



**Chief Administrative Officer’s “Oversight of the Clerk, Sergeant at Arms, Chief Administrative Officer and Inspector General of the House of Representatives” Testimony**

**Testimony**

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**U.S. House of Representatives**

**Before the**

**Committee on House Administration**

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**Summary**

Mr. Chair and Members of the Committee: I am pleased to appear before you to discuss the variety of achievements and improved business practices of the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer. This testimony will highlight the dedication and hard work these 675 employees deliver every day. Among their many accomplishments, these fine men and women keep our computer networks safe, make our share of the Capitol campus a national model of sustainability and keep this institution’s financial records publically transparent and in order -- all while providing Members, Committees and staff outstanding support, customer service and successful transitions.

**House Information Resources**

In 2009, the Speaker issued broad instructions to improve the transparency and full disclosure of financial information to the public. On November 30, the CAO posted the third quarter Statement of Disbursements (SOD) on House.gov, the first SOD to be



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provided electronically. CAO staff also developed a comprehensive set of support materials, providing educational references about the SOD to staff, media and the general public.

The new electronic version has allowed us to reduce the printed copies of the SOD by approximately 220 sets. Additionally, as of October, all Member Offices and Committees can now receive their Monthly Financial Statements electronically. The electronic delivery mechanism saves staff time and resources as well as more than 85,000 sheets of paper each month.

Last summer, the Speaker and Republican Leader also directed my office to undertake a series of improvements in information systems security efforts. These improvements included enhancing a centralized patch management system that has closed almost three million vulnerabilities -- and improving the CAO's laptop and data encryption program to better protect mobile data from unauthorized access.

The CAO has further enhanced its security program by implementing a secure configuration management program. This program improves protection of the House computer network by validating that each computer, server and printer is compliant with House security policy and technical standards. Currently, 85 percent of Member Offices are participating in this program. In addition, the CAO improved security for the 8,500 BlackBerry devices in use at the House by instituting a password policy and scanning the devices before and after international travel to determine if changes have been made. In



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2010, these efforts will extend beyond the House campus with security awareness training for DC-based and District Office staff.

These enhancements have significantly improved the CAO's security posture against increasingly bold and sophisticated hackers and other malicious users.

In response to a January 2010 joint Leadership request to assess security for public-facing Web sites, the CAO developed additional security measures for Member and other House public Web sites. The public site plan will expand the number of available vendors and reduce the time required for development and publication of Web sites.

In addition to providing support for House Web sites, CAO has been centrally funding the acquisition of news and information services for Member and Committee use on the Web and in print. We have an initiative underway to identify and contract for a range of optional news and information services for Members and Committees to greatly enhance this offering. A project is also underway to support and improve House.gov, HouseNet and other Web sites, with the intention of making them better information resources for the public and House staff.

The infrastructure of House.gov has also been substantially improved, now able to withstand much higher demand by the general public, as evidenced by the optimal performance achieved during the recent health care debates.



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Enhancements have also been made for the main District Offices that, when fully implemented, will double the bandwidth to remote District Offices at no extra cost.

We are continuing to work on campus-wide wireless access. Wireless access is now available to House employees and guests in the Ford House Office Building conference rooms and the Longworth cafeteria (WiFi access is expected next month in the Rayburn cafeterias also). We anticipate installing as many as 760 wireless access points in Member and Committee offices over the next three years. These installations will make the current infrastructure more robust and accessible.

Last fall, CAO launched Employee Express, a convenient online system that allows staff to make changes to health insurance, Thrift Savings Plan (TSP), TSP Catch-Up and Combined Federal Campaign contributions. Employee Express is a self-service option that eliminates paper processing, making it a more accurate and sustainable method for benefits processing. The next phase of this program will allow new House staff to make their initial benefit elections through Employee Express.

FinMart Financial Reports, a new Web-based system allows offices to view and analyze financial and inventory reports as well as monthly payroll certifications. Information is available upon demand and can be downloaded and sorted in Excel. Training sessions for financial points of contact began in November through the House Learning Center.

The Member Centralized Services initiative consolidated the computer servers for 150 offices by the end of 2009, significantly reducing the energy and resources required



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for computer operations. In October, the House’s mainframe system was retired after more than 10 years of careful planning. This resulted in significant energy and efficiency savings.

Additionally the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer has: begun supporting iPhone devices, fully readied the House’s computer infrastructure to support the implementation of the Atlas project, entered the final stages of preparation for migrating Members and staff into Exchange 2007, developed a plan to support the technology needs of Members and their staffs through “Live Chat,” and provided over 160 offices a data storage solution through the House Hosted Services.

The Atlas project is on track to go live at the start of the fiscal year, October 2010. The new system will allow House offices to submit a purchase request or payment request online, attach supporting documentation and track the status of their submissions. They will also have access to real-time budget information through online inquiries. The new system supports business continuity and enhances greening efforts by reducing paper flow and providing remote access for transaction processing.

**Green the Capitol**

The CAO and the Architect of the Capitol have been working together toward the Speaker’s goal of making the House campus a model of sustainability and energy efficiency. Under the Green the Capitol program, the House seeks to reduce its energy consumption by 50 percent over a 10-year period. The program is exceeding the five percent annual goal of reducing House energy consumption. This effort, overseen by the



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Committee on House Administration, has positioned the House as a leader of sustainability within the Federal government.

Highlights of the Green the Capitol program over the past year include:

- The successful implementation of the My Green Office program, through which the CAO held Member and Committee Office consultations that have included over 5,000 House staff. So far, 404 green office consultations have been held -- on Capitol Hill and in the Districts -- focused on effective sustainability practices;
- The execution of the House Green Expo 2010, held two weeks ago, which highlighted the partnership between the CAO and AOC and attracted approximately 1,500 staffers interested in learning how they can be more green in the workplace;
- The decrease of the House's carbon emissions by more than 74 percent, achieved by purchasing renewable wind energy for the House's electricity needs and by burning natural gas rather than coal at the Capitol Power Plant;
- A House-wide effort to consolidate computer servers, resulting in a reduction in energy consumption in the main data center from 500 kWh per hour of electricity to 125 kWh per hour;
- The offering of a new computer server hosting service, which saves energy and money in Member Offices. It eliminates the need for in-office computer servers as their functions are transferred to high-capacity servers in the main data center.



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- The significant emphasis on increasing the amount of recycling and decreasing the amount of landfill-directed trash produced at the House, through staff education and working with the AOC to make sure all bins are clearly labeled. (In 2009, over 1,800 tons of paper and 46 tons of bottles and cans were recycled. Assets, Furnishings and Logistics now recycles a range of materials from sawdust and wood scraps to carpets and drapes. Several CAO offices are piloting a zero waste initiative and all CAO employees will be enlisted in an effort to eliminate waste by 90 percent or more by the end of 2010);
- The sale of only 100-percent post-consumer recycled content paper in the House Office Supply Store;
- Recent revision of procurement guidelines, supported by the Committee, to incorporate sustainability and life-cycle assessment into the procurement process;
- The opening of a new dry cleaning vendor, who was awarded a contract in December, and who uses green processes to dry clean clothes, eliminating the emission of toxic air pollutants used by most traditional dry cleaners;
- The use of a pulper to process food services waste (including all containers and utensils, which are fully-compostable) into compost-ready material. (More than 1,500 tons of waste has been turned into topsoil, some of which went into the recent landscape renovation outside the Ford House Office Building);
- A complete redesign of the Green the Capitol Web site, a portal through which the general public can become informed about how the House, and specifically the



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Member and Committee Offices, are committing to sustainability practices.

**Work/Life Benefits**

The CAO recently centralized Transit Benefits, which are no longer charged back to each individual office. Benefit enhancements currently under development include a Child Care Affordability Program and a Tuition Reimbursement and Professional Dues benefit.

Additionally, the CAO has continued to enhance the benefits for House staff by working with the Committee to increase both the annual and lifetime caps for the Student Loan Repayment Program. The House's student loan program now parallels the Executive Branch program with an annual cap of \$10,000 in benefits and a lifetime cap of \$60,000. In calendar year 2009, more than 3,000 House staff participated in the program.

The CAO recently worked with the AOC to renovate the outdoor play area at the House Child Care Center.

In June and July Member Offices participated in the 2009 House Compensation study, conducted by the CAO. A total of 199, or 45.1 percent, of the offices responded, representing an increase of 13.1 percent over the 2006 response rate.

In December 2009, the CAO also conducted the 2009 U.S. House of Representatives Benefits Satisfaction Survey, the results of which are being analyzed and used to develop appropriate action plans.





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The CAO also continues to run the annual Summer Enrichment Program, a service to employees of the House which allows their children insight into where their parents work and gives them a broader context for the significance of Washington, DC.

The CAO has selected an outside consultant to ensure that the organization is promoting a culture of diversity. After a thorough review of 35 proposals, the Ivy Planning Group has been selected to assist us in addressing this important initiative.

**Wounded Warrior Program**

Established by the CAO in February 2008, the House Wounded Warrior Program has funded 50 fellowships for the purpose of providing employment opportunities to wounded or disabled veterans who have served on active duty since September 11, 2001.

Since its inception, a total of 33 veterans have been hired, with two having already transitioned into full time positions in other government agencies. Currently two fellows are assigned to positions in Washington, DC, while the other 29 are located in Congressional offices nationwide. The remaining 19 unfilled fellowships have been assigned to Members and are in various stages of the staffing process.

Feedback from Members who have already placed veterans in this program has been overwhelmingly positive. The majority of these fellows are working as Veterans Caseworkers, interacting with veterans in the Districts and advocating on their behalf to the Department of Veterans Affairs and other agencies.



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The success of the Wounded Warrior Program is evidenced by the fact that there are currently five Congressional Members waiting to participate as fellowships are completed or become vacant -- and the list is growing.

### **Modernizing Our Hearing Rooms**

Since FY 2002, House committee rooms have been undergoing audio and video upgrades through the Committee room renovation program. In this digital age, Members and their constituents have come to expect higher broadcast and recording quality and digital archiving and distribution capabilities.

Fifteen committee rooms have been upgraded. The remaining five are currently in the design phase, with installation dates to be determined by the Chairs of the committees.

More recent accomplishments include:

- The completed installation of an audio sound reinforcement system for the Subcommittee on Defense Appropriations, Capitol H-405 hearing room;
- The completion of audio/video and multimedia system installation for the Committee on Armed Services, Rayburn 2118 hearing room. (The Armed Services main hearing room is the first standing Committee to received integrated individual touch-screen technology for Members).

Projects also underway include:



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- An audio system design for the HC-5 multipurpose meeting room in the Capitol, as requested by the Appropriations Committee, with a projected completion in late June 2010;
- The installation of audio/video system for the Subcommittee on Armed Services, Rayburn 2212 with a projected completion date of May 17, 2010. This hearing room is also designated for audience overflow for Armed Services main hearing room Rayburn 2118.

**Secure Mail Review**

On February 13, 2009, the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Capitol Security directed me to review the House secure mail program and policies and provide a summary of findings and recommendations. The CAO presented findings and recommendations in September of 2009. We have met with key stakeholders and are currently working to implement those recommendations that allow us to more efficiently and effectively serve the CAO’s customers without impacting the security of House mail.

**Demonstration Projects**

Last year, the CAO received initial funding for a series of energy conservation and sustainability projects. These projects include new ways of using energy more efficiently, generating electric power in a more sustainable manner and lowering the costs of existing renewable power systems. This program is being undertaken in cooperation with the AOC, Lawrence Berkeley National Lab and the Department of Energy. We



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received nearly 40 proposals to demonstrate innovative energy efficiency and conservation technologies on the House campus.

The importance of this program transcends the House’s need to acquire better energy-saving technologies. This initiative also directly supports American companies at the forefront of green technology. By allowing these companies to showcase their developing technologies on Capitol Hill, the visibility of their respective industries will increase, fueling green job creation – a priority for both the Speaker and the President.

Legislative Branch Appropriations has provided funding for these Energy Demonstration Projects, however this funding awaits authorization.

**House Food Service Programs**

A variety of actions have been taken within the House food service programs to provide top quality food and value to the entire House community. We worked with Restaurant Associates to create value meal packages. A number of tools have been used to keep staff informed of the value meal program including signage at the stations that are running specials, posting specials on the menu Web page, and using Twitter to communicate specials and value meals.

Several other value meal programs have been designed and are in the final stages of development. The CAO, in collaboration with Restaurant Associates, is now working on a timeline for their implementation.

**Transition Activities**



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We are undertaking a slightly different approach to the 112<sup>th</sup> Transition from previous Transitions. In past years the CAO waited until early in the calendar year of a transition to begin preparations. For the 112<sup>th</sup>, the CAO began as soon as the 111<sup>th</sup> was completed. Our new thought process is to make the Transition a normal part of everyday business and not a project that affects us at the end of the year every two years for a few months.

We are building partnerships with the CHA, AOC and other House Officers. Our goal is to improve Transition each time through communication, proper planning and solid processes.

Of particular note, the CAO is working with this Committee currently to greatly streamline Transition communications through the use of Web-based information modules intended to quickly provide Members and their staffs with the information they need, prioritized in order of importance. The resulting forms and paperwork will then be centrally processed through a new Transition Office, scheduled to open in October, 2010.

### **Payroll and Benefits**

The CAO's Office of Payroll and Benefits has instituted changes aimed at improving quality of service, operational efficiency and transaction accuracy.

The effectiveness of these changes is reflected in improved customer satisfaction numbers: from 77 percent a year ago to 92 percent today.

We have worked hard to improve external communications through the complete overhaul of all Payroll and Benefits information on HouseNet as well as through direct



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House Office outreach. All of the Payroll and Benefits content was revised and structured in a way that best serves all of the payroll points of contact within Member and Committee offices.

Additionally, several new customer-facing programs were launched, such as MyPaylinks (a Web site where employees can view their benefit information and make changes to their payroll profile) and Employee Express (a Web site where House staff can view and make changes to their benefits).

Internally, employees were encouraged to play a greater role in the effort to improve operations. One way this was accomplished was to stress the importance of training and to support employees through a variety of training classes.

**Closing Remarks**

Mr. Chairman, my testimony highlights the work being done by the talented employees of the Office of the CAO. I have submitted with this testimony our last semi-annual report to the Committee, which offers a greater level of detail on some of the topics contained herein. I’d be happy to answer any questions you might have.