

Office of the Sergeant at Arms
Statement of Mr. William P. McFarland
Acting Sergeant at Arms
U.S. House of Representatives
Before
Committee on House Administration
Looking Ahead Series: House Sergeant at Arms Strategic Plan for the 118th Congress

Good morning Chairman Steil, Ranking Member Morelle, and Members of this Committee. I appreciate the invitation to appear before you today and present the Office of the Sergeant at Arms Strategic Plan for the 118th Congress, a topic I happen to be very passionate about. It's truly an honor to sit in front of you today.

As this is my first time testifying before this Committee, I feel compelled to share my journey to this seat and at the same time, highlight how lessons from my journey are reflected in the Strategic Plan our office has put in front of you. I began my career on Capitol Hill 32 years ago, starting as a security aide for the U.S. Capitol Police. As many of us have experienced, my first days on the Hill were filled with excitement and apprehension. Throughout those 32 years, I worked my way up, gaining experience, learning new skills and taking on increasingly challenging roles. Throughout that time, I met and learned from many great colleagues and mentors. I also learned some hard lessons along the way, but I was ultimately able to learn from my mistakes and grow from each of those experiences.

Today, I am proud to be seated here, representing our office, and I believe that my journey from being a staffer to sitting in this seat as the Acting Sergeant at Arms is a testament to the values that we hold dear and are represented in our Strategic Plan. I also believe that my story is not unique, and that there are many others within our organization who have similar journeys to share, all of which are ongoing. In fact, I know some of the Members of this very Committee have similar stories as well, having started their Capitol Hill journey as an intern for a Member office and ultimately working their way up to become a Member of Congress. I say this not to compare myself to the Members of the Committee, but rather to show how journeys that start in humble beginnings, with the right mentoring, training, and support, can grow into roles with greater responsibility. I am committed to providing my team with those same opportunities.

In the development of our Strategic Plan, we recognized that our employees are the key to delivering exceptional patron experiences and achieving our organizational goals. As a mentor of mine once stated, I can fail on my own, but success requires the commitment and skills of the full team working together to fulfill our mission. I remain available to my team to listen and assist in any way possible.

As I have said before, the employees of the Sergeant at Arms are its most valuable resource. And they deserve the strategic direction, mission, goals, and shared values to help guide them.

Upon my swearing in as Acting Sergeant at Arms on January 7, I have focused the efforts of my office on the mission of providing high quality, patron-serving, nonpartisan services to improve the safety of Members and their families wherever they may be, and that the Capitol Complex and district offices are safe and secure to Members, spouses, staff, and visitors from across the country.

To shape the future of our organization and refocus our energies on the critical mission the Office of the Sergeant at Arms provides, I asked our team to initiate a strategic planning effort in February 2023 to help guide our long-term and short-term efforts to produce the best results for the House community.

While the core planning team consisted of leaders from our Immediate office and each of our divisions, we made it a priority to incorporate ideas and inputs from our more than 170 team members. Rather than producing a vision that is printed and sits on a shelf, this is a vision that has been created with an open door and input from across the team. Throughout the development process we conducted brainstorming sessions, walked around and talked with staff and conducted organization-wide surveys. As I noted, we recognize that the people of the Sergeant at Arms are at the core of our ability to serve the Congressional Community and made sure their voice was included. I am proud of the contributions our staff made to help develop this Strategic Plan and I am pleased with the quality and thought-provoking contributions they brought to the table. One of those contributors is Mr. Torey McNeil who's sitting behind me today. I invited Torey as recognition for his contribution and work. I appreciate the overwhelming support from staff on our team and thank them all for their work. I would like to especially say thanks to my Leadership team for their tireless efforts and highlight Mr. Torey McNeil as well as Mr. Kevin Grubbs, Ms. Maria Lohmeyer and Ms. Davita Jones for going above and beyond.

In addition to ensuring our personnel's voice was incorporated, I would like to highlight some of the major changes to our new Strategic Plan:

- The revised plan acknowledges the need for our organization to remain agile and adapt to the changing needs of Congress. Subsequently, we have shifted from a five-year strategic plan model to a plan that aligns with the current Congressional calendar and carries us through the 118th Congress.
- We defined a Guiding Principle for the SAA Leadership Team to hold leaders within the organization to a higher standard. That principle states that we believe in investing in our people through training, development, and empowerment, as we recognize that our employees are the key to delivering exceptional patron experiences and achieving our organizational goals. We are equally patron-centric and strive to understand and serve the needs of our patrons through high-quality services and support.
- We also redefined our mission, vision and organization values to emphasize the importance of Sergeant at Arms personnel, service to the Congressional Community, accountability, transparency and to incorporate the office's security oversight mission.

To share more about the plan, I would like to start by presenting the values that the employees of the Sergeant at Arms will embody:

- **Absolute Integrity:** Commit to always doing the right thing, demonstrate unwavering honesty, and hold yourself and each other accountable.
- **Deep Collaboration:** Work together, value diverse perspectives and expertise to drive meaningful change and create innovative solutions.
- **Vigilant Reliability and Agility:** Consistently deliver high-quality services while remaining vigilant, adaptable and responsive to changing circumstances.
- **Thoughtful Transparency:** Value openness and honesty in communication with thoughtfulness to appropriate confidentiality.

As we move forward, I've asked each Sergeant at Arms team member to intentionally live out our values daily as we pursue our vision of being a top-quality organization respected by Congressional leadership, staff, and our patron community for high standards of excellence in

delivering a safe and secure environment; an informed and dignified patron experience; and a dedicated, well-trained, and engaging staff.

The goals within our Strategic Plan reflect our pursuit of this vision. We've identified goals aligned to four themes; our People goal centered on the employees of the SAA; our Patron goal highlighting the people our organization serves, including Members, staff, visitors and other stakeholders; our Ingenuity goal which highlights initiatives on modernization; and our Accountability and Oversight goal which highlights our focus on accountability and refocusing our security and safety governance and oversight efforts. We have also identified key objectives to structure our pursuit of these four goals.

- **People Goal:** Create a people first culture that fosters trust, inspires ownership, improves retention and invests in a professional, skilled, respected, and diverse workforce.
 - Employee Engagement: Implement an employee engagement program, centered on providing employees with a voice, improving transparency and increasing recognition.
 - Development & Investment: Establish, invest in, and socialize an intentional employee development and performance management program, to support personal and professional growth.
 - Evaluate Employee Expectations & Standards: Evaluate, update, and socialize employee expectations and standards of conduct to ensure Sergeant at Arms staff are positioned to provide the highest level of service.
 - Career Path Transparency: Clarify division organizational charts and develop written expectations for career path development.
- **Patron Goal:** Implement initiatives to build strong relationships, foster trust and create a safe, secure and positive patron experience through exceptional service.
 - Survey: Implement regular customer feedback surveys to identify opportunities to increase customer service, improve quality, and availability for Members and staff and measure progress.
 - Continue Enhancing Security & Safety: Evaluate, refine, and provide a list of priorities to relevant oversight committees to enhance the security and emergency preparedness of the Capitol campus, District offices, and Member residences for the House community, Members, staff, and visitors.

- Customer Engagement: Develop an initiative to identify new (i.e. Sergeant at Arms Services Center in LHOB) and increase use of existing (i.e. Sergeant at Arms website) methods to communicate and engage with the Congressional Community in a transparent and non-partisan manner.
- Customer Service Expectations: Conduct a needs analysis, develop, and socialize customer service expectations, measurement criteria and associated training for each Sergeant at Arms division.
- **Ingenuity Goal**: Explore opportunities to leverage technology and implement streamlined, innovative, modern and adaptive operational processes for Sergeant at Arms employees, Members, congressional staff and visitors.
 - Visitor Experience: Evaluate the visitor experience and identify opportunities to modernize processes including the badging system and increasing awareness of building densities while ensuring Americans can safely and securely engage with Congress.
 - Leverage Best Practices: Evaluate Sergeant at Arms operations against House Officers, Senate counterparts, other public, private and industry partners to identify key, cost effective priorities for enhancement and opportunities to leverage technology.
 - Recruitment: Assess and implement enhancements to the Sergeant at Arms recruitment process to streamline and improve the organization's ability to attract and retain top talent.
- **Accountability & Oversight Goal**: Implement intentional initiatives to strengthen the culture of accountability and refocus on oversight of safety and security operations.
 - Organization Values: Revise organizational values and vision to emphasize accountability and the office's oversight mission, educate staff on revised values and incorporate value alignment in employee evaluations.
 - Semi-Annual Report: Assess and update the semi-annual report and other committee report criteria and measures to ensure alignment with the strategic plan, transparency, and accountability in the reporting of Sergeant at Arms actions, responsibilities, and closure of security recommendations.

In closing, I would also like to share my commitment to collaboration. We believe that dialogue and collaboration is not just about sharing information, but also about actively seeking input and feedback from all stakeholders, including this Committee. We also believe that collaboration requires a willingness to listen and learn from others. We recognize that this Committee brings unique knowledge and expertise to the table, and we are eager to learn from your insights and experiences.

By working together in a spirit of collaboration, we believe that we can achieve better outcomes for our patrons, our partners, and our visitors. Thank you again for the opportunity to discuss our strategic plan and the future of our organization. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.