically, our committee is, I think, really double-clicked on some of the issues related to staffing, just recognizing how important the staff of the institution is to the function of the institution. There are a few areas where I just was hoping we could get a bit of an update.

There was a recent staff capacity report. The House OIG advocated for raising the staff cap to 25 from 18 full-time employees as a short-term solution and then removing the cap altogether as a long-term solution. I was just hoping for your comment on those recommendations and if you can tell us what you think would be necessary to implement changes like that.

Ms. SZPINDOR. Well, we have spent some time reviewing the report from the OIG and talking with them, and we think it was, quite frankly, a very excellent report that they provided.

We generally support their conclusions that—however, there are costs that I think everyone needs to be aware of, such as benefits and services, that are not covered by the MRAs. So I think some reasonable cap, probably around the 25-person cap that they were recommending, is a good number to start with.

To implement, of course, requires planning. And the first point is, the current staff cap is set in statute, so, of course, we would have to make sure that we take care of that change.

And then what we would like to do is work with the committee to make sure that we are identifying the costs that would be requested for services and staff. Right now, those services and cost for benefits is not covered within the MRA, and that has been running, currently, approximately about 40 percent of the current cost of salary.

So those are things that we are going to need to look into. They are not anything that we cannot do, but just to make you aware that there are some things that we have determined that we are going to need to work with you on and work with the committee to make this happen.

The CHAIRMAN. Sticking on the theme of staff retention, I was hoping for an update on just two specific recommendations the committee made. We have made a host of recommendations related to expanding the tuition assistance program. And then you mentioned in your testimony the Staff Academy.

Ms. SZPINDOR. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. And, certainly, opportunities for professional development can be part of retention.

One of our recommendations in the last Congress was for the creation of certification documents so individual staff positions, through the Congressional Staff Academy, you could, in essence, validate your continued training and get certified and kind of work your way up a certification ladder.

Can you give us just an update on both where things are with the certification within the Staff Academy and then the expansion of tuition assistance?

Ms. SZPINDOR. Certainly.

As far as our staff—let's talk about the Staff Academy certifications first. As far as—we do have some courses that are certified and we provide certifications for them. We are looking at other types of courses, and will continue to look, by which we can do that. We are looking, as I said, at developing classes right now for different staff to take based on their particular position within a Member office.

We believe, if we build that out, not only just with the coach program that we are working on but also with our Staff Academy videos, instructor-led training, and others, that we will have a very good package of training that someone can take.

All of that is maintained within our system where we track our training, and anyone can go and get a complete listing of all the courses that they have completed successfully.

We are going to have to work at defining what is a required certification for a particular position within the House. And I think that is something we are going to have to work on with you to determine what are the qualifications for any positions that would determine that they are certified.

I think that another question that was asked at one point and some discussions we have had with the committee is around tuition assistance as well. And money would need to be appropriated, of course, for that, because usually some—it can be anywhere between \$2 million to \$6 million annually that could be allotted for tuition assistance. But we are open to work with you on the tuition assistance program.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay. I am tempted to ask a followup on that, but I want to make—

Ms. SZPINDOR. Please.

The CHAIRMAN. [continuing].—Sure to give other members time.

Ms. SZPINDOR. That is fine.

The CHAIRMAN. One thing I will—and we can take it—

Mr. TIMMONS. Go ahead, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. [continuing].—We can take it offline. I guess I am just wondering, that is not necessarily so, is it?

Because, currently, there are offices that don't fully tap the tuition assistance program as it is currently constructed, right, where you are basically paying off people's loans. You know, I think the idea of this committee is to give folks, kind of, front-end help if they are—you know, if I have an MLA who wants to get a master's degree in national security, I could use part of that allotment and help them sort of pay the tuition in real-time rather than help do loan repayment on the back end.

I would love to see more funding appropriated to that. But I am just wondering, is that necessarily so? Couldn't an office choose to—if we just changed the rules, couldn't an office use that allocation for that purpose?

Ms. SZPINDOR. We think that, if we work through House Admin, there are changes that are possible, yes.

The CHAIRMAN. Perfect.

Vice Chair Timmons.

Mr. TIMMONS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

During Ms. Szpindor's testimony, I couldn't help but remember when I was an intern on the Hill and people would bring the letters around and you had the big auto-pen machine, and, inevitably, you never put the signature exactly where you wanted it, and it was always very stressful.

So the interns and staff assistants these days will not ever appreciate what it was like to be the last signature on a letter, now that we have electronic signatures. I just—that struck me.

I want to ask about schedules, strangely enough.

Ms. JOHNSON, one of the biggest challenges to the workflow in Congress are the scheduling conflicts created by overlapping committee meeting times. In the 116th Congress, the committee recommended the creation of a committee calendar portal to help reduce the number of conflicts.

Could you talk about what work has been done to implement that recommendation? And have you come across any challenges as this tool is being developed?

Ms. JOHNSON. As I mentioned in my oral statement and is expanded on in my written statement, we are looking to put out a request for information to work with an outside vendor to sit down with us and see what type of software we can develop for this. So we have not, as of yet, fully investigated all of the information that we need for this.

Personally, I was struck by, I mean, just even today's hearing, the fact that we had to change it to accommodate the votes that were going on on the floor today. So that certainly will be one of the matters that the vendor takes into consideration, how reactive we are to what goes on on a daily basis as Congress is constantly in flux.

Mr. TIMMONS. I think we all appreciate that. Is this something you think we could get done this year, or is that going to be a challenge?

Ms. JOHNSON. I would think—I don't know how to answer that, in that we are going, at the end of this month, just to get a request for information. That is not even a request for a contractor. So information is just coming up with a design. So the first step would be trying to design such a system, and then the second step would be development. And, with everything that we do in the House, accuracy and security is paramount.

So we would like to strive towards this year, but we also have a number of other projects, and that is always the concern. With the number of recommendations that we are working on, where is the priority? Because, in terms of our project team, we only have one project team, and we have multiple projects. So that one project team is working on the Comparative Print suite, the enhanced eHopper, and at the same time tending to day-to-day operations.

Mr. TIMMONS. Sure. No, I hear you, and I know that we have made a lot of recommendations. I think that the schedule—between Congresses is always the best time to try to make changes to these conversations, and having that resource by the end of year, I think, would be very helpful. But we can talk about that more later.

I have one more question, again, Ms. JOHNSON: the committee's recommendation on a committee vote database. You mentioned the

disparate systems and applications in use across committees and that careful consideration needs to be made as you implement that recommendation to ensure that we are improving workflow and transparency without causing unintended harm.

Can you expand on that? What are the challenges that we are facing with that recommendation?

Ms. JOHNSON. Again, each committee certainly has the discretion to design its voting system as it desires. There is no standardized process, as it is on the floor.

On the floor, as you know, votes are available—within 15 minutes after the vote, you can go to the Clerk's website and pull up how a Member voted. With the committee, it is a little more challenging. The committee vote process may be open a lot longer, or there could be so many votes, there might—you know, a defense committee hearing may have 15 votes, or Veterans' Affairs.

So, given the number of votes, given the varied committee process of votes, those are some of the challenges.

Mr. TIMMONS. Would you think that we should standardize that across committees and remove their ability to not have the same platform and application? Or—

Ms. JOHNSON. Well, it would certainly help. I mean, standardization—there are tradeoffs. Standardization certainly gets us quicker to more transparency. But, then, committees are unique. So we really have to—you all should discuss what it is that you are willing to give up for the benefit of transparency.

But I want to be clear: We don't take a position here in the Clerk's Office. You make the decision, you provide us the reasonable time and sufficient resources, and we will certainly make certain that it is developed and implemented, and we will do so with very high-quality standards.

Mr. TIMMONS. Sure. I really appreciate that. Thank you.

I think that is something we should look into, Mr. Chairman, just creating a portal, a platform that everyone can use. It can be a versatile platform that meets all the different committees' needs, but standardization, I think, would go a long way.

Thank you, Ms. Johnson.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Thanks, Vice Chair Timmons.

Mr. LATTA.

And just a reminder to members: If you have a question, feel free to raise your virtual hand if you want to get in on this conversation.

Mr. LATTA. Well, thanks very much, Chairman and Vice Chair, for today's hearing.

And to our witnesses, thanks very much for being with us.

My other life down here—I am the ranker on Telecommunications and Energy and Commerce. I am just curious, with everything that we are doing electronically today, what are we doing in both of your spheres out there when it comes to making sure that we are cyber-secure out there?

Ms. SZPINDOR. Is that for me—

Mr. LATTA. For both of you.

Ms. SZPINDOR [continuing]. Or for either one of us?

Mr. LATTA. Right. For both of you.

Ms. SZPINDOR. And I am sorry. I didn't hear the question clearly. Could you please—

Mr. LATTA. Yeah.

Ms. SZPINDOR [continuing]. Repeat it?

Mr. LATTA. Again, with everything that we are doing electronically today, and, you know, again, we are not pushing as much paper, you know, we are trying to reduce that for your office and the Clerk's Office, what are you doing to make sure on the cyber side—because, again, everything that we talk about today is how do we protect everything? Because, all of a sudden, all you have to do is have one attack and, all of a sudden, then we are really shut down. So what are we doing out there to protect ourselves?

Ms. SZPINDOR. Well, our cybersecurity team is working—for everything that we roll out, for all the technology we have, they do assessments on all of our systems to make sure that they do meet cybersecurity requirements, that they are behind the proper firewalls, that they have the proper review and auditing and analysis that they require on an ongoing basis.

We have 7-by-24 support for our cybersecurity team by those who are monitoring to make sure there are not any unusual circumstances that are occurring.

We are currently under a review by KPMG of all of our cybersecurity processes, including staffing and policies, procedures that we are doing. And we have had them come in and do a review several years ago. We are doing it again. We want to make sure that there is nothing that we need to be including that we are not.

Mr. LATTA. Madam Clerk?

Ms. Johnson. We use many of the systems and procedures that Catherine, the CAO, just mentioned. Cybersecurity is one of those areas where there is a lot of collaboration between the Clerk's Office and the CAO's Office.

I would also like to point out, with many of our systems, they are closed systems, meaning they are one-way. One of the examples I can give you is your voting card. Your voting card is an internal system, and that voting card could only be used to vote.

There was a proposal at one point, not by this committee, but there was a proposal at one point that the voting card might also be used as a security card to enter certain areas. And the Clerk's Office was completely against that, because we only want that voting card to have one dedicated purpose, to make certain that the vote is secure at all times.

But it is also exercised with most of our electronic functions—checking and rechecking and rechecking, as Catherine mentioned.

Mr. LATTA. Madam Clerk, let me follow up with another question. You know, as we always want to make sure things are flowing on the floor and keeping things moving, do you have suggestions on what we could do to make, you know, floor time the best time that we utilize? Any recommendations?

Ms. JOHNSON. I—we—

Mr. LATTA. Not to put you on the spot.

Mr. JOHNSON. I mean, personally, I just think we have come a long way with the—you know, it is a little difficult to answer because we are in COVID now, and so votes tend to last longer be-

cause you are trying to do some type of distancing and not having so many people in the Chamber at one time.

But, prior to COVID, we had gotten down where, if there were a long series of votes, we would have even 3- to 5-minute votes—

Mr. LATTA. Right.

Ms. JOHNSON [continuing]. For very long series.

Mr. LATTA. I remember our 2-minute amendment votes.

Ms. JOHNSON. Yes. Correct.

And, you know, hopefully, we will get through this pandemic and we could go back to some sort of efficiency in voting.

Mr. LATTA. Just a real quick followup on that, because, again, you know, when I first came down here, you know, we had our 15 minutes, and then we thought, well, let's try, you know, to keep things changing. We got things down to, you know, 5 minutes and then 2 minutes.

Is there any problem with those 2-minute votes for you all when we have those? Do we function pretty well right now with the 2 minutes?

Ms. JOHNSON. We function pretty efficiently with the 2-minute votes. We have a great—a very, very, very good team.

Mr. LATTA. Thank you.

Well, Mr. Chair, I am going to yield back the balance of my time.

The CHAIRMAN. Thanks, Mr. Latta.

Mr. PERLMUTTER.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

You know, just thinking about the different areas I was concerned about a few years ago about modernizing Congress, we have taken some really, I think, good steps on human resources, you know, updating and upgrading our personnel kinds of policies and things like that. And I want to thank this committee and our witnesses in that effort.

I think we have made some strides on technology. And part of it, you know, was intentional, and part of it was “necessity is the mother of invention.” We had to because of COVID, and, you know, the ability to really have good communication through a Zoom type of approach like this.

I am still concerned—and I would ask the chairs that we do have the Architect of the Capitol join us for a hearing in the near future, because I am not—I need to know more about the campus proposals and the layout he suggests.

Because one of the concerns we have all had is, the basic structure of a committee room, you know, does not lend itself to collaboration. It lends itself to conflict more than collaboration. This, actually, Zooming, you know, I can look at William and, you know, know if he is listening to me or not. You know, Dean is asleep; I know he is not. So, you know, it gives us a chance to really kind of just judge how people are responding to things.

So I would love to get the Architect of the Capitol in, and I am sorry he is not here.

Now, here is my question. And then I will yield to Mr. Phillips. But the one place where I see that there is something on the horizon but we haven't really implemented anything yet—there will be significant change next year. Whether Democrats hold the House, there are a lot of people moving on—for instance, me. If the Repub-

licans take the House, there are going to be, obviously, changes—is on that leadership training, so that if Mr. Latta or Mr. Timmons or Mr. Phillips are all suddenly chairs, that they know what the resources are, they know how to run their committee, they are able to hit the ground running.

So my question to you two is, what are we doing on the leadership training piece of these things?

Ms. SZPINDOR. I can go first.

For Members and for their Member offices or to assist them also with any other responsibilities they may have with committees, I mentioned we are—and I am personally interviewing people, looking for some of the top consultants in management/leadership training in the United States.

And I have worked with my staff; we have selected some individuals to participate and a person to lead that particular team of individuals. We hope to have more information on it in the next couple of weeks.

Because, right now, what we are doing, for those that we have selected, we are getting them onboarded from an acquisition standpoint, but we are also looking to give them some preliminary training on a framework that we are recommending that they all understand and adhere to.

So, even though every consultant may be approaching things a little differently, they are all adhering to the same overarching framework for how they are going to work with the Members one-on-one, with their staff, and help them in, one, setting goals for their offices, two, understanding that they are needing their team to work together to make sure that the Member is able to perform the functions that he has to perform or she has to perform.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. I guess I would also suggest that, if they are out there—and I don't know whether they are—that, you know, from both sides of the aisle, you know, maybe somebody who has chaired a particular committee, you know, and has gone through, you know, trial by fire as to how to manage and run the committee—because there will be business aspects that a management consultant could present but also the political and sort of management aspects of being a Member of Congress.

So, if there are some retired folks out there who have been chairs, you might bring them in for a class or two, would be my suggestion.

Ms. SZPINDOR. And we have discussed that. We——

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Okay.

Ms. SZPINDOR [continuing]. Have discussed that.

We are also working with the Congressional Management Foundation to provide us some podcasts with discussions by previous Members of Congress on various topics as well. And we will be introducing that also in the next several weeks.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Okay. Thank you.

And I will yield back to the chair.

Ms. JOHNSON. Could I——

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Oh, sure.

The CHAIRMAN. Yes, please go ahead.

Ms. JOHNSON. Could I just add that, here in the Clerk's Office, we have a course called "Committee Clerk" in the Congressional

Academy where we train the committee clerks to make certain that, in any transition—and even if there is not a transition in leadership; just on a day-to-day basis, there is a lot of turnover—but to make certain that the committee clerks continue to have development, professional development.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Great. That is exactly what I am talking about, or it could be the committee parliamentarian or counsel or—

Ms. JOHNSON. Right.

Mr. PERLMUTTER [continuing]. Whatever too. All right. Thank you. I am glad to hear that.

And I will yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Thanks, Mr. Perlmutter.

Mr. PHILLIPS.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. SZPINDOR. I would like to ask you about space. You know, as you know, we have made some recommendations about allocation of space, one of them creating a bipartisan Members gathering area in the Capitol.

As you think about space allocation in the Capitol complex, you know, what do you think are the most pressing issues that we face? And if you could wave a magic wand and make some changes, what might they be?

Ms. SZPINDOR. Well, first of all, happy birthday.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Thank you.

Ms. SZPINDOR. And, you know, space is a premium, even for the CAO. We have I think every inch of every office that we have fully utilized.

I do believe that we are doing a good job in administering any of the committee rooms that we have. We have a registration process for that. But, as far as additional space, we beg and borrow, as well, within the CAO to negotiate any additional space.

I don't have a lot of input into space for the Members, other than we make sure that the space you have, we have our teams and our logistics group that are going to help you in designing and trying to make the most optimum use of the space that you do have.

Mr. PHILLIPS. May I just ask, just for my own edification, you know, who controls space ultimately? Whose domain is that?

And I am not sure if anybody has a complete grasp on this. If you could just articulate, you know, who ultimately makes those decisions in the Capitol complex, at least on the House side in this case.

Ms. SZPINDOR. We go through our Committee on House Administration to request space for us.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Okay.

Ms. SZPINDOR. And we are working also at times with the Architect of the Capitol. I think that they primarily are the ones that have a pulse on all the space that is available across the Capitol buildings.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Okay. All right. Well, thank you, ma'am. I appreciate it.

Ms. JOHNSON one quick question for you too. In your testimony, you had articulated a system to track lobbying disclosures. And I would love if you might just spend a moment just sharing with us

a little bit more on that and letting us know if you believe you have the authorities and the funding already to pursue such a system.

Mr. JOHNSON. Currently, we do not have the authority. We—

Mr. PHILLIPS. Okay.

Ms. JOHNSON [continuing]. Are still in discussions. The committee hasn't given us direction in terms of how far we should go.

And this is one—because lobbying disclosure is in conjunction with the Senate side as well, so it is both chambers working together—

Mr. PHILLIPS. Yeah.

Ms. JOHNSON [continuing]. On that project.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Okay. All right. I appreciate it.

I yield back. Thank you very much.

Ms. JOHNSON. And happy birthday as well.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Thank you so much. I do appreciate it.

The CHAIRMAN. Indeed, happy birthday, Mr. Phillips.

Let me just ask—I am not seeing if anybody else has further questions.

I am just curious on two fronts: one, whether—you know, obviously, a lot of offices over the last year have figured out how to telework. And my sense is, that is going to be part of the institution's future, where you may not go back to having every member of a staff in every single day.

That may actually be helpful as we look at, for example, raising the staff cap, because there is a question of, how do you fit all these people into one office?

I guess I am just curious for your thoughts on that, going forward.

The other thing I want to ask: One of the recommendations the committee just made prior to the holidays was around, sort of, co-working space. You know, I think our thought here is that you would have some space set aside that, if a couple offices wanted to collaborate on something or even, let's just say for the sake of argument you had 25 people in the office on a given day and you had to have someplace for a team member to go, that there might be some space that—you know, not unlike we see in private industry, where there are, sort of, co-working opportunities.

Do you see that as something that could be implemented? Is that more likely to be implemented in the realm of more teleworking happening?

Ms. JOHNSON. Well, I can go first.

And, even before the pandemic, the fact that some of our staff is in O'Neill, across the highway, here with our offices in the Capitol we have some hotel space so that that space is dedicated for persons who need to be in the Capitol or closer to the floor on a given day. Persons would not work at their O'Neill space but would take a desk and a computer here in the Capitol.

And in terms of what we are doing right now, we—for protective staffing, we have, let's say, six tally clerks. Currently, we are only bringing in two or three a day—we have Team A and Team B—to make certain that we have a healthy staff number at all times to support legislative operations. So three would work from home and three would come in, depending on what day it is. Because our

concern is always to have the appropriate staff to make certain that Congress can continue its business on a daily basis.

But, yes, in the future, we do see more and more telework. I think it is the only way we are going to be able to stay competitive, particularly with our IT persons.

Ms. SZPINDOR. And I would tell you, I am a proponent of people teleworking, even without the pandemic. It has been necessary, but I do believe it is what we are going to see in the future.

One, as we look to fill positions, particularly technical positions, more and more individuals are asking in the interview if they could telework. It is growing in popularity.

And I will tell you, a huge majority of our staff do telework every single day, especially our engineers on the IT side in the HIR. In the past 2 years, we have moved data centers remotely, copying data from one data center to the other. There is very little that many of our organizations cannot do remotely.

Of course, we have to have our logistics crew onsite. We have to have our continuity group, many of them, onsite at times. There are some of our payroll, our front—our Member-facing, staff-facing organizations have, from the very beginning of COVID, been onsite, and commendably so, supporting and making sure that the House operations continue to work like they are supposed to.

And I know Cheryl—

The CHAIRMAN. We sure appreciate that. Please thank them for us too.

Ms. SZPINDOR. Yeah. They work very, very hard.

The CHAIRMAN. Can I just ask—and, unless other members have additional questions, I will perhaps wrap up with this. This may be asking you to make an admission against interests, because, as we have peppered you with recommendations, perhaps your thought is, “Please, dear God, stop.”

But as you look at the—you know, the mission of this committee is just to make Congress work better for the American people. Are there areas under your purview, under your jurisdiction, that you think, hey, I am surprised the committee hasn’t pulled on this string, or, hey, this is an area of opportunity?

We have another year for the existence of this committee before it hits its end date. I am just curious if there are areas where you think, hey, this is an area of opportunity to improve how the institution works and the committee ought to look at it.

Ms. SZPINDOR. We have things going in so many different areas at the request of the committee and other individuals to improve and modernize, I really think that we are good—

The CHAIRMAN. I think I heard you say—

Ms. SZPINDOR [continuing]. We are good where we are right now.

The CHAIRMAN [continuing] “Please, dear God, stop,” but in a more diplomatic way.

Ms. SZPINDOR. We still have a lot of the recommendations that is going to take us—we are doing it, you know, a phase at a time, and will take us another year or so to complete.

I do want to say one thing. For both you and—Congressmen Kilmer and Timmons, your staff have been so wonderful to work with.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Ms. SZPINDOR. They have collaborated with us. It has been a joy over the past year, quite frankly, to sit down with them and actually go over things and get a better understanding from them and us be able to work collaboratively. It has been a great experience.

So, if there are other ideas that you may have or that we can think of, we will certainly pass them on, but we will work to try and deliver what you are asking us to do.

The CHAIRMAN. Terrific.

Ms. JOHNSON. any comments on that?

Ms. JOHNSON. I would like to echo what the CAO just stated. Your staff, both Chair Kilmer and Vice Chair Timmons, are extremely helpful, extremely reasonable, and very, very committed. And to the extent that we identify challenges, they are very receptive. And I have been very, very impressed with working with them and look forward to continuing that.

I would just say, in terms of the recommendations, mine that I would recommend that you continue to emphasize are probably in the area of the CAO, which has to do with personnel. I think this institution is just second to none. And to continue that in years and decades going forward, to make certain that we continue to have high-quality staff by providing them good salaries and good benefits and good working conditions.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thanks very much.

Let me just see if any other members have additional questions.

Mr. Phillips, your hand is up. I assume that is just a relic of your prior question.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Yes, it is a relic. I will virtually take it down.

The CHAIRMAN. All right.

Well, with that, I want to thank our witnesses for their testimony today and thank our committee members for their participation.

I will echo the words of both of our witnesses with gratitude to our staff, not just for pulling together another informative hearing but for their work. I think, insofar as possible, we are trying to do this work with you, not to you. So, appreciate your collaboration and the work of our staff in that regard.

Without objection, all members will have 5 legislative days within which to submit additional written questions for the witnesses to the chair, which will be forwarded to the witnesses for their response. I ask our witnesses to please respond as promptly as you are able.

The CHAIRMAN. I also want to just thank the team at C-SPAN for showing our hearing today. I am sure we are tearing it up on ratings at 6:00 a.m. Pacific time. We are killing it, you guys.

I think we are also on Twitch, so I would like to thank all gamers out there for watching our hearing as well.

Ed Perlmutter, I will explain to you what Twitch is when we adjourn.

So, with that, everybody, our hearing is adjourned. Thanks, everybody.

[Whereupon, at 10:02 a.m., the committee was adjourned.]