

Testimony Related to the Establishment and Scope of the House Office of Talent Management, Formation of a Congressional Data Management Plan, and Creation of a Bicameral Memorandum of Understanding for the Co-Development of Legislative Branch Technology
Submitted by Aubrey Wilson and Taylor J. Swift of POPVOX Foundation for the House Appropriations Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch Fiscal Year 2025

Dear Chair Amodei, Ranking Member Espaillat, and Members of the House

Legislative Branch Appropriations Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. Our names are Aubrey Wilson and Taylor J. Swift, and we are both former House staff who continue to support Congressional modernization and operational innovation through our work at POPVOX Foundation. Although our backgrounds are from opposing sides of the political aisle, we submit this testimony jointly to humbly emphasize our support and encouragement of the nonpartisan work this subcommittee champions to boost Congressional capacity and operations. In particular, we submit three requests under the subcommittee's consideration:

- Establishment and Scope of the House Office of Talent Management,
- Formation of Congressional Data Management Plan, and
- Creation of a Bicameral Memorandum of Understanding for Co-Development of Legislative Branch Technology

Establishment of the House Office of Talent Management

One of the most important resources Congress has is the dedicated staff that come from every state and territory to serve their country in the Legislative branch. Over the last several years, this subcommittee has helped to create a House

that is substantially more modern, efficient, and operationally effective through impactful human resources initiatives such as the Chief Administrative Office's (CAO) creation of the Coach Program, House HR Hub, and House Intern Resource Office. These investments boost Congressional staff effectiveness, which, in turn, increase Members' ability to serve their constituents. We support the proposed creation of a House Office of Talent Management (OTM) within the CAO as an important continuation and expansion of these efforts.

A new OTM should be empowered with sufficient resources and a mandate to keep pace with practices developed in the private sector for data-driven workforce management – including but not limited to analyzing data and trends related to employee recruitment, turnover, background, economic class, geographic origin, etc. This focus on data would build on the important work this subcommittee made possible in 2022 with the House HR Hub that now provides information on payroll ranges, professional development, and management best practices. Building on this momentum, the OTM can be crafted into the next tool to support the House's workforce continuity and operational health.

The subcommittee must ensure that the OTM's mission is centered on data collection and providing resources to address data-driven insights to improve staff capacity and workforce health within the House. This will require funding for full-time OTM personnel to ensure the expertise required for the office to carry out its mission and support all Member offices in recruiting and retaining a vibrant and

talented workforce. For example, as a central repository of workforce recruitment, pipeline, and data retention (building off of the data collection practices piloted by the prior Office of Diversity and Inclusion) the OTM can identify weak points throughout the seven stages of an employee's lifecycle (attraction, recruitment, onboarding, retention, development, offboarding, and exit), propose interventions, and provide data-informed progress analysis. As the House expands its data collection and analysis, it is essential that employees are aware of what personal data they contribute and how that data is used. Beyond what is publicly accessible (such as data within the Statements of Disbursements) employees should be allowed to opt-out of providing additional data.

Formation of a Congressional Data Management Plan

With the emergence of commercially available large language models (LLMs) and generative artificial intelligence, the House has acted proactively to establish user guidance and a staff working group, placing it among the world's leading legislatures in responding to this emerging technology.¹ All Legislative branch entities play an essential role in the life cycle of legislative data. However, a comprehensive data map wholistically examining the lifecycle of legislative data does not exist, nor does a comprehensive data management plan ensuring all entities manage data in a uniform, secure, and responsible approach.

¹ Harris, Marci, and Aubrey Wilson. "Representative Bodies in the AI Era: Insights for Legislatures." *POPVOX Foundation*. January 2024, <https://www.popvox.org/ai-vol1>

The ongoing need for the institution to better manage its data illustrates the importance that the House take swift action to develop and adopt an institution-wide data management plan (DMP), including the creation of a Legislative branch-wide data map. As such, the chief information officer, chief technology officer, or equivalent personnel in each entity within the House of Representatives and Senate, the Library of Congress, Government Publishing Office, Congressional Budget Office, and Government Accountability Office should be required to organize and participate in a working group to coordinate the creation of a DMP.

Creation of a Bicameral Memorandum of Understanding for Co-Development of Legislative Branch Technology

Standardizing Congressional data access takes two chambers to accomplish, as do many Congressional modernization goals. Over the last decade, both chambers have invested significant time and resources into the internal development of bespoke tools to modernize and streamline operations in response to both continuity challenges and Member demands.

Recent noteworthy examples of innovation and invention include the House Clerk's years-long development and launch of the Comparative Print Suite in October 2022, the Senate Sergeant at Arms's creation and continued refinement of the e-signature platform *Quill* in 2020, and both chambers' independent investment and development of next generation (but separate) lobbying disclosure portals. However, as these bespoke tools have been developed in one chamber or the other,

access and utilization of the technology for the other chamber has been a continual challenge, requiring negotiation to expand access or pursue customization.

Similar to efforts that should be undertaken to craft a Legislative branch DMP and data map, **the CAO, Clerk, and Senate Sergeant at Arms should develop a working group to explore the creation of a bicameral memorandum of understanding (MOU) for the two chambers to be able to work together on co-development of future bespoke tools** that aid Congressional capacity, continuity, and customer service to the American people.²

The attention of this subcommittee to the needs of the Congressional workforce, the investment in modern technology, and the institution's agility in responding to emerging technologies is worthy of recognition. The modernization progress made over recent years is creating a House that we are proud to have served in and continue to support. The creation of a data-empowered OTM, a House DMP, and an MOU to allow the utilization of technology across the chambers are echoes of a larger legacy this subcommittee is cementing. It is a legacy that will boost Congressional capacity and effectiveness for generations to come.

We thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony and stand ready to continue to support your work in the months ahead.

² We recommend the working group be formed within thirty days of the issuance of the Legislative Branch Appropriation Subcommittee bill report and shall provide bimonthly reports to Appropriators, the House Committee on Administration, the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration, and to the public concerning the progress of the working group, including the creation of a pilot program.