

**Statement of The Honorable Hugh Nathaniel Halpern
Before the Subcommittee on Legislative Branch
FY 2025 Appropriations Request of the Government Publishing Office
May 08, 2024**

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Fischer and Members of the Subcommittee, I am honored to appear before the Subcommittee on Legislative Branch Appropriations to present the Government Publishing Office's (GPO's) fiscal year 2025 appropriations request. I thank you and your staff for your past support of GPO, and I look forward to working closely with you again in the coming year. For fiscal year 2025, I am requesting appropriations in the amount of \$136,089,000, an increase of \$4,090,000 over our FY 2024 appropriation.

This marks just the fourth time in a decade that GPO has requested an increase in appropriated funds that incorporates increased labor and materials costs while accommodating certain initiatives of importance to Congress and the rest of the legislative branch. Our FY 2025 requests represent a 3.1 percent increase over FY 2024. They are also 7.7 percent lower than the Agency's all-time high appropriation of \$147.5 million in FY 2010.

GPO runs as a business enterprise and appropriated funds represent a comparatively small portion of GPO's overall budget. For FY 2024, about 90 percent of GPO's revenue came from billings of its other Federal customers, including the State Department, the courts, the Department of Defense, and many others. For FY 2025, we estimate that direct appropriations will represent a similar portion of our overall budget. And just as we occasionally need to adjust the rates we charge our other customers, we also need to request adjustments to our appropriation levels to ensure that we are meeting our statutory obligation to recover our costs and provide for investments that will yield additional efficiency and capability.

Charting a Course for the Future

During fiscal year 2023, GPO made considerable progress in our efforts to chart a new course for the Agency's future. First and foremost, we closed our books for fiscal year 2023 with a net positive income for the third consecutive year. All told, we had a net positive income of \$61.1 million in FY 2023 and did so while making the critical investments in human capital and technology needed to thrive in the years ahead.

One of our proudest achievements in FY 2023 was our work to fulfill the statutory requirements of the "Access to Congressionally Mandated Reports Act" [P.L. 117-263] to build a centralized repository for the congressionally mandated reports that Federal agencies are required to submit to Congress or committees. Fulfilling this mandate required us to work closely with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and our congressional stakeholders to make these reports publicly available online within one year's time. We are proud to have met our December 2023 deadline and to report that, as of April 24th, there are 315 congressionally mandated reports from 62 issuing agencies posted on GovInfo.

In FY 2023, we also celebrated important milestones for our Security and Intelligent Documents (SID) business unit. First, we marked our first full year of production of the state-of-the-art Next Generation Passports (NextGen), producing an impressive 22 million NextGen passports

for the State Department. Additionally, we had the opportunity to celebrate the 15th Anniversary of our Stennis MS Secure Production Facility, which has produced a total of 95 million passports since 2008 and 9.5 million secure credentials since 2013.

We also initiated the Project Common Press with our congressional partners, the first attempt to modernize the look and style of key congressional publications since GPO opened its doors in 1861. Today, advances in technology have provided us a level of flexibility with congressional documents that we haven't had before, whether they are displayed digitally or in print.

For example, GPO uses digital inkjet presses capable of cost-effective printing on any size paper with a wide variety of features, including color. Advances like these, coupled with a congressional willingness to reexamine long-standing practices to improve outcomes for lawmakers, staff, and the public, have led to the bicameral, bipartisan Project Common Press effort to develop a new design template for committee reports and hearings.

With the full support of the Joint Committee on Printing, GPO has started the Project Common Press focus group work of gathering our customer requirements for what a new format might look like. To date, we have completed our first round of focus group meetings with the JCP staff, House and Senate institutional officers, and House and Senate committees. In light of their feedback, we are further refining our designs and look forward to continuing that dialog with congressional stakeholders in the coming year.

Last summer, GPO celebrated the 10 billionth retrieval of government information from our websites, coinciding with the 30th anniversary of the signing of the GPO Electronic Information Access Enhancement Act [P.L. 103-40]. It's amazing to think of where our digital presence is today when we consider that it all began with a rudimentary, pre- Netscape Navigator site to post the Congressional Record online in the mid-1990s.

Throughout fiscal year 2023 our ongoing efforts to modernize and build a dynamic and welcoming workplace continued to attract attention. In fact, we were notified that Forbes Magazine again rated us—now for the third straight year—as one of America's Best Midsize Employers while also recognizing us as one of the nation's Best Employers for Veterans for the second consecutive year.

Those positive sentiments were also reflected in the results of our first-ever employee climate survey designed to assess agency morale and identify challenges, which found that 90 percent of respondents are proud of the work they do at GPO and 76 percent agree that respect is high among teammates. While there is always room for improvement, the survey provided encouraging results we hope to build on in the years ahead.

GPO's vision is of an *America Informed* and our mission is to publish trusted information for the Federal Government to the American people guided by four key values—honesty, kindness, effectiveness, and inclusiveness. Our vision and mission are supported by our FY 2023-2027 Strategic Plan which is built on four strategic goals: to (1) Achieve Operational Excellence; (2) Modernize and Innovate; (3) Ensure Financial Stability; and (4) Develop the Workforce. (A copy of the plan can be found here: https://www.gpo.gov/docs/default-source/mission-vision-and-goals-pdfs/gpo_strategicplan_fy23-27.pdf.)

It is with those goals in mind that we accepted the recommendations of the Task Force on a Digital Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) last year to guide the evolution of the

FDLP and build a strong digital future for all our library partners and transition the program to one that is primarily digital. We are currently moving forward on those Task Force recommendations we can implement on our own. We have also shared a set of legislative proposals with Congress to address other Task Force recommendations and guide ensure our statutes support the transition to a digital FDLP.

As we look to our future, GPO's single biggest current challenge is attracting and maintaining a workforce prepared to fulfill our mission. Dramatic shifts in the newspaper and publishing industries have significantly diminished traditional sources of potential skilled labor for us. It's a serious challenge. Fifty percent of our workforce is eligible to retire in the next four years. That's one out of every two proofreaders, presspeople, bookbinders, carpenters, electricians, IT specialists, contracting officers, and a host of other trades and professions working at GPO.

To ensure that GPO continues to attract and retain an exceptional workforce in the years ahead, we have established the Recent Graduates Program and restarted our Apprenticeship Program.

Designed to appeal to talented young graduates seeking a career, the Recent Graduates Program attracted 22 new hires in its first year and another 29 in FY 2023, its second full year of operation. The Apprenticeship Program, created to help promising GPO teammates acquire the skills needed to assume larger roles throughout the Agency, welcomed its first eight participants and aims for 22 more in FY 2024.

We also created a new position, Production Technician, through which the Agency provides promising individuals with three years of on-the-job training to earn certification as fully credentialed bookbinders. We have hired 56 Production Technicians in Washington and Stennis, MS to date and are currently working to bring an additional 24 on board in FY 2024.

A Snapshot of GPO's Business

GPO has three primary lines of business: (1) producing items requested by our customers, either ourselves or through contracts with other firms across the country; (2) making government information available through libraries, the internet, and direct distribution; and (3) building the tools that our customers use to produce their own content in formats that facilitate digital and physical distribution.

Production

GPO's business portfolio consists of—

- our in-house production work for Congress and the Executive Branch.
- the passports and secure credentials we produce for the State Department and other Federal agencies; and
- the print procurement and ancillary business services we provide to a broad range of Federal agencies.

For Congress, in-house work includes the Congressional Record, the House and Senate calendars, bills, resolutions, committee reports and hearings, and the United States Code. For the executive branch, we produce the Federal Register and Code of Federal Regulations, the President's Budget, the Economic Report of the President, and many other high-profile

publications. Notably, daily production of the Congressional Record and the Federal Register is like producing two major city newspapers every day.

Additionally, our craftspeople frequently produce a wide array of programs, invitations, and ceremonial and commemorative documents for both the executive and legislative branches.

Making Government Information Available to the Public

Still, another core enterprise of GPO is administering the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP), through which GPO provides important public documents to the over 1,100 FDLP-affiliated libraries nationwide, many of which are then also made available to the public at no charge through our ISO-certified secure digital repository, GovInfo.gov. Through the Catalog of U.S. Government Publications (CGP), the public can identify and access over 1 million current and historic government titles and resources housed in FDLP libraries throughout the country or linked to in digital collections at libraries and Federal agencies.

GPO's Superintendent of Documents and Library Services and Content Management (LSCM) units support the FDLP libraries in the identification and access to new government content, maintenance of their tangible collections, digitization of aging and rare tangible documents, and education, outreach, and training to ensure that the staff of FDLP libraries can assist their patrons in finding government information in both tangible and digital collections. Additionally, LSCM distributes new tangible publications to the FDLP libraries.

The Superintendent of Documents also supervises a sales and distribution program offering current, high-interest Federal publications to the public. They also provide logistics and warehousing services for Federal customers distributing printed materials.

Building the Tools to Deliver on the Vision of an *America Informed*

As technology has evolved, GPO has updated its operations to keep pace. With the development of GPO's proprietary MicroComp composition engine in the 1980s, GPO got into the business of building tools that would later be incorporated into our customers' workflows. Soon after adoption by GPO, Congress incorporated MicroComp into its workflows in the House and Senate offices of Legislative Counsel and the legislative operations teams of the Clerk of the House and Secretary of the Senate. While MicroComp is still in use today, GPO is hard at work on its replacement, XPub, which will leverage several commercial and open-source technologies to produce a composition system worthy of the 21st century.

The current version of XPub is in the user acceptance testing phase with the House and Senate for congressional bills, resolutions, amendments, and public laws. When our customers adopt XPub, hopefully later this year, features will include integration with House and Senate XML authoring tools for bills and a new responsive HTML format for congressional bills and public laws.

GPO also works closely with the Clerk of the House, the Secretary of the Senate, the Library of Congress, and the Congressional Data Task Force to develop and enhance United States Legislative Markup (USLM), an XML standard in the Legislative Branch and a critical data format for XPub.

GPO's ISO-certified secure digital repository, GovInfo, is also a key technology for supporting our customers. The data in GovInfo supports many public and private sector databases, such as

Congress.gov, through open application programming interfaces (APIs). In FY 2023, there were 96 million average monthly information retrievals from GovInfo's collection of more than 2.3 million content packages—as we hit 1 billion annual retrievals for the first time ever.

Breaking Down GPO's Revenue

In fiscal year 2023, GPO's overall revenues totaled \$1,229.8 million. Of that amount, \$1,109 million—or about 90 percent—came from direct billings to our non-congressional customers. This category includes the Next Generation passports produced for the State Department and secure credentials produced for numerous Federal agencies, including the Capitol Police, government publications sales and distribution, and Federal print procurement contracts managed by GPO.

Another six percent—or \$69 million—came from billings to Congress for the provision of specific requested services, including the Congressional Record, congressional hearings, bills, resolutions, calendars, and other publications. Still another three percent—or \$36 million—came from appropriations we used to administer the Federal Depository Library Program and provide critical public information program services. And finally, the remaining one percent—or \$16 million—came from appropriations this Subcommittee provided to enable GPO to make critical information technology and cybersecurity investments for the future.

Some Key Accomplishments

In fiscal year 2023, our first full year of operations under our ambitious FY 2023–2027 Strategic Plan, GPO continued charting a new course for success in this digital age and achieved some notable successes:

Our GovInfo digital repository earned recertification to retain its status as the world's only ISO 16363 Trustworthy Digital Repository and hit a record of over 1.1 billion information retrievals in a single year—the first time we have ever topped 1 billion retrievals in a year.

Our Customer Services business unit awarded \$496 million in competitive contracts to private-sector printers nationwide supporting thousands of jobs in all 50 states.

Our Security & Intelligent Documents business unit produced a total of 21,889,000 Next Generation Passports for the U.S. Department of State, and another 6,547,000 secure card credentials for our Federal agency customers.

We closed 11 regional print procurement offices transitioning 58 customer service employees to remote work, saving \$1 million per year in rent and other costs.

We removed the antiquated Group 98 web presses that our new inkjet presses have rendered obsolete and initiated a state-of-the-art RTB-480 machine that fully automates the paper roll-to-book form conversions.

We produced the Final Report from the January 6th Committee and the latest report from the House Committee on Modernization with our new XPub composition engine.

Our Creative Services and Digital Media Team won four awards from Graphic Design USA for the high quality of their productions for Federal agency customers.

For the 2d consecutive year, we designed the logo for the United States Capitol Christmas tree, which came from Monongahela National Forest in West Virginia this year.

Our Plant Operations unit was honored by the In-Plant Printing and Mailing Association at their Annual Education Conference with the IPMA's 2023 Innovation and Best of Show Awards for their inkjet press work quality.

We had the privilege of producing the White House Holiday Greeting Card for the fourth consecutive year as well as producing "Holidays at the White House," a White House tour book.

We completed Supplement IV of the Annual Supplements to the United States Code via XPub.

And for the 27th consecutive year, GPO's independent outside auditor provided us with an unmodified, or clean, opinion on our annual financial statements.

GPO's FY 2025 Appropriations Request

GPO is requesting an increase in its FY 2025 appropriations to \$136,089,000, a \$4,090,000 increase over our FY 2024 appropriation. This increase will account for changes in our labor and raw materials costs and fund certain ongoing projects of importance to our congressional customers.

This would be GPO's only fourth proposed increase in appropriations since FY 2014 and is 7.7 percent less than our FY 2010 appropriation. Increased productivity through the adoption of new technologies has been key to keeping GPO's appropriations needs down, providing new and improved services at lower costs, and reducing overall headcounts. Currently, we have 1,622 GPO teammates, compared to 2,284 in FY 2010.

One tool we used to keep our appropriations requests low was to repurpose prior-year unexpended balances. We appreciate the willingness of this Subcommittee and the Full Committee to allow GPO to use those balances in support of programs and capital investments that benefit the original purpose of the appropriated funds.

However, as I have informed your predecessors in recent years, those balances are declining, forcing GPO to request additional funds if we are to continue our current pace of development and innovation.

Our FY 2025 request includes \$83,000,000 for congressional publishing, the same amount as our FY 2024 appropriation. It is based on our estimates of Congress' likely needs, informed by historical trends, available unexpended balances, and increased raw materials and labor costs. In constant dollar terms, it represents a 75 percent reduction for congressional publishing appropriations since FY 1980 and a 36 percent reduction since FY 2010.

Our request for our public information programs (PIP) account, through which we administer the nationwide Federal Depository Library Program, is \$41,664,000. This represents an increase of \$4,296,000—or 11.4 percent—over FY 2024, and will cover the costs of providing Federal Government publications in digital and tangible formats to 1,100 Federal depository libraries nationwide, cataloging and indexing, and distributing documents to recipients designated by law and international exchanges. Rising labor and compensation costs as well as increased materials

costs are the driving factors behind this increase in our FY 2025 PIP appropriation request. With this proposed increase, the PIP appropriation will be just 1.8 percent higher than the amount appropriated in FY 2010, but 29 percent lower in constant-dollar terms.

The final component of our overall appropriations request is for a total of \$11,425,000 for GPO's revolving fund to support capital investments and information technology upgrades, which is \$186,000 less than amounts appropriated in FY 2024.

This component of our request is critically important to ensuring that GPO can make the capital investments in equipment and technology needed to continue providing Congress and our Federal agency customers with the high level of service they expect. This appropriations request will be used to support two specific longstanding priority capital investment projects that will be familiar to the Subcommittee.

First, we are seeking direct appropriations support for our continued development of the XPub composition system, which is intended to replace our more than 40-year-old proprietary MicroComp composition system.

XPub is a transformational project for GPO. It will enable GPO and our customers to move to an all XML-composition workflow, simplifying authoring and production while also providing data in a format where it can easily be posted on the web, delivered to mobile devices, and repurposed into e-books, mobile web applications, or other forms of content delivery which contribute to openness and transparency in Government.

XPub is being deployed on a product-by-product basis. In FY 2019, GPO took a major step forward by publishing the 2018 Main Edition of the United States Code, a nearly 60,000-page publication, through XPub. Since then, GPO continues to work on bringing additional publications into XPub's production process, with a focus on congressional bills, resolutions, amendments, public laws, Statutes at Large, House and Senate calendars, the Congressional Record, and the Federal Register.

In FY 2022, GPO obtained the internal authority to operate for the upcoming production release of congressional bills and public laws. This release is currently being tested by our House and Senate customers and is slated to be in production with the House, Senate, and GPO Bill End during FY 2024. Features in this release include integration with House and Senate XML authoring tools for bills and a new responsive HTML format for congressional bills and public laws.

Prior to FY 2022, much of the initial development of XPub had been funded through the annual reprogramming of unexpended appropriations with the Subcommittee's support, but given GPO's mostly static appropriations requests in recent years, those prior-year funds have been largely expended. In recognition of the importance of the XPub project, the Subcommittee generously provided direct appropriations of \$3,370,000 in FY 2022, \$5,630,000 in FY 2023, and \$6,086,000 in FY 2024.

If approved, our \$5,975,000 appropriation request will keep XPub development and deployment on track in FY 2025. Once development is complete, we hope to provide XPub to our customers as a software-as-a-service (SAAS) application, ensuring that there is a dedicated stream of income to support continued development of the platform without the need for separate recurring appropriations.

The second component of GPO's request for increased capital investment appropriations in FY 2025 relates to the continued development of our peerless GovInfo online portal, the world's only ISO-certified trusted digital repository. In recent years, the Subcommittee directly appropriated funds to refresh GovInfo's infrastructure and further develop its content collections. This year's request of \$5,450,000 for GovInfo is \$75,000 more than the Subcommittee provided in FY 2024, and it would be divided between infrastructure investments (\$1,800,000) and development investments (\$3,650,000), including development required to support the digitization of historical content.

Investments in GovInfo support the distribution of much of the legislative data that supports the Library of Congress' Congress.gov site as well as the bulk data made available for other public uses. In addition, GovInfo helps keep the costs of administering the Federal Depository Library Program down by making hundreds of thousands of critical Government publications available online free of charge, obviating the need to print and distribute thousands of volumes annually.

With the Subcommittee's sustained support, GPO has been able to add hundreds of thousands of additional documents and publications to the GovInfo online repository each year—over 195,000 content packages were added in FY 2023—and the public's usage of GovInfo continues to grow, with more than 96 million retrievals per month from GovInfo in FY 2023.

GPO successfully completed its recertification to retain ISO certification as the world's only ISO-certified trusted digital repository. With this designation, end users can be comfortable knowing that information accessed via GovInfo is both safely secured and authentic, two invaluable attributes for government information.

Lastly, before I conclude, I want to add that, as required by section 1604(c) of the Legislative Branch Inspectors General Independence Act, we have forwarded our Inspector General's request for \$7,540,000 in budget authority for FY 2025 as part of our FY 2025 Budget Submission. Currently that request is funded as part of GPO's agency overhead—a component of the prices and rates GPO charges its agency customers and Congress—and not as a separate appropriation.

Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Fischer, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to present GPO's FY 2025 appropriations request, and for all the support you and your staff have extended to us during these challenging past two years. This completes my prepared statement, and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.