

Statement of Mary B. Mazanec
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Before the
Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Fiscal 2018 Budget Request
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Mister Chairman, Ranking Member Murphy and Members of the Subcommittee,

Thank you for the opportunity to present the fiscal 2018 budget request for the Congressional Research Service (CRS) and to briefly describe to you the support we have provided the U.S. Congress this past year. As you know, the Service assists Congress by supporting its legislative, oversight, and representative functions. CRS provides objective, analytical research and information to all Members and committees through all stages of the legislative process. The Service assists in analyzing draft legislation, comparing policy proposals and options, and assessing the potential impacts of policy changes. It provides substantive written products, tailored confidential memoranda, issue-related seminars, and personal consultations and briefings. Moreover, CRS provides those services without advocacy or agenda.

In the last fiscal year, CRS served the Senate and House with support across a wide spectrum of complex and diverse issues. The Service received 563,000 requests for products and services from Members and committees, including more than 62,000 requests for custom research and analysis. CRS produced more than 3,600 new or updated products, published over 6,300 bill summaries on our website, and hosted seminars and other events for more than 9,200 congressional participants. In the last fiscal year and in the several years prior, CRS provided custom services to 100 percent of Senate and House member offices and standing committees.

FISCAL 2018 BUDGET REQUEST

The CRS budget request for fiscal 2018 is \$119,489,000, with almost 90 percent devoted to staff pay and benefits. This request equitably balances the competing goals of providing the comprehensive services mandated by statute, while recognizing the significant budget challenges facing Congress and the nation as a whole.

BUDGET CHALLENGES

Over the past several fiscal years, CRS's staffing levels and purchasing power have been significantly diminished, while demand for CRS work has remained strong. CRS is committed to maintaining broad analytical expertise and flexibility to address both recurrent and emerging legislative issues. However, if the fiscal trajectory of recent years continues, CRS may not be able to sustain the level of service currently provided.

CRS's full-time equivalent (FTE) staffing levels since fiscal year 2010 have dropped by 13 percent, including an 8 percent reduction in analytical capacity. While CRS continues to hire analytical, research, and managerial staff, the Service is not able to replace staff on a one-to-one ratio. CRS has worked to contain costs, including prioritizing hiring research staff over other positions, and dividing congressional issue portfolios among remaining staff to maintain comprehensive coverage of legislative priorities. To streamline our infrastructure, in April we combined our workforce and finance offices into one Office of Administrative Operations.

Static budgets since fiscal year 2010 have also resulted in the erosion of CRS's purchasing power by almost 16 percent. CRS uses as many modern methodologies and technology platforms as available and affordable to increase its efficiency. However, diminishing purchasing power may affect CRS's ability to maintain current service levels.

Specifically, the Service anticipates that:

- the ability of CRS to conduct in-depth research and analysis will be adversely impacted as existing staffing gaps intensify, with the Service facing challenges acquiring necessary new expertise and retaining its invaluable cadre of experienced experts;
- the Service will not be able to effectively procure and utilize new technologies and thus will not be able to leverage the increasingly vast amount of data that could provide critical insight for congressional decision making;
- areas of consistently heavy congressional demand, including education, health care, defense, and appropriations will increasingly be impaired by staffing constraints, and the timeliness of responses to requests and of updating research products may be compromised due to expanding staff workloads; and
- the Service's ability to effectively perform all of the functions required by statute may diminish.

FISCAL 2018 PROGRAMMATIC INCREASE REQUEST

CRS is requesting \$4.753 million in programmatic increases in fiscal 2018 in order to address ongoing challenges and to continue to provide the products and services expected by the Congress. This request includes \$753,000 to support eight not-to-exceed (NTEs) appointments to strengthen research capacity in areas of high congressional demand and \$4 million to support an Integrated Research and Information System (IRIS), a needed technology enhancement.

The majority of the requested funding increase would establish the Service's next-generation Integrated Research and Information System (IRIS). For fiscal 2018, CRS is requesting \$4 million be temporarily added to the base through fiscal 2022, for a five-year investment of \$20 million, to modernize legacy IT systems. The current funding level only allows CRS to support operations and maintenance on its existing, aging systems. IRIS will leverage the latest advances in web based technologies to provide an agile and flexible infrastructure that will enable efficient, easy-to-use technologies for rapid deployment and use by CRS staff and Congress. IRIS will support Congress in four key areas: knowledge management; policy and data analysis; content creation; and product delivery. New tools and systems will allow for significant improvements including: enhanced personalization of content and alerts for congressional users; a more effective search engine with faceted search; and new content management and authoring systems, which will reduce staff time spent on administrative and production issues, thereby allowing for more staff time to focus on research, analysis, and consultative services for Congress. IRIS will also allow CRS to better capture, digitize, and catalog institutional memory, including work products and supporting materials, for future CRS staff.

CRS also plans to create eight new entry-level positions which would be recruited at the GS-11 pay level in NTE 3-5 year appointments. These positions would support our succession planning efforts by establishing a pool of qualified and available talent. Succession is a concern for the Service as 23% of CRS staff will be retirement eligible in fiscal 2018. CRS is seeking two positions in each of the following high-demand areas: defense policy and budget; health policy; education policy; and budget and appropriations process.

LEGISLATIVE SUPPORT FOR THE CONGRESS

CRS supported Congress over the past fiscal year across all public policy issues. This support included examining the nature and extent of domestic and international issues facing Congress; identifying and assessing policy options; assisting with hearings on policy proposals and on implementation of policies; supporting congressional review of nominations and treaties; and providing products, briefings, and consultations to address pressing issues on the legislative agenda.

Selected highlights of our services are as follows.

Comprehensive Energy Legislation: Members of Congress from both chambers met in conference to negotiate major energy and natural resources legislation. CRS provided ongoing support for the conference process through in-person consultations, comparisons of bill sections, analysis of provisions, new reports, and updates.

Constitutional Law and CONAN: The role of the Constitution in shaping American society was a prominent issue in the 2016 election, and the death of Antonin Scalia raised the potential for significant changes to the future of constitutional interpretation by the Court. CRS attorneys provided guidance to lawmakers through a variety of formats, including efforts to prepare the decennial edition of the Senate Document, *The Constitution of the United States of America: Analysis and Interpretation (CONAN)*, presentation of seminars for the Federal Law Update series relating to constitutional law, the Court's criminal law cases, and the application of the Constitution's Supremacy Clause. In the wake of the death of Justice Scalia and the nomination of his successor, CRS attorneys wrote comprehensive reports to guide lawmakers with regard to the Supreme Court vacancy.

Defense Reform and the National Defense Authorization Act: CRS assisted lawmakers as they debated key provisions in the FY2017 National Defense Authorization Act, beginning with seminars for staff of both chambers on the President's defense budget request, often the first such overview and analysis available to Congress following the Administration's initial budget presentation. CRS experts examined proposals related to reform of the Department of Defense. As the bill entered its conference phase, more than 60 CRS analysts prepared side-by-side comparisons of the more than 1,000 provisions in the Senate and House versions of the bill.

Environmental Law and Policy: In 2016, CRS analysts and attorneys assisted Congress by analyzing Senate and House amendments to the Toxic Substances Control Act. When the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued its Clean Power Plan rule regulating emissions of greenhouse gases from existing fossil fuel-fired power plants in 2015, CRS analysts and attorneys briefed congressional requesters regarding the implications of the rule and provided written reports and memoranda.

Federal Aviation Administration: In FY2016 both the Senate and House addressed legislation to reauthorize civil aviation programs, encompassing everything from regulation of unmanned aircraft to subsidized air service to small communities. CRS responded to congressional

requests for analysis as the two chambers considered provisions relating to aviation security, hiring of air traffic controllers, and maintenance of control towers at small airports.

International Law: CRS legislative attorneys provided research and analytical support through briefings and written products on a number of foreign affairs and international law issues, including the Paris Agreement made by parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action regarding Iran's nuclear program, resolutions issued by the United Nations Security Council, and various treaties submitted to the Senate for its advice and consent. The attorneys also researched the status of the settlement claims against Iran and assisted as Congress enacted the Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act.

Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership and "Brexit": CRS worked with Congress on a major trade agreement as it entered its fourth year of negotiation, the U.S.-EU Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). CRS regularly updated Congress on the status of the negotiations, the priorities of the respective sides, and the outstanding issues that remained to be resolved before the agreement could be concluded. A related policy issue for Congress was the United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union. CRS supported Congress as it expressed interest in the vote's outcomes, particularly the trade and economic implications. CRS helped Congress assess its impact on TTIP and on the potential future U.S.-UK free trade agreement.

Middle East Turmoil, Terrorism, and Instability: CRS provided Congress with in-depth analysis and authoritative information about ISIS and the international struggle against it and other terrorist groups in Iraq and Syria as well as Libya, Yemen, Egypt, and beyond the region to Europe and Asia. CRS analyzed a new Memorandum of Understanding between the United States and Israel aimed at enabling Israel to defend itself effectively in the midst of regional instability and Israel's continued concerns about threats from Iran. CRS also conducted detailed analysis of the failed July coup in Turkey.

Response to the Zika Outbreak: Analysts and attorneys across the Service reported on policy concerns affecting countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as the United States and its territories. CRS helped Congress as it considered measures to fund Zika response efforts and assisted in understanding Zika funding requests in relation to the status of appropriated funds for the previous Ebola crisis. Congress repeatedly turned to CRS legal, policy, and budgetary experts as it deliberated an aid package to support domestic and international efforts to contain the outbreak.

MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES

CRS developed initiatives to optimize workflow, streamline operations, and enhance efficiency. Selected accomplishments are as follows.

Congress.gov Development

As part of the Library's multi-departmental team, CRS contributed to continuing development and daily operations of Congress.gov, which will replace two legacy legislative information systems with a single, modern system. CRS provided data analysis, subject matter expertise, consultation, system testing, user testing, coordination of data partner relationships, and support for congressional users and data partners. The Service also supports the use of the Congress-only LIS until equivalent capability is fully developed for Congress.gov. Accomplishments included the deployment of LIS-like quick searches for each of the Congress.gov collections and the initial implementation of an LIS-like advanced search.

Strategic Planning

CRS began implementing a new five-year strategic plan for 2016 through 2020. Key goals of the plan include expanding the range of products and services in line with the needs of Congress across a diverse clientele, enhancing a dedicated professional workforce to deliver those services, and efficiently and effectively managing resources to ensure that the Service optimally executes its statutory mission. As part of that effort, CRS is comprehensively evaluating operations and research activities to leverage efficiencies and synergies. For example, as noted, CRS merged its workforce and finance operations. Furthermore, the Service continues to critically examine other facets of its operations to strategically allocate resources. CRS also launched new initiatives on workplace diversity and internal communications to strengthen employee engagement.

Information Technology Improvements

CRS is collaborating with the Library of Congress to consolidate IT operations and services, as appropriate. In parallel with that process, in the past fiscal year, the Service upgraded Mercury, its customer relationship management (CRM) system. CRS also redesigned parts of its website for Congress (CRS.gov) into a series of 23 new Issue Area pages, which better align with the issue portfolios found in congressional offices.

Product Enhancements

CRS launched a new infographic product on CRS.gov. Infographics are intended to present complex information without the need for an accompanying written product. The Service also continued work on geospatial analysis and mapping products to illustrate public policy data. CRS continues to explore additional product formats for presenting information and analysis in ways that meet congressional needs for authoritativeness, accuracy, and brevity. As part of this effort, the Service is developing one-page summaries of CRS reports that will be published as stand-alone products.

CONCLUSION

CRS continues to provide accurate, timely, objective, and nonpartisan research to the Senate and the House. However, CRS's ability to continue to provide comprehensive research and analysis across the spectrum of complex congressional issues may become increasingly challenging as the Service works to replace departing colleagues, to hire new staff in emerging areas, and to modernize information technology.

Thank you for your steadfast support of the Service's mission, and the trust you place in the Service. I look forward to working with you to ensure that CRS continues to robustly meet your needs in an increasingly complex and fast-paced legislative environment.