

Statement of Mary B. Mazanec
Director, Congressional Research Service
before the
Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Fiscal 2013 Budget Request

March 1, 2012

Mr. Chairman, Senator Hoeven, and Members of the Subcommittee:

I want to begin by saying what an honor it is to have been appointed Director of the Congressional Research Service by Dr. Billington last December. This - my first presentation on the CRS budget before this subcommittee - is an opportunity for me to describe some of the accomplishments of the past fiscal year, plans for the future, and the truly unique work of the dedicated staff of CRS.

Support for Congress

Major world and national events and an active legislative agenda demanded much of CRS staff this past year. Despite significant staff reductions and cutbacks in other resources, I believe we were able to successfully accomplish our mission of providing objective and authoritative information and analysis of the issues before Congress. Let me outline briefly some of the major areas in which we provided support to Congress last year.

The state of the economy dominated much of the legislative agenda and will probably continue to be an overarching issue in 2012 and beyond. CRS policy analysts and economists analyzed options to provide economic stimulus, create jobs, assist the unemployed and reduce the deficit. We provided briefings and seminars on the sustainability of the debt and deficit, approaches to address the budget deficit and methods to stimulate economic expansion. CRS budget and congressional procedural experts produced a series of products on the operation of the Budget Control Act and its implications for agencies and programs.

CRS tracked and analyzed rules and regulations implementing financial reform legislation and provided legal analyses of aspects of the new financial regulatory structure. Analysts conducted several seminars on banking and financial intermediation and the basics of the financial system. Economists and policy experts analyzed the implications of the economic challenges facing the Euro zone countries for the U.S. economy and world financial stability. Reauthorization of the Export Import Bank and policies surrounding China's currency were issues of interest that will carry over into this session of Congress.

CRS foreign policy and military experts were called upon to analyze volatile and quickly changing events in the Middle East and North Africa. Egypt, Syria, Libya and other countries in the region have entered an era of rapid, dramatic and fundamental change with implications for the region as a whole and for the United States. CRS specialists also provided support on U.S. strategy in Afghanistan and Iraq, including governance and security issues following drawdown of U.S. presence in both countries. American involvement in NATO military operations in Libya raised questions of war powers and options facing the NATO-led coalition forces.

Reauthorization of the anti-terrorism tools in the USA Patriot Act prompted requests for legal and policy analyses of the scope of the government's law enforcement authorities in the national security context and the application of the state secrets privilege in litigation. Attorneys also analyzed the detainee provisions in the recently enacted National Defense Authorization Act. The debate over the FAA reauthorization saw CRS analysts addressing such issues as air traffic control modernization, fuel tax proposals and transportation security.

Several devastating natural disasters at home and abroad – from flooding and wildfires to the Japanese earthquake and tsunami - prompted congressional interest. CRS provided information and analysis on government disaster relief programs and the relief operations of the Army Corps of Engineers. Analysts also evaluated the implications of the Japanese nuclear incident for U.S. nuclear energy policy and the safety of nuclear reactors.

The Supreme Court will be ruling this term on the constitutionality of key provisions of the health care legislation as well as the authority of states to legislate in the area of immigration. Both of these controversial issues have been features of the legislative agenda for the past two Congresses and have occasioned legal analyses by CRS attorneys. The decisions are certain to generate much congressional interest and have implications for not only the operation of programs directly implicated but also for the scope of congressional power.

CRS legislative procedure experts completed a major revision of a Senate committee print on cloture. Last updated in 1985, the revision included much additional analysis and numerous case studies of the cloture process. Analysts and attorneys also supplied legal and historical analyses of the recess appointment power both preparatory to and in the wake of the president's recess appointments in January.

Many of the issues recounted above will continue to be of interest to the Senate and Congress in this session. CRS recently completed its annual legislative planning process for the second session of this Congress. We identified over 160 issues likely to be before Congress and organized our product line and web resources around those issues. We have been meeting with leadership offices to ensure that CRS is well positioned to support Congress' legislative agenda.

Our support for Congress spans the entire legislative agenda and our expert and multidisciplinary staff are ready to provide confidential tailored memoranda and personal briefings, more widely available CRS Reports for Congress, seminars and programs on the legislative process and topical issues, and information and advice in response to a phone call or e-mail. CRS is also making strides in providing access to its expertise and information via the technological tools that our clients rely on to do their work.

While we are operating under increased budget pressures in technology and research resources, we continue to enhance the functionality of our web site. CRS.gov is the gateway to all CRS analytical and informational resources, including our analysts and informational professionals. A useful and accessible web site is an efficient way to deliver CRS services and expose clients to all that CRS has to offer. This past year we have introduced customization capabilities which enable users to create accounts and tailor the information they would like to receive from CRS, get updates on new products, programs and changes to the web site, and facilitate their placing specific requests. We have also made it easier for users to focus more quickly on notable CRS products, featured topics that are dominating the legislative agenda, and to have access to basic data resources that complement the analytical content of CRS Reports.

We are currently in the process of examining more robust search capabilities and ways to make CRS subject matter experts more accessible to our clients. We have also enhanced the mobile web site and continue to explore ways to make CRS material more accessible on the variety of mobile devices that have become such an important part of the way Members and staff access information.

CRS is also repurposing the Senate Research Center (SRC) in the Russell Building into an education and outreach facility to better serve our clients. Members and their staff should find it more convenient to attend CRS seminars and briefings, and to meet with CRS experts in the SRC. CRS expects to begin offering an expanded list of events from the SRC in early spring 2012.

Fiscal 2013 Budget Request

The CRS budget request for fiscal 2013 is \$109.2 million, with almost 90 percent devoted to salary and benefits for our staff. CRS continues to operate at its lowest staff level in more than three decades and we lowered our hiring ceiling by 40 positions in fiscal 2012. The small percentage of non-pay expenditures is limited to basic support for research and analysis. This request is mindful of the difficult fiscal issues facing Congress and does not include funding for additional specialized technical skills and policy expertise that would be helpful in meeting the growing policy demands placed upon Congress.

Conclusion

I want to close by reiterating what an honor it is to have been named Director of CRS. I am aware of the great responsibility of the Service to provide objective and non-partisan assistance to Congress and I am committed to following in the footsteps of my distinguished predecessors. I believe that this mission of contributing to an informed national legislature is even more vital and important today as Congress is exposed to a flood of information from all sides and Members must sort through the myriad of voices that vie for their attention in order to make sound policy choices. I intend to ensure that the Congressional Research Service remains Congress' primary source for the analysis and information that it needs to perform its legislative functions and that we continue to explore new and innovative ways we can best serve – as shared staff – the committees of Congress, Members and their staffs. I thank you for your continuing support.