

Statement of Daniel P. Mulhollan
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before the
Subcommittee on Legislative Branch Appropriations
Senate Appropriations Committee
United States Senate
FY 2008 Budget Request
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Madam Chairwoman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to present the fiscal year 2008 budget request for the Congressional Research Service (CRS). I come to you with great appreciation for the support you have given us in past years. Having worked closely alongside Congress for more than 13 years now in my capacity as Director of CRS, I know full well the fiscal pressures under which you must operate, and that frame your deliberations.

Fiscal Year 2008 Budget Request

The CRS fiscal year 2008 budget request is \$108,702,000. This request covers mandatory pay increases for CRS staff, as well as price level increases due to inflation for the goods and services we require in the course of doing our work. We are not asking for any funds for new initiatives or program growth and are undertaking all of our initiatives within current funding.

CRS is appreciative of Congress's continuing support. Even in these times of constrained resources we have managed to sustain our full services to the Congress, serving every Member and congressional committee. Our highest priority is to ensure that Congress has continued access to the nation's best thinking on policy issues, and to that end we devote almost 90 percent of our budget to personnel. Since 1994 we have successfully increased the number of analysts within the organization from 313 to 343, and they along with our information professionals represent 75 percent of our total staff. At the same time, the overall number of CRS staff has declined by about 10 percent.

The pressures and evolving priorities of Congress drive CRS' short- and long-range planning. We strive to strengthen our analytic capacity and the quality of our analysis. We evaluate a host of factors in an effort to target and improve our analyses, including

- institutional changes within Congress
- demands on Members' time
- turnover of Members and staff
- complexity and interdependencies of policy issues before the Congress
- need for creative new solutions to policy questions

- cultural shifts in the United States and abroad
- global integration
- continuing rapid advances in technology
- growth in information sources

We stand in direct service to Congress. We continually review our services to improve access, streamline operations, and increase our efficiency. We are:

- enhancing our website so that you have targeted access to the analysis you need;
- providing our staff with the research tools they need to accomplish their work;
- protecting the safety of our staff and ensuring that, if disaster strikes, CRS's services to the Congress will remain available;
- looking for economies within the organization and efficient ways of undertaking our mission; and
- minimizing our non-personnel costs through systematic assessments of each program activity and support function.

Research Agenda

Congress turns to CRS daily. In fiscal year 2006 we provided over 900,000 services to the Congress. These included more than 65,000 customized products and services such as memoranda, telephone and in-person briefings. In addition, CRS created over 800 new reports, bringing the total number of reports available to the Congress to over 5800, all available through the CRS website.

As in previous years, in the months before the start of the 110th Congress, our experts from across CRS got together, assessed events here in the United States and around the world, and working closely with every congressional committee, determined the issues that would most likely face this Congress. The result of this and ongoing work is the creation and maintenance of a robust and evolving research agenda framed around almost 150 policy issues. We continue to work alongside you as you identify and clarify policy problems, explore policy options, monitor and assess program implementation, and conduct oversight.

CRS approaches its work with a commitment to serving the Congress and a spirit of collaboration, resulting in research and analyses that are creative, interdisciplinary and insightful. As Congress conducts its deliberations, CRS makes every effort to provide the best thinking on the problems that congressional lawmakers address. To meet these demands, CRS staff must have access to the best research and information resources to provide authoritative analysis whenever and however Congress requires assistance. Thus the Service invests in education and training for staff members to stay current in their respective disciplines, and ensures that staff are challenged and informed by interactions with colleagues in other disciplines.

All this, of course, means nothing unless our analysts also understand the intricacies of the legislative process and remain sensitive to the competing demands on

time that Members of Congress juggle day after day. CRS analysts are therefore educated about the workings of the Congress so that they have a command of Congress as an institution — its rules and procedures — and an understanding of Congress processes in enacting legislation and in conducting oversight.

Core Values

As Congress adjusts to the changes in the world and CRS realigns its services to meet those changes, our commitment to our core values does not waiver. CRS analysis is renowned for being confidential, objective and authoritative. These core values underscore our service to Congress and remain stable regardless of the changes around us.

In today's marketplace of ideas, we strive to outpace all others. CRS is unique among the legislative branch agencies and like no other think tank, government bureau, or policy organization in the world. According to the guiding principles that Congress set forth when it established CRS in 1914, our sole purpose is to support the United States Congress, serving equally both chambers and both parties on all issues.

I came to this subcommittee in 1996 asking for assistance in addressing the challenge that half of CRS staff would be eligible to retire by 2006. Well, the future is here and thanks to the support the Congress provided for our succession planning, we hired one third of our staff in the past four years. They are all enthusiastic, highly credentialed individuals, dedicated to public service. Our more tenured staff work closely with these new employees to transfer their institutional memory and expertise in the legislative framework. I tell all new employees that it is an honor to work for the Congress. But it is also a weighty responsibility. And so honoring and applying our core values becomes at once a reward, a challenge, an obligation.

CRS holds confidentiality as its first core value and highest priority. When working with CRS, Congress can access information, dispute it, ask questions about it, knowing that questions and comments are held in the strictest confidence. I am frequently told by Members of Congress that the promise of confidentiality is what keeps them coming back to utilize our services. Members know they can come to us to float an unusual idea or explore issues, and they can do so without question, challenge, or disclosure.

Our second value is objectivity. Because our work is objective and non-partisan, we sit in a unique position. We focus all our efforts on getting you, the Congress, what you need, when you need it — and in a form that works for you. CRS works one-on-one with Members and committees to address specific questions as they arise. Those who choose to reference or distribute our work can do so with confidence, knowing each report we produce is objective and fair.

As CRS provides authoritative and confidential assistance, we are vigilant about our ability to analyze issues without bias or unexamined assumptions. Our outstanding

reputation for objective and nonpartisan analysis is hard-won by every one of our policy experts, each and every day.

Finally, CRS ensures that the research and analysis it provides are authoritative. Rigorous research methodologies must be free of built-in bias. Every critical assumption must be presented, explained, and justified. Data anomalies must be investigated and rechecked for appropriateness and applicability. Primary resources are used whenever available, all statements of fact are double- or triple-checked, all sources are documented and appropriately caveated. We at CRS understand that our research and analysis must be authoritative and above reproach if it is to continue to serve as the foundation upon which Congress engages in debate.

Such assurance is critical. For example, as Congress sought to improve preparation for and response to future catastrophes, such as a national flu pandemic, CRS experts assisted with appropriations legislation and oversight. When the House and Senate continued to confront the myriad issues stemming from the government's response to Hurricane Katrina, CRS experts analyzed flood insurance reform and the funding of infrastructure repairs on highways, bridges, ports, and airports. Analysts used mapping software to estimate the characteristics of individuals most likely affected by the storm. We examined the entire range of federal agencies' preparedness and response. For example, in addition to extensive examinations of such agencies as the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Army Corps of Engineers, CRS prepared analyses on the Department of Housing and Urban Affairs' role in responding to past disasters. This provided precedents and an analytic framework for further consideration of disaster-related housing needs and use of Section 8 housing vouchers.

Management Initiatives

In the coming years, CRS will continue to align research capacity to meet congressional needs, to improve congressional access to our services, and to develop tools for our research managers and staff to facilitate their work. This year we will launch a new authoring and publishing system that will reduce the time devoted to writing and publishing reports and memoranda, thus freeing up the time available to CRS analysts to undertake their research. This new tool will standardize the presentation format and enhance graphic capabilities.

In a world of ever-evolving technologies and a constant need for information, CRS is forefront. We plan to enhance our online services — be it podcasts, webcasts, or interactive discussions. For example, mapping and spatial software will allow Congress to manipulate data to determine the possible implications of legislative options for specific populations, regions, industries or economic sectors. In addition to providing Congress with analysis, this next step would make analytic tools available for Congress and staff to use. Another example is a legacy series that will capture the knowledge and institutional memory of our experts before they retire, further preserving their valuable analysis for the Congress and their successors.

Conclusion

I wish to thank the Congress for its continuing support for CRS. In keeping with the current fiscal realities, the CRS budget request for fiscal year 2008 does not seek additional funds to support program growth. The Service seeks your support for the mandatory pay increases for CRS staff and price-level increases for goods and services.

These funds will allow CRS to continue serving the legislative needs of the 110th Congress.