

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 501 of House Resolution 756 from the 116th Congress, I am submitting this report on adopting standardized formats for legislative documents.

As reported previously, legislative branch staff are working on the next phase of the “More Documents in USLM” roadmap (included below), entitled “Remaining bill/resolution versions.” The Government Publishing Office (GPO) leads this effort with representatives from the Office of the Clerk, the Secretary of the Senate, and the Library of Congress, along with the contractor who performs the modeling activities.

Since November 8, 2021, the project team has met regularly to create USLM data standards for the remaining bill and resolution versions. To date, the contractor has completed initial modeling for most major bill versions. On September 28, 2022, the first set of samples of the new USLM was made available to the public on GPO’s USLM GitHub repository.<sup>1</sup> In June 2023, a second set of USLM samples was made available to the core USLM Team and included enhancements on bill versions as well as samples of Engrossed Amendments. These samples will be made available to the public on the repository soon. We anticipate that the modeling of the remaining

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<sup>1</sup> <https://github.com/usgpo/uslm/tree/proposed/bill-version-samples>.

bill versions will be completed this fiscal year along with a more robust set of USLM sample files.

*Roadmap for Publishing Legislative Documents in USLM XML Format<sup>2</sup>*

Completed	U.S. Code
Completed	Enrolled bills, public laws, and the Statutes at Large
Completed	HOLC/SOLC statute compilations
IN PROGRESS	Remaining bill/resolution versions (introduced, reported, engrossed, all amendments, et. al.)
C	Committee Reports
D	House portions of the <i>Congressional Record</i> , including the <i>Daily Digest</i>
E	Hearing Records
F	House Calendar
G	<i>Precedents of the U.S. House of Representatives</i>
H	<i>House Journal</i>

One central goal of this stage of the roadmap is to ensure that the modeled USLM XML is conducive to interoperability within the legislative ecosystem and considers the editing and publishing needs of all legislative organizations.

As mentioned in previous reports, there is a cross-organizational set of systems that utilizes the USLM schema. Each project builds upon the tools and successes of previous projects. The Legislative Branch XML Working Group, in consultation with the Congressional Data Task Force, continues to analyze and recommend next steps that build on the work that has already been accomplished. As with any data standardization efforts, interoperability is a key goal, and project work must address any potential impacts on documents and systems used within the legislative branch. Recently, the XML Working Group discussed expanding the roadmap to include additional activities. We expect to complete a more extensive roadmap soon.

Below I have provided brief updates on some of the current projects using the USLM schema.

- **GPO’s XPub Program and Related Items:** GPO’s XPub Program is replacing its aging and proprietary MicroComp composition system and associated applications—a major initiative in furthering GPO’s transformation to an all-digital, all-XML workflow. GPO is nearing completion of a production release to bring bills, resolutions, amendments, and

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<sup>2</sup> For more information about this roadmap, please see page four of the initial report at <https://cha.house.gov/modernization-reports>.

public laws into XPub production later this year and to work closely with House and Senate users and stakeholders (including the Office of the Clerk and Secretary of the Senate, as well as the Legislative Counsels and Committees in both chambers). Key to this production release is ensuring that XPub is fully and seamlessly integrated with the XML editors the House and Senate use to draft legislation, commonly called XMetaL and LEXA. Since the last report, GPO has delivered iterative releases for additional User Acceptance Testing, reflecting typographical improvements and performance enhancements. As part of the lead-up to the release, GPO provided a proposed responsive HTML format for bills and public laws for public comment. This format will replace the plain text file GPO currently provides. Optimized for any device (including mobile devices, tablets, desktops, and laptops), the format uses modern, easy-to-read fonts for screen usage and search engines. It also contains metadata for re-use by data providers. GPO highlighted this new format at various Congressional Data Task Force meetings and provided samples of these files for download via its XPub GitHub repository.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, in alignment with recent recommendation from the Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress that GPO create and offer a standardized process for automating Committee hearing records, the vision is to enable Committees to compile hearing documents and reports using Microsoft Word and to simultaneously publish hearings and reports in print-ready PDF, HTML5, and USLM XML formats. This step would allow Committees to customize the design of hearings and reports to take full advantage of color, graphics, and typography for print and online editions.

- **Office of Law Revision Counsel’s Modernization Projects:** The Office of Law Revision Counsel (OLRC) is engaged in maintenance and enhancement work to improve the Hammurabi system for bill drafting, the ClassAct system for new law classification, and the Coda system for editing the U.S. Code. OLRC is striving to eliminate performance issues and develop new features to ensure tools for editing and improving the U.S. Code use the latest version of USLM. Additional details about these projects and our collaborative work are available in Law Revision Counsel Ralph Seep’s March 28, 2023, statement before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch. Additionally, the Working Group is working with OLRC as OLRC prepares to publish the U.S. Code in USLM 2.0.12 later this year. House Digital Services is also working with OLRC to move the ClassAct system from the vendor-supplied environment to in House, similar to the work LCS is doing with a key component of the Comparative Print Suite, as the vendor on this work is the same.
- **Editing in XML:** As described in previous reports, the House and Senate use XML editors with a generation one schema that was implemented 25 years ago to draft legislation in a common data format. It is time to review what the House needs now and in the future for drafting tools and related items. As you know, Clerk, House Office of the

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.govinfo.gov/features/bdtf-meeting-march-2022>.

Legislative Counsel, and GPO staff met with the Members of the Subcommittee on Modernization on September 13, 2023, to discuss needs and challenges for bill drafting, processing, and publishing. We reiterated our request to use funds from the fiscal year 2023 Modernization Initiatives Account to work with vendor partners to develop a project vision and plan that includes user discovery, a market review, and a feasibility study of available tools and approaches for improving legislative drafting and the collaborative work required. Outsourcing this work will reduce the impact on existing Clerk projects, and we will ensure that all deliverables conform to House standards and our long-term goals of developing tools that support the legislative process. We look forward to working with the Committee on our funding request.

### **Status of the USLM Schema**

Below is an update on work related to the USLM schema that the XML Working Group and relevant stakeholders agreed to by consensus during a March 20, 2023, meeting:

- In June 2023, the Draft label was removed from all versions of the USLM schema in the Main branch in GPO's USLM GitHub repository.<sup>4</sup> As of September 2023, the current version of the USLM schema is 2.0.12.
- USLM XML files created as a result of transformations from legacy file formats will continue to carry the Beta label.

The XML Working Group manages the schema under the following guidelines.

- When changes are made to the schema as a result of ongoing XML modeling activities or other proposals, new point releases will be made available on GovInfo and in the Proposed branch of the USLM GitHub repository.
- Upon approval from the XML Working Group, USLM schema files in the USLM GitHub repository Proposed branch will be moved into the Main branch.
- Updates to the User Guide and other supporting materials in the USLM GitHub repository will be made as needed.
- As in the past, every effort will be made not to create breaking changes. If a breaking change is deemed necessary, the first digit in the version number will be incremented, and appropriate documentation will be created to describe the differences.
- All adopted versions of the schema will continue to be made available on GovInfo and in the USLM GitHub repository.
- USLM XML files may validate against any of the adopted schema versions.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://github.com/usgpo/uslm>.

### **Availability of Senate and House XML Formatted Files**

As the Committee knows, bills and resolutions formatted in XML are important to the legislative process in both chambers. The XML format is rooted in section 314 of Public Law 104-197 (2 U.S.C. 181), as well as in a 1996 directive from the chairs of this Committee and the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration. For years, the House has made XML files publicly available on the U.S. House of Representatives Document Repository ([docs.house.gov](https://docs.house.gov)) and some Committees sites, such as Rules ([rules.house.gov](https://rules.house.gov)), particularly when the House has not sent proposed legislative text (of bills, resolutions, and amendments) to GPO for publishing and posting on GovInfo.

While the set of bills, resolutions, and amendments not published by GPO is narrow, House staff, particularly Committee staff who draft using the House's drafting tool, occasionally need the Senate-created XML file to prepare a bill's next iteration. Currently, the Senate does not make its XML files available on Senate websites. This lack of Senate XML documents adds overhead for drafters who need to rekey Senate-drafted text and prevents House staff from being able to use the Comparative Print Suite with these files. Clerk staff have raised this matter with our Senate counterparts. It is our understanding that the offices of the Secretary of the Senate and the Senate Legislative Counsel are discussing this matter. We will continue to update the Committee on these discussions.

Finally, unless otherwise directed, we will submit our next report about this work on or before April 15, 2024. If you or others on the Committee have questions about the contents of this report, 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