

Testimony of the Honorable Jennifer A. Hemingway
Sergeant at Arms and Doorkeeper of the Senate
before the
Senate Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch
May 14, 2025

Chairman Mullin, Ranking Member Heinrich, and members of the Subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of the Sergeant at Arms' (SAA) fiscal year (FY) 2026 budget request.

The Sergeant at Arms and Doorkeeper serves the Senate as its chief law enforcement and protocol officer and is responsible for a host of services in the Senate, including critical physical security, cybersecurity, emergency preparedness, and support services.

Earlier this year we supported three (3) National Special Security Events in 15 days: the January 6 Joint Session to Count Electoral Votes, the State Funeral for former President James Earl Carter, and the 60th Inaugural Ceremonies.

These events required effort across the Sergeant at Arms. From media credentialing to technical support to security planning to photography, every office in the Sergeant at Arms supported the Senate during these events while carrying out our day-to-day mission.

Our law enforcement work is a significant piece of our daily operations. In calendar year 2024, the office of the Sergeant at Arms addressed more than 5,700 requests for law enforcement assistance, including security escorts for Senators' domestic travel, advice for public events, and local law enforcement support. This was an increase of 35 percent (35%) over the previous year. We also prevented the delivery of more than 2,300 suspicious mailings that required further scrutiny by the Capitol Police.

Using authority and funding provided by this Committee since FY 2023, we have funded security equipment, monitoring services, and physical security improvements for Senators' homes through the Residential Security System Program. Participation in the program has increased from 17 percent (17%) in the first year to 40 percent (40%) this year, with 40 Senators participating as of May 5, 2025.

Thanks to the Appropriations Committee, we are able to provide the Privacy Bee data removal tool to Senators and their spouses upon request, too. This privacy tool helps participants blur their homes on Apple Maps and Google Street View as well as remove personal information from data broker websites, corporate databases, and many of the major junk mail lists. That makes it more difficult for bad actors to find specifics about Senators through a quick internet search. Privacy Bee also conducts vulnerability monitoring to determine whether a participant's personal information has been compromised through a hack or phishing scam.

In calendar year 2024, we conducted emergency training for more than 4,100 staff and more than

120 members of the press and, in response to the August 2, 2023, false active shooter threat, an SAA team led a working group to review and update our active shooter training. We worked with Senate offices to review their Emergency Action Plans and Continuity of Operation Plans. These reviews occur on a rolling, two-year basis, and in 2024 we helped update 123 Emergency Action Plans and 41 Continuity of Operation Plans. We also finalized the online Emergency Action Plan tool in May 2024, which includes room-specific evacuation routes, AED locations, and Emergency Staging Areas. This mobile app enables members of the Senate community to have this information in the palms of their hands, saving critical time in an emergency.

Of course, our security efforts extend beyond Washington, D.C. to more than 460 state offices across all 50 states. During calendar year 2024, we partnered with the Capitol Police and local law enforcement to provide security training at 82 state offices, reaching 313 staff. We provided hands-on security training and consultations to more than 230 staff representing 43 Senators in our State Office Demonstration Room here in Washington, D.C., too.

We provided physical security enhancements and system upgrades for 77 state offices and security systems. While 99 percent (99%) of state offices have adopted some level of SAA-recommended and funded security enhancements, I am hopeful that this year we can achieve 100 percent participation.

Working with the Federal Protective Service (FPS), we have conducted a total of 156 state office facility security assessments and have enrolled 56 Senators in our Temporary Armed Guard Service (TAGS) program through early May, 2025. TAGS allows Senators to request FPS Protective Security Officers at commercial state offices, and we deployed FPS officers at eight (8) state offices during calendar year 2024.

We continue to offer the AlertMedia emergency notification tool to Senators, their spouses, and staff at no cost to Senate offices. AlertMedia provides customized notifications to users about severe weather incidents, civil unrest, major crime, and other potentially impactful events. At this time, more than 700 individuals from 49 Senate offices use this service.

Further, we offer to provide satellite phones to Senators and their state offices for emergency communications. After Hurricane Helene caused record flooding across several states last fall, one State Director reported that satellite phones were the only mode of communication for a prolonged period of time, and having SAA-issued satellite phones allowed the Senator and his team to remain in contact with other Senate offices as well as state and local officials. Eighty-one (81) Senators utilize these phones.

Securing the Senate also involves cybersecurity. We have strengthened our cyber threat detection and response capabilities by hiring three (3) new security analysts to monitor and defend the Senate network as well as by adding a threat intelligence position in October 2023 that represents the Senate on the National Cyber Investigative Joint Task Force. The latter hire allows us to communicate about cyber threats in real-time with 20 law enforcement and intelligence agencies.

We have increased our efforts to make the Senate community aware of cybersecurity tactics and scams. Recent alerts to Senate staff have warned of current phishing lures and a focused smishing campaign; we also offer monthly briefings about cybersecurity topics, tips, and best practices.

We successfully completed our second large-scale cybersecurity assessment of the Senate network at the end of 2024 as well. That assessment made minimal recommendations, such as removing end of life operating systems and unsupported web browsers, as well as patching some third-party software. We have closed out a number of those recommendations and expect to have all of them closed by the end of calendar year 2025.

As I mentioned earlier, security is only part of our mission. Over the past several months, we have been focused on new Senator orientation and office transitions in D.C. and the states. In November, we joined the Secretary of the Senate in welcoming Senators-elect, their spouses, and their transition staff to Washington, D.C. We offered guidance about security, setting up state offices, and office equipment and technology. Since then, we have supported 14 outgoing and 14 incoming Senators' office building moves, assisted with the turnover of 36 state offices to new Senators, and continue to support Senate office and committee moves.

We welcomed our first Stars of Valor Fellow in March and, as of May 5, 2025, are actively recruiting for placements for eleven (11) Senators.

In addition, last year we refreshed the working space within the Chamber dais for the Legislative Clerks and Parliamentarian and built a new desk for Capitol Police and Senate Pages in the Senate tunnel. In calendar year 2024 we completed upgrades of end-of-life audio-visual equipment in the hearing rooms of this Committee, the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, the Committee on the Budget, the Committee on Rules and Administration, and the Committee on Veterans Affairs. We also upgraded our digital audio network to improve the audio feeds from all hearing rooms to the news media.

We completed the Otis payroll automation, which allows offices to submit payroll actions electronically; enhanced the electronic financial disclosure application; and built PILLARS, a seating application for the Inaugural Ceremonies. We revamped the *Senate Employment Bulletin* to make it simpler for job seekers to explore and apply for Senate vacancies and easier for Senate office staff to review the applicant pool.

We are on track to complete the migration of services from the TranSAAct application to ServiceNow during this fiscal year. This platform will make it easier for Senate offices to request a variety of SAA services, including phone support, Congressional IDs, and floor privileges.

Accessibility improvements remain a priority. We purchased two ADA-compliant shuttle buses that transport about 10,000 passengers each year. Members of my team have completed training to create accessible documents for Senate offices, and we provided QR codes to Senate committees that enable individuals with hearing impairments to access live captions of hearings on their personal devices.

Last year 84 Senate offices and 16 committees ordered more than 2,200 printed materials using Direct Xpress, our online order fulfillment service. We covered more than 3,000 photography assignments at the request of Senate offices, and offices ordered more than 31,000 photo prints from the Sergeant at Arms. We broadcast over 1,000 hours of Senate floor proceedings and 452 hearings. Our media galleries credentialed approximately 1,450 correspondents, for a total of almost 5,100 credentialed media.

In 2024, nearly 6,400 Senate employees attended training provided by the Employee Assistance Program or participated in well-being activities, and approximately 1,800 employees accessed resources addressing childcare, parenting, adult care, aging, education, legal concerns, or financial issues. Almost 200 individuals participated in our Passport Day earlier this year, and last year the Joint Office of Training and Development provided 65 custom trainings, facilitated 10 staff retreats, and hosted the State Staff Conference for 125 staff from 42 Senate offices. In addition, 990 staff attended our Wellness Fair, 129 participants donated blood at our blood drives, and 82 staff participated in health screenings. We also assisted staff with 69 vehicle lockouts, three (3) flat tire repairs, and 14 jump-starts in Senate parking lots.

To accommodate increasing requests for security assistance, rising state office rents, and higher equipment costs for Senate offices under a continuing resolution has required some belt tightening. To prioritize funding for projects and technology improvements that benefit our Senate customers, we have instituted a selective hiring freeze, will not provide merit raises or a cost-of-living increase and have canceled an internal-to-the-SAA human capital software management system. Because we are operating under a continuing resolution, a number of our requests for funding increases this year are renewed requests from our proposed FY 2025 budget. In addition, six (6) of our 13 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) position requests are renewed requests.

For FY 2026, we are requesting \$357,381,000, a \$46,564,000 increase over current funding.

Our request includes \$130,353,000 for salaries, \$14,478,000 over the enacted level. The increase includes \$3,822,000 for a cost-of-living adjustment, 9,393,000 for salary increases and other adjustments, and \$1,263,000 for new FTE positions. This will provide the Sergeant at Arms with a total of 1,050 authorized FTE positions.

Six (6) of the new positions will support SAA Support Operations: a financial analyst to provide long-range planning, budgeting, and project tracking; a technology system solutions specialist to research, evaluate, and test technologies for Printing, Graphics and Direct Mail; a logistics and operations specialist to support the flag ordering process; two digital and graphics designers to support Senate offices' digital media projects, e-Publications, and accessible PDF forms; and a program management specialist to monitor and communicate project statuses for the Program Management and Congressional Transition office. Four of these positions were requested in FY 2025; we have added a second digital and graphics designer and a program management specialist to our renewed requests.

The four (4) positions requested for the Office of Security, Emergency Preparedness and Continuity will serve the Senate community as parking specialists. These are new FTE requests for FY 2026.

Two (2) new positions will serve in the Executive and Staff Offices. We are renewing our FY 2025 request for a wellness technology and communications specialist to help identify and manage technology solutions for the Employee Assistance Program. We are making a new request for a program manager to support state offices with emergency planning, supply and equipment logistics, and event notifications. The position will also administer the Temporary Armed Guard Services program.

We are renewing our FY 2025 request for a continuity communications engineer within the office of the Chief Information Officer. This position will support the Senate's increasing communication capabilities and staff who have specialty communications devices like satellite phones and radios.

Our request includes \$216,528,000 in our five-year expense account, \$31,086,000 over the enacted level. The increase includes \$4,455,000 to account for rising costs and \$26,631,000 for improved security and services for the Senate community.

Within that request is \$9,552,000 for the Office of Security, Emergency Preparedness and Continuity, an increase of \$5,099,000 over the enacted level. This increase includes renewed requests from FY 2025 for \$120,000 to address higher rates for new vehicle leases as well as \$100,000 for costs associated with Capitol Police support for Congressional delegations. The Sergeant at Arms is required to reimburse Capitol Police for these expenditures, which have increased significantly in recent years.

Our request includes a new increase of \$800,000 for a mobile and web-based duress platform that will allow Senators to alert authorities if they feel threatened or unsafe. As with other security programs, use of this platform will be voluntary.

We request \$35,439,000 for the Executive and Staff Offices, an increase of \$4,872,000 over the enacted level. This increase includes renewed FY 2025 requests of \$1,032,000 for state office buildouts and tenant improvements that help secure Senators' state offices, and \$1,300,000 to pay rent for state offices in federal buildings and make leasehold improvements in federal spaces. It includes renewed requests of \$350,000 for AEDs and related supplies so we can transition from the post-9/11 emergency supply kits currently in state offices to a modern program that is able to scale and meet emerging requirements. We are also renewing our FY 2025 request for \$35,000 for an application to improve the onboarding process for Senate pages.

We requested \$395,000 for state office secure reception areas in FY 2025 but are updating that request to \$695,000 this year due to increasing construction costs and additional Senators adopting our recommended security enhancements. We could see some out-of-cycle construction due to the General Services Administration's planned closure of certain federal buildings housing Senate state offices, too. We also are requesting a new increase of \$725,000 to replace security equipment

in state offices. The work driven by this lifecycle replacement program will require the addition of two contract staff; funding for those contractors is included in this request.

We request \$150,894,000 for the Chief Information Officer, an increase of \$14,922,000 over the enacted level. The increase includes several renewed requests from FY 2025. We are renewing our request for an increase of \$1,500,000 to address the increasing costs of our cybersecurity contracts and update our cybersecurity risk assessment program. This funding will also provide the ability to mitigate potential cyber risks within our supply chain. In addition, we are renewing our request for an increase of \$1,500,000 for information technology (IT) support services. This will provide for a three-month transition period when we award a new contract for the Senate IT Help Desk and will help ensure there is no impact on service to Senate offices. We are renewing our requests for increases of \$1,265,000 to address Senate offices' growing demands for data warehousing, long-term data retention, and file size growth; \$1,051,000 for backup, archiving, and export capabilities associated with the widespread adoption of Microsoft Teams, OneDrive, and SharePoint Online; \$218,000 to improve internet services for state offices; \$250,000 for the e-Gallery Pass program, which will provide Senators with the option of issuing electronic Senate gallery passes to constituents; and \$50,000 to provide Privacy Bee to Senators and their spouses.

Our new requests for FY 2026 include an increase of \$2,550,000 to provide Microsoft Enterprise licenses for Senate offices. In January, we used \$2,550,000 in available appropriations to cover this cost for Senate offices for calendar year 2025. Offices spend an average of \$300 per user for this license, and the SAA covering this expense freed up an average of \$57,000 per office to fund other IT needs with their Economic Allocation Fund (EAF) monies.

Our related request for an increase of \$3,275,000 for the Economic Allocation Fund will further assist Senate offices with the cost of technology equipment and software licenses. In FY 2025, we had requested an increase of \$775,000 for the EAF, but we are increasing that request to help offices meet their technological needs.

In FY 2026 we also plan to begin our search for a data center location to strengthen the Senate's technology posture. The new data center will provide the added benefit of faster network speeds for state offices that may currently experience a delay on the Senate network because an office's geographic distance from a data center directly impacts lag time. While this is measured in milliseconds, some state offices do notice a delay. We will select a location that gives those offices faster access to the Senate's technology resources while strengthening the Senate network.

Our FY 2026 request includes \$11,620,000 for Capitol Operations, an increase of \$5,985,000 over the enacted level. We are renewing our FY 2025 request for \$65,000 to design and build custom IT cabinets for state offices. An SAA team collaborated to create these lockable cabinets, and this funding would allow us to improve state office operations and aesthetics with these cabinets that mask noise and neatly secure Senate equipment and wiring.

We are seeking a new increase of \$5,000,000 for renovations to the Senate Recording Studio, which broadcasts Senate floor proceedings and hearings and offers individual services to Senators.

This modernization will focus on replacing complex equipment that is near or past the end of its serviceable life in multiple rooms.

We also seek a new increase of \$750,000 for Capitol Operations to address an expected rise in framing orders from Senate offices. At the beginning of this Congress, in coordination with the Committee on Rules and Administration, we updated the Senate Frame Shop offerings for the first time in 20 years. We increased the number of molding finishes and mats available to offices and began to offer mat embossing and cutting. We have seen a 4.75 percent (4.75%) increase in orders over the same period of time during the 118th Congress, and the new orders are more complex because of our increased offerings.

Lastly, our request includes \$10,500,000 in no-year funds. We seek \$5,000,000 to continue replacing aging audiovisual equipment and systems in Senate hearing rooms. This is a renewed request from FY 2025. We request \$5,500,000 for a new State Office Operations Fund. The SAA currently spends \$1.2 million each month on rent for state office space in commercial buildings and \$650,000 each month on rent for state office space in federal buildings. Additionally, leasehold improvements for state offices in federal buildings are often delayed due to General Services Administration funding constraints and bandwidth, often beyond a Senator's term. We are requesting a State Office Operations Fund to ensure continuity of monthly rent payments for Senate state offices and for leasehold improvements in federal buildings. We envision this fund to be similar to the Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery fund that was established by this Committee in the Legislative Branch Appropriations Act, 2022.

We also request permission to expand the Residential Security System Program to provide residential security support for officers of the Senate, as defined in 2 U.S.C. § 4101(b), when prudent. Federal law authorizes the Capitol Police to provide personal protection for officers of the Congress when such protection is necessary,¹ and we recommend that the Residential Security System Program offer similar residential security support.

This budget will allow us to meet the security needs of the Senate and provide the services Senate offices have come to expect, while also addressing new and emerging needs.

Thank you for working with us on each of these endeavors and for the opportunity to discuss our accomplishments and FY 2026 budget request.

¹ 2 U.S.C. § 1966.