

Statement of Mary B. Mazanec
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before the
Subcommittee on Oversight, Committee on House Administration
"Library of Congress: Ensuring Continuity and Efficiency During Leadership Transitions"
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Mr. Chairman, Representative Lofgren, and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for this opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the Congressional Research Service (CRS) of the Library of Congress. I am honored to have been appointed CRS Director by Dr. Billington last December after having joined CRS in August 2010 as Deputy Director. The mandate that Congress gave to CRS is to provide the Congress, throughout the legislative process, comprehensive and reliable legislative research, analysis, and information services that are timely, objective, non-partisan, authoritative and confidential, thereby contributing to an informed national legislature. Every action I take as Director is designed to ensure that CRS not only fulfills that mandate to serve the Congress, but continues to improve upon that service. I want to further a CRS that is responsive at every stage of the legislative process – from the inception of the significant policy idea, to committee markup, to informing the floor debate, and coming to final resolution in conference.

My transition to Director of CRS was seamless due in significant part to the excellent, dedicated, and talented staff working at all levels of the Service. CRS staff are truly dedicated to serving Congress and view themselves as extensions of congressional staff, a pooled resource available to all Members and committees.

My vision for CRS is the vision enunciated at the time of passage of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970. I intend to ensure that CRS remains Congress' primary source for the analysis and information it needs to perform its legislative functions and that we continue to explore new and innovative ways to best serve the committees of Congress, Members and their staffs.

Support for Congress

CRS' work is driven by the core values of timeliness, authoritativeness, objectivity, balance, confidentiality and non-partisanship. Our support for Congress spans the entire legislative agenda and our expert and multidisciplinary staff are ready to provide confidential tailored memoranda and personal briefings, CRS Reports for Congress, seminars and programs on the legislative process and topical issues, information, advice in response to a phone call or e-mail, delivery of expert testimony, support for hearings and investigations, examination of legislative options, and legal analysis.

Some of the major areas in which we provided support to Congress in the last year include the economy, the debt and the deficit; banking and financial reform; rapidly

changing events in Egypt, Libya and Syria, as well as U.S. strategy in Afghanistan and Iraq; devastating natural disasters at home and abroad; reauthorization of the USA Patriot Act; FAA reauthorization; as well as the authority of states to legislate in the area of immigration. In all of these cases, CRS analysts worked with Members and congressional staff to inform the national legislative debate.

Many of the issues I have recounted above will continue to be of interest to Congress in this session. CRS recently completed its annual legislative planning process, identifying over 160 issues before Congress and organizing its product line and web resources around those issues. We are also meeting with leadership offices to ensure that CRS is well positioned to support Congress' legislative agenda.

Additionally, we are beginning our planning for the *CRS Seminar for New Members* for the 113th Congress held in Williamsburg, Virginia. The last program was attended by a record number of new House members and we expect another productive exchange with the freshman class next Congress. The program offered in conjunction with the Committee on House Administration and led by CRS and outside experts introduces new House members to the range of issues that they will confront in their initial months in office as well as briefings on the legislative and budget process.

In FY2011, CRS completed more than 760,000 responses and services for Members and committees. This number includes completing over 76,000 requests for analysis, information and research; engaging over 12,000 congressional participants in seminars, institutes, and training sessions; and almost 675,000 client visits to the CRS website home page that resulted in a total of over 3 million hits on CRS.gov. By year's end, over 3,500 CRS Reports were updated, and 566 new CRS Reports were prepared. Through the Legislative Information System (LIS), over 7,700 bill versions were summarized. Of significance, CRS served 100 percent of Member offices, and 96 percent of committees.

The Way Forward

Since becoming Director, I have made it my top priority to meet personally with Members, committees, and senior congressional staff in order to elicit feedback and suggestions on how well we are serving the Congress and what we can do better. I have also made it a priority to personally engage CRS staff at all levels, many of whom have solid and innovative ideas. We are continually examining budget priorities, and in this regard, I have directed my senior managers to examine our current organization to determine where we can continue to achieve efficiencies and introduce synergies between offices and divisions to most effectively serve Congress.

Engagement with Congress and with CRS Staff

Since the beginning of the 112th Congress, I have held meetings with nearly 30 Members, and 85 senior professional staffers. I met with this Committee and with other Members and leadership offices to brief them on CRS' research planning for the second session of the 112th Congress and to solicit their input on CRS products and services.

The meetings I have had with Members and congressional staff have affirmed the findings of the customer satisfaction study undertaken in 2010 pursuant to congressional direction. Overall, the findings were extremely positive. Highlights of the findings included that 91 percent of those surveyed said that CRS is very responsive/ responsive to meeting their requests for information and analysis; 89 percent said that they strongly agree/agree that CRS understands the needs of Members of Congress, committees and their staff; and 88 percent of respondents reported that they were very satisfied/satisfied with CRS products and services.

When looking at products and services, some clients interviewed by LMI (who conducted the study) said that CRS reports are too long and complex. In the areas of communication and feedback, LMI found some suggestions for improvement in the CRS.gov website, and a sense that CRS is lagging in the use of technology and multimedia. There also appears to be a desire for CRS to have a more formal process for obtaining client feedback.

Looking specifically at some of the ways we responded to the client survey, CRS Reports for Congress have become shorter and more succinct with better focused summaries at the beginning of each document. We have enhanced our outreach efforts to address client needs, and to ensure that our clients know when we are available to serve them, and we redesigned the interface for a more streamlined and user friendly process for placing requests and registering for events on the CRS.gov website.

I have also sought the input of CRS staff at all levels since becoming Director. I initiated a series of open staff meetings soon after being appointed Director and invited staff to raise whatever questions or issues they had on their minds. I also invited any staff members who were interested in meeting to “brown bag” lunches where we discussed ideas for improving our service to the Congress, and have welcomed phone calls, emails, and visits from staff who have ideas on improving service to Congress and increasing efficiencies in CRS. On a regular basis, I meet with the President of the Congressional Research Employees Association to discuss the thoughts and concerns of the union. I frequently visit the offices and divisions of the Service to get to know all staff, and to see first-hand the work they are doing in support of the Congress.

Budget Considerations

Since becoming Director, I have looked across the Service to identify measures that will increase efficiency in this period of budget constraints, while maintaining our high-levels of expertise, authoritativeness, and timeliness in order to meet our unique mission to serve the Congress. CRS is operating at its lowest staff level in more than three decades. As of March 31, 2012, CRS had 618 positions currently occupied. (This figure includes permanent and indefinite positions.) Of this number, the composition of the workforce breaks down into 24 senior managers, 336 analysts and attorneys, 103 information specialists, and 155 research and infrastructure support staff. By way of comparison twelve years ago, our workforce numbered 685 staff members.

CRS identified nearly 80 staff positions for possible inclusion in the Library's Voluntary Early Retirement Authority and Voluntary Separation Incentive Payment Program, ultimately offering 40 opportunities. Twenty-two staff members availed themselves of the opportunity in 2011. Of this number, eight were analysts. Some of the individuals CRS has lost over the last year include very senior staff, possessing several decades worth of institutional memory on various public policy issues. This is a loss in capacity to the institution that is not replaced overnight.

The Service has limited flexibility to develop new analytical capacity or extend or expand capacity in increasingly demanding and complex areas such as health care, energy development, military weaponry and financial regulation. Replacing departing analysts and attorneys is limited by the budget; making it necessary for analysts to expand their portfolios where possible. This could result in slower and less comprehensive responses especially in periods of high demand. Professional development expenditures such as training, research-related travel, and recruitment expenses have been reduced by about one-third.

Nonetheless, my focus remains on maintaining the highest analytical capacity that we can for the Congress. My senior managers and I have examined the current staffing configuration and as a result have reassigned some issues, expanded collaborative opportunities to ensure the coverage of issues, looked at cross-training and cross-coverage as ways of meeting Congressional needs during periods of high demand, and engaged when necessary in selective hiring for critical positions. My goal has been to think strategically to reshape the workforce while maintaining analytical capacity. CRS will continue to work with its congressional clients to scope out and prioritize needs and to meet these needs in a timely manner. We understand that we need to work more efficiently and I believe we are well on our way to achieving that objective.

Although almost 90 percent of the CRS budget is devoted to salary and benefits for our staff, I have also looked for savings in non-personnel costs which account for approximately 10 percent of the budget. In May 2011, an internal advisory committee was formed to review the usage and renewal of print and electronic research subscriptions and prioritize requirements. After a detailed evaluation, investment costs were reduced by over 15 percent (about \$600,000). To this end, we have taken steps to consolidate and reduce print subscriptions at multiple locations, collaborated with other service units in the Library on joint purchases of high-cost subscriptions, canceled print subscriptions for which there were equivalent digital versions, and sought to leverage efficiencies through collaboration with other legislative branch agencies. These and other cuts made to the non-personnel part of the budget were significant, but they cannot be repeated annually without some likely sacrifice to the quality of service that we provide to the Congress.

While we are operating under increased budget pressures in technology and research resources, we recognize that it is not just the analysis we provide, it's how we transit and

deliver it to a 21st century Congress. Our technology needs to evolve as Congress has evolved, and we are committed to making those improvements.

CRS.gov is the gateway to all CRS analytical and informational resources, including our analysts and informational professionals. A useful and accessible web site is an efficient way to deliver CRS services and expose clients to all that CRS has to offer. This past year we have introduced customization capabilities which enable users to create accounts and tailor the information they would like to receive from CRS, get updates on new products, programs and changes to the web site, and facilitate their placing specific requests. We have also made it easier for users to focus more quickly on notable CRS products, featured topics that are dominating the legislative agenda, and to have access to basic data resources that complement the analytical content of CRS Reports.

We are currently in the process of examining more robust search capabilities and ways to make CRS subject matter experts more accessible to our clients without incurring significant new costs. We have also enhanced the mobile web site and continue to explore ways to make CRS material more accessible on the variety of mobile devices that have become such an important part of the way Members and staff access information.

Conclusion

In closing I want to thank you once again for the invitation to appear before you today. It has been an interesting transition moving from the leadership of former Director Dan Mulholland who served the Library for 42 years, 17 of those as CRS Director. But this transition affords new opportunities for CRS. On a personal note, I am gratified knowing that I work with some of the best and brightest policy and legal analysts, information professionals, and infrastructure support staff. My vision for CRS is to see that every major policy issue addressed by the Congress has the support of CRS staff who are ready and able to provide balanced, objective, timely, authoritative and insightful products and services. Together, my colleagues and I are ready to serve Congress and the legislative process, and I look forward to working with you during my tenure as Director.