

LISA P. GRANT
DEPUTY CLERK

Office of the Clerk
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-6601

October 13, 2023

The Honorable Bryan Steil
Chairman
Committee on House Administration
1309 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Joe Morelle
Ranking Member
Committee on House Administration
1216 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Steil and Ranking Member Morelle,

Pursuant to Section 502 of House Resolution 756 from the 116th Congress, I am submitting this quarterly report about the Comparative Print Suite.

As the Committee is aware, the Comparative Print Suite is a set of applications that enables House staff to produce comparative prints showing how proposed legislation may amend law and how a bill, resolution, or amendment changes from one version to another. My staff in Legislative Computer Systems (LCS), in partnership with the House Office of the Legislative Counsel (HOLC) and our contractors, lead the project team.

Product Support and Training

As shared in previous reports, the Comparative Print Suite at compare.house.gov was released Housewide in October 2022 following a Committee pilot group phase. Support calls have been minimal, and feedback on the Suite and the training course continues to be positive. Recent comments received from House users include “this tool is game-changing,” “[the Representative] loves seeing the changes to the U.S. Code,” and “it has helped me as a staffer to compare bills that have similar effects.”

All House staff have access to the Basic Edition, which includes the Bill to Bill Differences and Bill Viewer tools. Users must take the required online, on-demand course, available at the

Congressional Staff Academy (CSA) to have access to the Advanced Edition, which includes two versions of the How a Bill Changes Current Law tool as well as the ability to upload files to generate comparative print reports.

According to the CSA, since the October 2022 release 224 individuals have completed the course. The course is now a year old, and we will work with HOLC and CSA to update and refresh it based on user feedback and the knowledge we have gained. We expect this work to start in the first quarter of 2024.

As of September 29, 2023, 319 individuals in the House, including new users, original pilot group users, and Law Revision Counsel, Clerk, and Chief Administrative Officer staff have advanced user access to the Suite. All HOLC staff (86 individuals as of September 30) have access to the Advanced Drafter Edition, a special role implemented since the last report that allows them to be early adopters of features before Housewide release.

Stakeholder Engagement

The Office of the Clerk and HOLC released e-Dear Colleagues about the Suite on December 21, 2022, and April 4, 2023. CSA has highlighted the online, on-demand course in its weekly newsletters. On September 18, 2023, we held an open house in the CSA classrooms to answer users' questions and to build awareness of the tool. During this open house, we distributed 80 flyers about the Suite. A second open house will be scheduled soon as we continue to look for ways to reach out to the House community to promote the Suite and its effective use.

Product Updates and Releases

The product team and the vendor continue to work on backlog items that will be included in future releases. As previously reported, Clerk staff, working alongside our vendor partners, have implemented a fully agile software development process using a two-week cadence or "sprint" to design, build, test, and deliver new features, fix defects, and make other incremental updates. We made nine release updates to the Suite during the second and third quarters of 2023.

Since the last report, we have added a feature to the Advanced Drafter Edition that shows how an amendment changes a bill or resolution and an enhancement to Bill to Bill Differences that allows for isolated comparisons of larger texts. HOLC staff are actively using these features. As early adopters, their feedback has helped the product team make refinements and determine that these additions should be released to advanced users only. We will release these features soon, email advanced users about how to use them, and invite them to join us at the yet-to-be-scheduled open house mentioned above.

Additionally, in order to better manage user access, an upcoming release will require all House staff to log in to the application. An e-Dear Colleague and a notice posted on the landing page will alert users to this change.

As reported in the past, Senate staff continue to request access to the Suite, and we have ongoing discussions internally and with our House and Senate technology partners about how to best enable such access. LCS staff have discussed with the Senate the need to make the XML file available to Senate staff, particularly when the legislative proposal has not been published by

GPO. We understand that the offices of the Secretary of the Senate and the Senate Legislative Counsel and others are discussing this matter, and we will continue to update the Committee on these discussions.

Pilot Group

Pilot group users outside the House—the Congressional Budget Office, Library of Congress (LOC), and Joint Committee on Taxation—use an instance of the application managed and located in the vendor’s cloud environment. This instance mirrors the Clerk’s production environment and follows its release and update schedule. All Legislative Analysis Services staff from the Congressional Research Service, as well as others from LOC, have access to the tool. There are approximately 125 individuals who access the vendor’s cloud environment.

Procurement

Since the last report, fiscal year 2023 appropriated funds for this project were obligated and are in use.

Finally, unless otherwise directed, we will send the next report on or before April 15, 2024. If you or others on the Committee have questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Kevin F. McCumber
Acting Clerk of the House

cc: The Honorable Mark Amodei, Chairman, Legislative Branch Appropriations
Subcommittee
The Honorable Adriano Espaillat, Ranking Member, Legislative Branch Appropriations
Subcommittee