

**Testimony of the Honorable Karen H. Gibson
Sergeant at Arms and Doorkeeper of the Senate
before the
Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch
May 22, 2024**

Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Fischer, and members of the subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of the Sergeant at Arms' Fiscal Year 2025 budget request.

I want to thank the subcommittee for supporting our initiatives, which have allowed us to improve security, modernize operations and further enhance the services we provide to the Senate community.

Senate security is among my most important responsibilities. In the wake of increasing confrontations and demonstrations on and off-campus, our offices of Member Outreach and Security Coordination and Security Planning and Police Coordination have conducted extensive proactive outreach and education to Senate and committee offices, providing security awareness briefings for Senators and staff, advising on best practices for event planning, arranging security escorts during Members' domestic travel, coordinating with the Capitol Police to request local law enforcement support for events off Capitol grounds, streamlining coordination to address unwanted visitors or disruptive demonstration groups, and coordinating with the Capitol Police to conduct residential security assessments. In 2023, more than 4,200 requests for law enforcement assistance were addressed.

The Risk and Threat Management office works closely with the Capitol Police's Threat Analysis Section to identify and track hundreds of potential threats to Senators and pass timely information about potentially destabilizing events near Senate offices or near Senators' homes. We look forward to an even closer partnership once the Capitol Police stand up their Protective Intelligence Operations Center.

We are completing our second year of the Residential Security Support Program for home security improvements based on assessments conducted by the Capitol Police. The program covers the cost of equipment, installation, and monitoring services, and we are working with offices and the Capitol Police to provide additional security assessments at Members' homes. SAA staff have also worked with the Committee on Rules and Administration, the Architect of the Capitol (AOC), and the Capitol Police to install Proximity Card Readers in seven Senate personal offices, five committee offices, and two support offices. Additional requests are pending installation or design.

In response to lessons learned, the Senate Operations Center has streamlined and refined communication processes in conjunction with the Capitol Police to ensure rapid dissemination of critical information about emergencies and campus access issues, reducing the time that Members and staff must wait for instructions on actions to take in an emergency.

One of the most complicated software builds completed this Congress was the creation of an Emergency Preparedness (EP) Mobile Application for the entire Senate. This application makes emergency preparedness information available room by room, allowing a Senate staffer to find information about evacuation, sheltering in place, or internal relocation regardless of their location, whether in a committee space, an office, the cafeteria, or the Senate-side of the Capitol. This app and all its information remain available even if the network is down. This significant upgrade to the emergency preparedness tools in the Senate was made possible through collaboration between the Chief Information Officer organization and Office of Emergency Preparedness.

The Office of Emergency Preparedness also provides training to prepare Members and staff for emergencies. Last year, the Office conducted almost 250 training sessions for 2,900 staff. They have innovated their offerings to provide interactive courses on WebEx, allowing Senate staff to refresh their knowledge at any time. The Office also provides more detailed training for the Senate's 287 Office Emergency Coordinators and worked with them to update the Emergency Action Plans of 148 offices and 79 Continuity of Operation Plans. With the security of the entire Senate community in mind, the Office also trained over 40 members of the credentialed press on Capitol Hill emergency procedures and the use of escape hoods.

To improve security in over 420 state offices, the State Office Operations team worked with the Capitol Police and local law enforcement to provide security training at 43 Senators' state offices. Working closely with the Federal Protective Service (FPS), to date they have facilitated 89 state office facility security assessments and enrolled 37 Senators in a new program that allows them to request FPS Protective Security Officers at commercial state offices, a service previously only available in federal buildings.

State Office Operations also provided initial physical security enhancements and existing system upgrades for 167 offices and conducted more than 500 service calls to maintain, repair, test, and inspect state office physical security systems. At this time, 99% of state offices have adopted some level of SAA-recommended and funded security enhancements.

A significant uptick in disruptive demonstrations prompted development of a tip sheet outlining best practices for state offices. Utilizing the new State Office Demonstration Room, State Office Operations provided security training and consultations to more than 500 staff representing 83 Senators over the last year. We continue the rollout of a state office alert and notification service to monitor, evaluate, and distribute customized emergency notifications directly to Senators and staff across the country, informing Senate users over 125,000 times of severe weather incidents, civil unrest, and major crime events near Senate offices.

Finally, the State Office Operations team, the SAA Cabinet Shop, and the Chief Information Officer collaborated to create a lockable IT cabinet for safely storing state office IT and security equipment. These attractive cabinets improve office operations and aesthetics by masking noise and neatly securing Senate network equipment and wiring. The previous alternative to

this cabinet cost upwards of \$14,000 and took almost six weeks to construct. We built the new IT Security Cabinet in house and installed the first one in only four days!

To address persistent and increasingly significant cyber threats, our Chief Information Officer blocks, defends, and mitigates critical cyber events 24 hours a day. We have worked closely with the Capitol Police, the FBI, and other organizations in the cyber defense community to ensure the Senate receives early warning of penetration attempts, new indicators of compromise, and evolving adversary tactics. To improve the user experience while prioritizing security, in late 2025 we will move to a modern and centralized identity management system with single sign on to the network. Finally, in 2023, we successfully conducted the Senate's most comprehensive cybersecurity assessment ever, validating the success of our collective efforts. We plan to continue these assessments annually.

Of course, we also monitor traditional areas of risk. Senate Post Office staff screen mail for over 180 locations within the Capitol complex and last year safely processed and delivered more than 4.4 million incoming mail items while flagging nearly 800 suspicious mailings.

The SAA mission extends beyond security to include administrative and logistical support to the Senate community. I am proud of our efforts to improve and modernize those services as well.

One of the Chief Information Officer's most significant innovation projects is to migrate multiple stand-alone Senate services from old, legacy platforms to modern, integrated hubs. The first phase of this project migrates several services to ServiceNow, a hub for requesting IT support, tracking Help Desk tickets, submitting customer satisfaction surveys, and sharing IT knowledge base articles. We plan to expand ServiceNow by migrating three additional legacy systems to the hub: CAPFOR, which allows Members and staff to order items and services for their Capitol offices; TranSAAct, which allows offices to request many Sergeant at Arms services, review bills, link to frequently used websites, and log into other Senate applications without re-entering credentials; and Asset Manager, the Senate inventory system. When complete, this migration will eliminate a number of manual workflows, streamline asset management, and enable data-driven decisions.

The Senate Recording Studio has implemented closed captioning for all D.C.-based committee broadcasts and for some field hearings, enhancing accessibility by providing deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals with access to committee content. The Recording Studio also introduced the unofficial vote count tally displayed on the Senate floor channel, modernizing the broadcast of Senate proceedings. These improvements were made at the same time the studio broadcast more than 1,100 hours of Senate floor coverage and 613 hearings, while producing 481 TV studio shows and 755 radio shows. The Audio-Visual team also assisted with 801 events, and the Video Post-Production Department fulfilled 447 work requests, including 608 hours of editing.

In response to customer requests, Senate Photographic Services created a new photo browser, the Digital Media Hub, which provides a central location for offices' visual and media assets, including photos, videos, graphics, and audio files. It includes more than 1.4 million images and

videos and allows users to search through photos, order customizable prints, and upload and store all office photography in one place. Importantly, the Hub is compliant with Senate Archival and National Archiving best practices. Senate Photographic Services staff also covered 3,400 assignments, photographing more than 70,000 images and producing nearly 34,000 photo prints, a 35% increase over 2022.

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provides some of the SAA's most popular services. In 2023, almost 5,600 employees attended EAP training or participated in wellbeing activities, and more than 3,500 employees accessed resources for personalized information and referrals addressing childcare, parenting, adult care, aging, education, legal concerns, or financial issues. The EAP also offers LifeCare, which helps Senate staff find everything from childcare services to specialized kits for college-bound children, and from licensed care options for elderly parents to home repair services. EAP has hired an additional counselor to help address the growing demand for staff resilience support.

The Joint Office of Training and Development rolled out a Learning Center hub that allows staff to register for all classes offered in the Senate and access online training tools. The Learning Center also allows managers to assign specific training to staff members and ensure that Senate-required anti-harassment, cybersecurity, and ethics training is completed.

Printing, Graphics and Direct Mail (PGDM) is working with Senate office customers to transition to a digital editing tool, PageProof, which will streamline the editing process. PGDM is also working to enhance the flag ordering process for Senate offices and constituents through the Direct XPress storefront and a flag satellite office in Hart. Ninety offices currently utilize Direct Xpress, placing more than 5,300 online flag orders through the system.

The Senate Employment Office improved its services to Senate offices and job seekers with a new website, virtual information sessions, online resources, and an updated resume bank, which has grown from 1,100 registrants in 2020 to 5,500 in 2023. We will soon roll out an enhancement to the Job Advertisements in the Senate Employment Bulletin, which will provide unique job links for new job ads. Job seekers will be able to apply for positions in Senate offices through an automated collection process, and office staff will be able to search the applicant pool with a modern set of tools. The Senate Employment Bulletin will have a modern and dynamic look, and job seekers will be able to filter search criteria and set up email job alerts.

This year, the SAA established a new office for Program Management and Congressional Transition. The office is preparing for transition to the 119th Congress by updating transition materials for incoming Senators. We plan for early and consistent consultation with incoming and departing Senators, the Secretary of the Senate, the AOC, the Government Printing Office, and the General Services Administration to ensure a smooth transition for all parties.

We are also coordinating with partners across the Capitol, including the Secretary of the Senate, Capitol Police, and AOC, on our move out of the Postal Square Building and with the AOC and Senate Superintendent's office as we prepare to fully renovate Webster Hall in a way that does not interrupt services to the Page program.

Our Chief Financial Officer is overseeing implementation of the OneStream budget formulation application, which will be used to complete our annual budget and other critical business functions such as comprehensive financial reporting, salary forecasts, and expenditure tracking.

Our Financial Management team is also working closely with the Senate Financial Systems Program Office on an “eProcurement” project to migrate procurement related accounting functions from a custom application within the Financial Management Information System to an off-the-shelf software application within PeopleSoft.

Taken together, these two projects – one for budgeting and one for contract accounting – will enable the Senate PeopleSoft General Ledger to be a single source of entry ensuring data integrity and accurate reporting. This joint project between the Office of the Secretary and the Office of the Sergeant at Arms is an example of how well our two offices collaborate. Many thanks to Secretary Ann Berry and Mr. Dan Rubenstein with the Financial Systems Program Office for the collaboration that made this innovation possible.

We continue replacing aging audiovisual equipment and systems in Senate Hearing Rooms and are working with this Committee, the Committee on Rules and Administration, and the AOC to avoid equipment failure. We installed a self-service Postal kiosk in the Dirksen basement and expanded notary services to the Senate community. The Passport Office brought back “Passport Day on the Hill” and is currently hosting its second Global Entry/TSA PreCheck event on the Senate side of the Capitol.

These are not the only in-person activities to return to the Senate campus. We hosted representatives from 24 emergency response, emergency management, and related organizations in our National Preparedness Month Fair this year. In addition, our Wellness Fair saw record attendance, and 36 offices participated in the 2024 State Office Conference.

I am proud of our contributions to the U.S. Senate, many of which would not be possible without collaboration with partners, including the Secretary of the Senate, the AOC, Capitol Police, the Federal Protective Service, the General Services Administration, the Government Printing Office, our counterparts in the House of Representatives, local law enforcement agencies across the country, the Senate Financial System Program Office, and the Superintendent of the Senate. We have worked together to improve security and services for the Senate, and I look forward to continuing that work in the coming year.

For FY25, we request \$345,006,000 and 1,054 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) positions. This increase of \$34,189,000 and 17 positions includes \$199,544,000 in our five-year expense account, \$131,685,000 in our salary account, and \$7,500,000 in our no-year accounts to renovate hearing rooms and for the Senate Residential Security System Program, as well as \$6,277,000 in no-year funding to support the Stars of Valor Fellowships Program.

Senate resolutions adopted in the 117th Congress created the fellowship programs for wounded or disabled veterans and Gold Star family members, and the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration finalized regulations for the program in March of this year. The program will

provide 24-month, full-time fellowships in Senate offices across the country, with salary and benefits paid by the Sergeant at Arms. The fellowships are expected to provide first-hand experience for Gold Star family members and wounded or disabled veterans while allowing Senate offices to benefit from the fellows' expertise and resilience.

Out of the 17 additional positions we are requesting, four FTEs will support critical functions for the Chief Information Officer. Two positions will support the implementation of a Senate Intern Resource Office to share best practices for intern hiring, assist interns regarding their work environment, and promote awareness of internship opportunities in historically underrepresented communities. The remaining FTEs address additional needs in Capitol Operations, the Employee Assistance Program, Human Resources, Support Operations, the Executive Office, and the Office of Security, Emergency Preparedness and Continuity.

Our specific requests include a \$4,000,000 increase for cybersecurity. This money will go toward existing Governance, Risk and Compliance contracts, security operations, and audit contracts to fully implement a Risk Management Program. It will also fund cybersecurity tools to protect our supply chain, replace end-of-life-hardware, and cover recurring costs associated with implementing Zero Trust cybersecurity initiatives.

The SAA requests \$4,300,000 to purchase a Human Capital Management System that will streamline operations and automate business processes associated with workforce management. With over 1,000 employees to support, we have outgrown our piecemeal legacy systems and manual processes, which are both slow and prone to error, and must replace them with a modern system that integrates scheduling, time, attendance, leave tracking, payroll, overtime, and compliance.

Growing demands for data warehousing, long-term data retention, and file size growth (e.g., from digital media and database files) directly impacts storage capacity. Accounting for additional resources will be essential to meet the Senate's on-demand data storage needs. Accordingly, we request \$1,265,000 to support the increased growth of enterprise services offered to the Senate and increased resiliency and high availability within our secondary data center.

The widespread adoption of Microsoft 365 services, including Teams, OneDrive, and SharePoint Online, has increased the need for backup, archiving and export capabilities for these services when Senators depart. We must ensure these critical services are hosted on redundant and supported infrastructure with secure backup and request an additional \$1,051,000 to do so.

Our largest contract is for Senate IT support. With the projected award of a new contract for the Senate Help Desk IT support, we request \$1,500,000, to allow for a three-month transition period to ensure there is no impact on service to Senate offices.

We also request \$775,000 for the Economic Allocation Fund that supports software and hardware purchases by Senate offices and committees. This reflects higher prices for IT equipment and licenses requested by Senate offices.

We seek a \$3,077,000 increase for State offices to address rising federal rent and construction costs, to harden secure reception areas, and to improve state office readiness. A \$65,000 increase for Capitol Operations will allow us to design and build additional custom IT cabinets for state offices to safely house and secure Senate IT equipment.

Our recent migration to a standardized phone system across all state offices and DC requires a more robust Wide Area Network Maintenance Contract, so we request \$218,000 to support internet services and secure connections between the DC campus and all state offices.

In FY25, we request \$506,000 for an e-Gallery pass project, which will allow Senators to provide constituents with electronic passes for the Senate Galleries or for events such as swearing-in day at the beginning of each Congress. The e-Gallery pass will enable communication in real-time to passholders. For example, if a Senator was taking photographs with a student group who also had e-Gallery passes, an email to all pass holders could direct them to a change in location for the photograph.

We also request \$600,000 as one-time funding to support the 60th Inaugural Ceremonies. Funding will cover technical equipment such as large-scale video boards and development of event management and credentialing software utilized by the Joint Congressional Committee on Inaugural Ceremonies.

We seek \$400,000 to build an EAP app to make employee assistance accessible on mobile phones, \$120,000 for contract labor for surge support in the ID Office during the 119th Congressional ID renewal period and to replace end of lifecycle ID printers, a \$100,000 increase to reimburse the Capitol Police for expenses incurred when they support Congressional delegations abroad, and \$35,000 for a Page Program onboarding application to ensure efficient onboarding and to increase the security of sensitive personal information.

We remain dedicated to meeting the personal, physical, and cybersecurity needs of the Senate, as well as providing essential administrative and logistical support. We do so, seeking at all times to improve our effectiveness and customer satisfaction.

Thank you for your committed support of the Senate Sergeant at Arms and for the opportunity to discuss our accomplishments and our FY25 budget request.