

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON MODERNIZATION
AND INNOVATION: INNOVATIVE IDEAS
FOR SUBCOMMITTEE CONSIDERATION**

ROUNDTABLE
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MODERNIZATION
AND INNOVATION
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON HOUSE
ADMINISTRATION
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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C O N T E N T S

	Page
OPENING STATEMENTS	
Chairwoman Stephanie Bice, Representative from the State of Oklahoma	1
Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Modernization and Innovation	
Norma Torres, Representative from the State of California	1
WITNESSES	
Catherine Szpindor, Chief Administrative Officer, U.S. House of Representa- tives	2
Kevin McCumber, Clerk, U.S. House of Representatives	4
Hugh Halpern, Director, U.S. Government Publishing Office	6
Warren Burke, Director, Office of the Legislative Counsel, U.S. House of Representatives	8

ROUNDTABLE ON MODERNIZATION

March 25, 2025

SUBCOMMITTEE ON MODERNIZATION AND INNOVATION,
COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, D.C.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 3 p.m., in room 1310, Longworth House Office Building, Hon. Stephanie Bice [Chair of the Subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Bice, Carey, Torres, and Morelle.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. STEPHANIE BICE, CHAIRWOMAN OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON MODERNIZATION AND INNOVATION, A U.S. REPRESENTATIVE FROM OKLAHOMA

Chairwoman BICE. Well, good afternoon. I want to be respectful of everyone's time. It is straight-up 3 o'clock—

Mr. MORELLE. Amen.

Chairwoman BICE.—and I like to be timely and get us in and get us out.

First of all, I want to say thank you to our witnesses for being here this afternoon. The purpose of today's meeting really is to hear from you all. I like the roundtable format because I think it gives us the opportunity to have more of a conversation with you all around the topic at hand, which is modernization.

I think the format of today's roundtable is really going to be a brief statement from each of you, you know, 3 to 5 minutes, kind of, of some of the things that you are interested in or would like to see as it relates to modernization and innovation within your agencies.

Because that is really what we are doing, is, how do we make the House function more efficiently and more effectively? What technology or tools can we utilize to make that happen? What are the, sort of, pressing needs from each of you within your respective entities?

I am going to turn it over to my Ranking Member, if you want to make a brief opening statement.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. NORMA TORRES, RANKING MEMBER OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON MODERNIZATION AND INNOVATION, A U.S. REPRESENTATIVE FROM CALIFORNIA

Mrs. TORRES. Absolutely.

Thank you to all of you for being here.

Thank you, Chairwoman, for the opportunity to reconvene once again. Some of us have had one-on-one meetings with all of—with

each individual that are here, so I appreciate the opportunity to reconvene and talk about how we can make this place a much better environment, not just for the Members that come fly in from their respective States, but also for the people that work here every single day and, most of all, for the folks that fly in or drive in from our communities who are lost in our halls and oftentimes, too often, are asking Members like myself that do not know north from south how to get around here.

Chairwoman BICE. "Where do we go from where we are?"

Mrs. TORRES. Yes.

Thank you for your willingness to be here and to participate in the dialog that I think could only make our environment a little better.

Of course, Kevin, you and I have some stories to share, and hope you have an opportunity to talk about that. You know, I hope that you will have an opportunity to tell me what is the most sexiest story or call that you have taken, the scariest call that you have taken, or the saddest call that you have taken.

We were both 911 dispatchers by trade—

Mr. HALPERN. Ah. I was gonna say—

Mrs. TORRES [continuing]. at one point in our careers, for the rest of you.

Thank you. I will turn it back over to you.

Chairwoman BICE. Thank you.

Mrs. TORRES. I am running in between meetings, so I apologize.

Chairwoman BICE. 'Tis the life, right? Exactly.

Mrs. TORRES. Right. Yes.

Chairwoman BICE. First of all, I want to say a quick follow-up and just mention, this is an off-the-record discussion. It is really an opportunity for us to have dialog and be able to ask lots of great questions. We do have stenographers here, and the reason for that is I want to make sure I do not miss anything. Just know that in advance.

Why don't we go ahead and get started?

If I can throw it over to Catherine Szpindor, who is the Chief Administrative Officer, to give a brief kind of overview of some of the initiatives that you would be proposing to this Subcommittee.

PANEL: CATHERINE SZPINDOR, CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER, U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES; KEVIN MCCUMBER, CLERK, U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES; HUGH HALPERN, DIRECTOR, U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE; WARREN BURKE, DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL, U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STATEMENT OF CATHERINE SZPINDOR

Ms. SZPINDOR. Yes. We actually have four initiatives. I am going to concentrate on the first two, and then I will just mention the other two.

The top two: The first one is a human resources replacement project.

We have a human resources and payroll and benefits system that is over 20 years old and is nearing end of life within the next sev-

eral years, so we feel like that that has got to be a top project for us to concentrate on.

It is the core administrative system. It disburses 75 percent of the House funds for the House; onboarding/offboarding of staff; maintaining critical employee records related to Federal services, which—we have to go back from time to time and be able to pull those; assisting staff with payroll and benefits inquiries; and supporting House offices in managing their payroll.

Beyond some of the possible adjustments we could make to a new system, we are looking at optimizing and automating our payroll and benefits processes, to include onboarding and offboarding in a more electronic manner; enhancing the user experience, which I think has to be done, with modern self-service options and fully digital forms, eliminating the outdated paper-based system that we have been using for some time, which you all are familiar with if you are been here for any length of time.

We want to expand our H.R. services for Members, such as applicant tracking, performance management, leave management, and training management, and aligning with the best practices developed by the H.R. Hub so it is consistent.

These initiatives represent a significant investment, several million dollars over the next 3 to 4 years. While most funding will be requested through standard budget processes, some seed funding would be very, very helpful to explore the expanded H.R. services that we could provide to Members, Committees, and leadership as part of this.

Additionally, we will want significant support and guidance from the Committee as we consider if and how we roll out any expanded services to Members.

I want to reiterate that we do not have an option but to do this, because the current system we have will be end-of-life in about 3 years and no longer supported by the vendor for any additional cybersecurity improvements or anything like that.

The second item I have that I would like to talk about is celebrating artificial intelligence adoption.

The House, I believe, has a unique opportunity to accelerate AI adoption by investigating and, right now, investing in the Microsoft Copilot. It is an AI tool already available within our secure Microsoft environment.

We are prepared to implement this tool, but funding is needed not only to purchase licenses in addition to our normal Microsoft license structure, but also to equip staff with the knowledge and skills to be able to use it effectively.

Copilot will only be as effective as the people that are using it. That is why investment in AI tools must be paired with structured training and upskilling of all House staff, not just those that are in IT. Everyone needs to better understand what AI is, what it can do, and how to use it effectively. That is why any investment in AI tools must be paired with structured training and upskilling. We want to make sure staff can confidently and responsibly do their daily work.

In addition to technology and training, targeted demonstration projects can deliver immediate benefits while helping us explore longer-term potential.

To guide this effort—and we have had many meetings on this within my organization. To guide this effort, I have directed my staff to develop a 2-year strategy focused on three pillars: deploying Copilot, upskilling House staff, and launching targeted demonstration projects using the technology.

While we have the tools and planning capacity to begin now, additional funding will be essential to implement the strategy at scale.

With the right support, we can safely and effectively accelerate AI adoption across the House while remaining aligned with the guiding principles set forth in the House AI Policy, which is—very important we do that.

Microsoft Copilot, quite frankly, is a game-changer for accelerating AI adoption. Why that is is that, unlike public AI tools like ChatGPT and others, Copilot operates entirely within the secure House Microsoft tenancy, meaning it can automatically access and analyze internal data, internal files, emails, documents, calendars, and anything you would like to roll into your Microsoft environment. It does not require any necessary uploads or downloads. This will transform the capability of the House staff to incorporate AI effectively and responsibly in their daily work.

We anticipate a gradual roll-out later this year. However, we do not have all the necessary funds for full implementation, and modernization funds can be helpful in helping us to accelerate that. A lot of this is the licensing associated with Copilot, which is on top of your Microsoft contract.

We propose an AI upskilling program in the Congressional Staff Academy designed not only to train staff on AI tools but also to create opportunities for peer-to-peer learning and knowledge exchange. Staff will be able to share insights, best practices, real-world applications, and the role AI plays in how they can better do their job. Training will be tailored to specific roles—for example, such as schedulers, legislative staff, and communications staff.

While we plan to start this program using existing resources, more funding will allow us to accelerate this critical, I believe, very-critical-to-the-House upskilling program.

Regardless of funding level, this is one of my highest priorities, and we are moving forward.

Chairwoman BICE. Thank you. I appreciate the oversight.

Next, we are going to move to Kevin McCumber, the House Clerk.

STATEMENT OF KEVIN MCCUMBER

Mr. McCUMBER. Chairwoman Bice, Ranking Member Torres, Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting us to participate in this roundtable.

We have given each of you a handout, which lists five ideas. I am going to touch on three of them, one very, very quickly since it is an idea that has already come to fruition, which is the digitized Constitutional Authority Statement.

This idea was passed along when this roundtable was first being organized. The idea was to create a way to digitize the Constitutional Authority Statement.

We already had this feature on our product development list, but we listened and heard you, and, through our use of agile methodology, it allowed us to add it to our sprint planning, where we successfully developed, tested, and, I am happy to report, announced the deployment of this new feature in an e-Dear Colleague yesterday.

The second idea is for an e-cosponsor signup tool.

A cosponsor management system has been a dream of many of us, including me, for nearly a decade, long before the eHopper. We actually had come up with a project proposal, which received support from the Clerk at the time, but House leadership decided not to move forward back then.

The solution would require a workflow management application that integrates communication, information-sharing, and an electronic signup which automates and streamlines the processes.

Currently available e-cosponsor features in the eHopper can be used as a standalone API by an external application to manage the cosponsor data and create a fully validated cosponsor document that can be submitted to the eHopper.

Currently, the Clerk's Office, we do not have the capacity to build this application. However, we are able to provide guidance and support to the potential development team with the eHopper API integration. We estimate this work could take up to 1 year.

Finally, I would like to briefly discuss our idea to improve the management and archiving of Committee records.

Our current processes related to records management and archiving are outdated and inefficient. We recognize that Committee staff time is extremely limited, and no one has the time to invest in processes that are inefficient and time-consuming.

Our Office of Art and Archives has already partnered with House Digital Services to find a solution that offers staff a centralized and user-friendly digital system for archiving and managing Committee records.

It is a two-phase project as proposed. Phase one will be user discovery to identify systemic strains related to records, information management, and archiving. Phase two will use that information to develop the best solution or solutions for the Committees and the archivists to achieve seamless workflow integration to improve that process and their operations.

What do we expect to get from this solution? The Committees will be able to manage and seamlessly submit electronic records. Committees can submit all their requests and questions to the archivists online in one place. Committees can fill out and transmit required forms online, whether box labels, inventory sheets, with more built-in guidance on how to better describe the records. It offers us the opportunity for direct communication with Committees about the status of records that have been loaned to them or records that have been accessioned by the archivists. It will provide Committees improved access to their previously archived materials.

We estimate the cost to be up to \$750,000, with phase one, up to 1 year, and phase two, 1 to 2 years.

We are working, again, with House Digital Services finalizing a proposal to submit to this Committee for this project that will in-

clude a request for funding in the Modernization Initiatives Account to get the ball rolling.

These are just a sampling of the many ideas that we collected from our staff over the last few months. We remain committed to offering creative solutions that enhance the experience and make this institution work better.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today.

Chairwoman BICE. Thank you very much.

I did not mention before we got started that I wanted to let each of our agency heads give their, sort of, intro and assessment of the things that they would like to see, and then we will open it up for questions from the Members.

Next up, Government Publishing Office.

Mr. Halpern, the floor is yours.

STATEMENT OF HUGH HALPERN

Mr. HALPERN. Thank you, Chairwoman Bice, Ranking Member Torres, all the Members of the Subcommittee.

I want to talk about two issues today. One is a passion project of mine, and the other is an issue very near and dear to all of your hearts.

If any of you have introduced a bill recently, you know that it takes a very long time for GPO to process that bill. That is largely due to extremely high volumes.

In the 118th Congress, GPO processed nearly 23,000 legislative measures. That means House and Senate, multiple versions of bills if they got reported or they got passed. We have the same number of staff, proofreading staff, now that we had, basically, at the time of the pandemic. That is because it takes us a very long time to train journeyperson proofreaders who are capable of doing the very fine-tuned work that you need to do with bills.

The last time I was here, this was an issue that I raised, and I am coming back because it has not gotten better.

To give you an idea, like I said, last Congress, we processed roughly 23,000 measures. So far this Congress, we are running 10 percent ahead of where we were at the same time last Congress.

The good news is, after looking at the data from last Congress, we identified some internal bottlenecks that we are working to resolve. To give you an idea, we identified one piece which is sort of—there is some time required to process each individual item. It does not matter if it has 60 pages or 6 pages, it requires about the same amount of time.

We have added personnel across all three shifts to do that work. We also have the benefit of a few new proofreaders from our apprenticeship program going straight into the bill end corner. We have gotten very, very good results with that. My goal is that by mid-April we will have the backlog down to about 500 measures.

To give you an idea, of the 12 weeks so far this Congress, for 9 of those weeks, we have had backlogs in excess of 1,000 measures. That is because we get, on average, about 300 a week. Last week it was a little lower because you all were not in session, but on those pro forma days we would still get 70 or 80 measures.

The request that I am making of you all is to allow us to work with the Clerk to allow Members to opt out of the proofreading

stage at GPO for measures that are drafted by Leg. Counsel and are at the introduction stage.

Now, I want to be perfectly honest: This will impact quality. My team catches mistakes, whether they are from a Member office or Leg. Counsel or wherever. We routinely find things, go back to the Clerk, and they go back to the sponsor to say, "Hey, what did you mean," or, "This name is spelled differently in two different places," or, "We think there is the wrong number of digits in this amount."

That said, we think that Members are growing increasingly impatient with the backlog, and this is one way that we can speed up processing while at the same time, you know—for measures that were drafted by Leg. Counsel, theoretically, there is somebody who has looked at this.

You know, it will put the onus on the Member office a little bit, and we will probably get some amount of reprints we have to do just to mollify folks, but we think that this will be another tool we can bring to bear to speed up the processing of the bill backlog.

That is the first item.

The second item is something that I have been working on, frankly, since I came to GPO, and that is trying to update the format for Committee reports and hearings.

The basic format for Committee reports has really been the same since GPO came into being at the beginning of the Civil War. It has survived hand-set type, hot-lead type in the 1940's and 1950's, and now digital type.

Chairwoman BICE. Wow.

Mr. HALPERN. We started a project about a year, 18 months ago, to try and modernize this format. We said we should use standardized paper—standard-size paper, color where we can, things like that. We came up with a design very similar to this.

We got a lot of good response out of that, but we also got some folks who were not happy about change or thought that something that was on letter-size paper did not look official enough.

We are in the process—and what we would like to do is go back to the folks in our focus groups and offer them options. We are proposing sort of a menu of three options.

This is what we are calling the "modern" design. It is full-color, 8-1/2 by 11, easy to access.

For those folks who really kind of like things the way they are, we came up with what we call the "classic" design. I have not done the inside, so that is why these are mockups. The idea is to just slightly tweak the existing design so that the information that the Clerk and the Secretary use are all in the same place regardless of which version. This would largely be the same format. Again, this is what we call "doc size," so it is the smallest of the sizes, and type is small and that sort of thing.

If somebody was looking for something in the middle, we came up with what we are calling the "traditional" format. We updated type sizes and the font we use, so it is a little bit more modern, a little bit easier to read. The idea there is, it is still not a standard-size piece of paper, so we have to trim it, but that is something that can add to the professionalism or make it less likely to appear like it came out of your desktop printer.

I think our proposal here is, we would like to go back to these focus groups and say, "Here are three options," and that, if this were eventually adopted by the House, we would put in place the mechanism with the Clerk and the Secretary to allow Committees to choose which format they want to use, and then we would have a number of different formats that the Committees could choose from.

Chairwoman BICE. Thank you.

Finally, Director of Office of Legislative Counsel, Mr. Burke.

STATEMENT OF WARREN BURKE

Mr. BURKE. Thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to speak with you today.

My office has proposed three ideas for modernizing and improving the legislative drafting process within the House. Those are: reducing backlogs and turnaround times in drafting while maintaining our traditional high standard of quality, leaning into our teaching role, and improving collaboration between Leg. Counsel and clients.

I would like to spend my remarks really focusing on the first of those three ideas, reducing backlogs and turnaround times.

There are essentially three challenges that make this difficult. The first is, well, legislative drafting, by its nature, takes time. It can be a little more like fine dining than fast food, because you want to get it right.

Challenge No. 2: workload. As Hugh was just saying, every Congress, the workload goes up. This Congress, the 119th, is going to be no exception. In fact, in the first 10 weeks of this Congress, 34 percent more bills have been introduced in the House than over the corresponding period in the 118th. That only partially reflects my office's increased workload, because we are actually receiving about twice as many requests as are reflected in the introduced bill numbers.

Point No. 3 is something I call a training bottleneck.

Let me use our health finance team to illustrate what I mean. Our health financing team covers areas in the jurisdiction of CMS—Medicare, Medicaid, health insurance regulation—and so, you know, a big, very time-intensive area to cover.

Unfortunately, we have suffered some retention loss in this area. For the last year, how many attorneys do we have staffing this team? Three. Three attorneys to draft all the health finance legislation for 435 Members of the House. It is a great team. It is a super-strong team of drafters. It is obviously too small.

I assigned a fourth person a couple weeks ago, and I intend to assign a fifth person in July.

My health finance team knows they need these additional members, but at the same time this is a big ask, for me to ask them to add two members in the same year. Why? Because it takes hours in the day to train these new attorneys. Training can go on for literally years in an area as complicated as health finance. They are really—I am asking them to go above and beyond to add two members this year.

That is the training bottleneck, the limited capacity for training on top of your drafting workload.

Now, here is the good news: Leg. Counsel is totally up for this challenge. We have three solutions.

The first is a very traditional, maybe obvious solution. It is the solution that Members from across the House, bipartisan, have been asking us for repeatedly over the years, and that is to properly staff up our teams. I am proud to say that, this year, we are onboarding 15 attorneys and 2 paralegals. Now, our more typical number would be four to six, but this is the number that is necessary if we want to get there.

How are we managing to do this in the face of this training bottleneck which I just described? Well, I will tell you. Here is our secret. Out of the 15 new attorneys, 4 are previous members of my office. These people are fully trained already; they are ready to hit the ground running. They have all committed to being trainers themselves.

Solution No. 2: We are improving our system of triaging new requests.

We have to know how much review is required, because not every Member, not every client wants full legal review, and we understand that, that our clients do not have the same goal for every piece of legislation. Not all of it is intended to be law. Sometimes people do not want fine dining in the legislative process——

Chairwoman BICE. They want fast-casual?

Mr. BURKE. They want Taco Bell, let us be honest. I mean—and that is fine. We understand that, and it is——

Chairwoman BICE. I think Chipotle might be a better——

Mrs. TORRES. For the purpose of convenience.

Mr. BURKE. To honor that, one thing we have done this year is we have created a formatting-only track. I do not know, this may make you shudder, but the idea is that any client can request that their tech submit text and have it just formatted by us into XML without legal or paralegal review.

Now, obviously, quality is going to take a hit for those bills, but there will not be any backlog.

Mr. CAREY. They are not going to pass anyway.

Mr. BURKE. We are hoping that——

Mr. MORELLE. I would not assume that.

Mr. BURKE. We would love for Committees to perform their traditional gatekeeping quality control——

Mr. MORELLE. Can we print them out on different colored paper so we know which ones have not been——

Mr. BURKE. You know, we cannot because of confidentiality reasons. We cannot reveal which bills have been through the formatting track and which have not.

Also, third solution, one which I cannot implement just yet because, first, I need to prioritize staffing these really urgent staffing gaps on my team, but I would love to create what I would call a floater team. This would be a strike force of two or three attorneys who would not have a subject area specialization like all the other attorneys in my office, who I could just assign differently on a week-to-week basis based on what are the most acute needs of the House. I mean, if the NDAA is on the floor, let us assign them to help the defense team. That would be great. That would give us an

ability to reallocate personnel in a way that we have never been able to do historically.

Basically, what I am asking is, just help with advocating for our fiscal year 1926 budget request. Because my whole office, as I say, we are literally drafting and training at all-time-record levels. If we are flatlined at fiscal year 1924 levels, well, that is not sustainable, because in fiscal year 1924 we had 89 FTEs; in fiscal year 1926, we project 109.

I mean, in order to preserve this, in order to make it work, we need to keep properly staffed. Otherwise, we reverse all the progress we have made, which would inevitably result in, frankly, backlogs and turnaround times just going through the roof.

Chairwoman BICE. Thank you—

Mr. BURKE. So—

Chairwoman BICE.—very much. I appreciate the insight.

I want to open it up for questions from my colleagues.

Mr. Carey, you can start it off.

Mr. CAREY. Was there ever a time—my dear friend to my right here, we were talking. Was there ever a time when Members were limited on the amount of requests they could actually put in for legislation?

Mr. BURKE. Not to my knowledge. I have heard of State legislatures—

Mr. CAREY. Yes.

Mr. BURKE [continuing]. where that is the case.

Chairwoman BICE. According to something I read, I think in 1977—

Mr. MORELLE. Yes.

Chairwoman BICE.—there was a limit on the number—

Mr. MORELLE. There was.

Chairwoman BICE.—of bills a Member could file—

Mr. MORELLE. Per Member.

Chairwoman BICE.—but now that has been changed.

Mr. CAREY. OK. I mean, because I think that is part of the problem, right?

I mean—and do we have a listing of—and I think both of our caucuses would appreciate this—a listing of the number of requests from the same Member that goes on and on and on? I mean, if you believe—

Mr. BURKE. It is going to be subject to confidentiality, how many requests a particular Member has made.

I mean, as I mentioned, we are getting twice as many requests as bills introduced, so there are cases—

Chairwoman BICE. Let me—

Mr. BURKE. There are cases where people—

Chairwoman BICE.—let me piggyback off of that, because I want to be quick with responses so we can get through as many questions as possible.

To maybe pivot just slightly off of this comment, how many pieces of legislation are being re-filed every Congress?

Mr. CAREY. Yes. That is a good point.

Chairwoman BICE. Because that impacts both of you there. If they are being refilled, I am not sure there needs to be Leg. Counsel review and GPO, you know, oversight as well.

Mr. BURKE. For a reintroduction, there can be very little or there can be a lot of review required. Because, at the least, you need to update, you know, the dates and so forth like that. If the law has changed, then you might have to completely rewrite the bill. The only way to know whether the bill still works is to review it.

In cases like that, they could use—our clients can use our new formatting track—

Chairwoman BICE. Well, I think that this is where—

Mr. BURKE [continuing]. if they choose to.

Chairwoman BICE.—potentially, I think, technology could help, right? Because if we have a, you know, internal AI language model—I am going to look to my AI expert over here—that specifically focused on legislation and statute and code and whether changes have been made to that, it would be easy for you all to be able to submit that through this, you know, AI to say no changes have been made to statute or code, and then you would know you do not have to do anything to it, and I think it would speed the process up, potentially.

Mr. BURKE. Yes. My office is looking very seriously at AI and what is its potential—

Chairwoman BICE. That is really what we are focused on. I mean—

Mr. BURKE [continuing]. to help in the drafting process.

Chairwoman BICE.—I know the staffing issue—

Mr. BURKE. Yes.

Chairwoman BICE.—is certainly something for you guys.

Mr. BURKE. The reason why I did not get into that as much is because there is a legislative drafting study ongoing, so we want to see what the results of that are.

One thing I would point out about AI is—I mean, yes, one review that we do is, do the amendments in a bill still execute this Congress like they did last Congress? Even that would not necessarily mean that the bill still works, because the law may have changed in other places. The verbatim amendment may execute, but the function of the bill may be meaningless because a similar program was just enacted somewhere else in law.

Yes, you are correct; sometimes reintroduction is very simple. We tend to crank those out pretty fast. Sometimes, complicated.

Chairwoman BICE. You mentioned that those are confidential, you cannot flag them, to the point of using a different colored sheet of paper. When those bills are filed—

Mr. BURKE. Uh-huh.

Chairwoman BICE.—then we know it. You should be able to pull a list—or can, I am sure—have pulled a list of the number of requests or bills being introduced by Members and can see who has an exorbitant number of—

Mr. CAREY. Yes.

Chairwoman BICE.—bills being filed.

Mr. CAREY. That is where I am going. Because it is kind of—

Mr. MORELLE. Introductions as opposed to requests.

Mr. CAREY. Yes.

Mr. MORELLE. The actual bills that end up getting introduced, you could certainly do an analysis of that, I would think.

Mr. BURKE. Yes.

Mr. MORELLE. By Member.

Mr. BURKE. Anybody can.

Mr. HALPERN. When I was staff director of the House Rules Committee in another life, we had our frequent flyers.

Mr. CAREY. Yes.

Mr. HALPERN. We knew exactly who those Members were, the ones who were submitting lots of amendments week after week after week.

Mr. CAREY. Right.

Mr. HALPERN. I am sure it is the same way with your Leg. Ops team.

Mr. MCCUMBER. Yes.

Mr. HALPERN. There are some Members that are more prolific than others.

Mr. CAREY. That is kind of where I am coming from, guys. I mean, honestly, I mean, I think, you know, the people around this table, we did not run for office because we wanted to waste time. You know, when we have—I think every single piece of legislation that I have done is a bipartisan legislation. Whether we get it through the committee of jurisdiction, you know, that is up to us, that is up to our teams. I know for a fact that there are a lot of people that are just doing messaging bills that are not going anywhere and that are wasting—on both sides, on both sides.

I kind of like going back to the concept that if—going back to 1977, where, if you think you really want to put a piece of legislation out, by God, you only have X amount, and it better be worth it.

I kind of would like to know—I mean, I am not asking you, but, I mean, maybe our teams can find out—why this rule changed in 1977. I mean, because these people that are throwing out these amendments after amendments, I mean, it is a waste of time. I think there are things that we can actually get done.

Anyway—

Mr. MORELLE. How many bills get introduced in the course of the 2-year—

Mr. BURKE. Last Congress, it exceeded 10,000 for the first time since 1977. The reason why it was higher back then was because there used to be limits on cosponsorship. You could not have more than 20 cosponsors. People were introducing a lot of duplicate bills.

Mr. MORELLE. Oh, because they could not get on the bill.

There are 10,000 introductions. Then—

Mr. HALPERN. In the House.

Mr. MORELLE. In the House, right. Obviously, I do not care about the Senate, but—in so many different ways.

How many amendments are submitted—I mean, that is in the—I mean, I remember on Rules—

Mrs. TORRES. I know. I was gonna say—

Mr. MORELLE [continuing]. we were doing—the NDAA in the Rules—

Mrs. TORRES. Twelve hundred amendments.

Mr. MORELLE [continuing]. is 1,200 and another 1,000—

Mr. BURKE. It is higher than 1,200 now. Yes. It is—

Mr. MORELLE. In Rules for the NDAA?

Mr. BURKE. NDAA is higher than 1,200 now.

Mrs. TORRES. Oh, my God.

Mr. BURKE. It is at least 1,500.

Chairwoman BICE. Yes. We are looking at—just for your awareness, we are looking at the programs that are utilized to actually review those amendments by the Committee internally. Rules has its own—we found out Rules has its own amendment platform. NDAA—I mean, HASC has their own. Approps has their own.

Everyone is using a different way to evaluate amendments, which is interesting, and we are trying to figure out is there some way to standardize that.

Mr. HALPERN. I built that system when I was here, whatever it was, 15 years ago.

Chairwoman BICE. You are the reason that the—

Mr. HALPERN. Yes. I can tell you exactly why we created it. We kept asking questions much along this line, like, when was the last time this Member offered an amendment? Did we make it in order? Things like that. What used to happen was, I had a bunch of great staff who would sit there going through paper files. We built the system to query those kinds of questions.

That later got built into a workflow system so that now—

Chairwoman BICE. That has not been updated in—

Mr. HALPERN [continuing]. they can triage that whole system, and, frankly, from a GPO standpoint, we get good electronic files at the end of that.

That is where that originated in the Rules Committee.

At HASC, their system is designed to write their bill. Because they do one bill a year, and it is really big, and it is the same process over and over again.

Mrs. TORRES. I guess what I am hearing is that you are taking amendments from more serious legislators seriously?

Mr. HALPERN. I can only speak to what it was when I was here, and that was a long time ago.

Mrs. TORRES. I mean, some of us, I think it is really clear, are here to just do crazy—

Mr. HALPERN. I think it was a mix. I think it was a mix.

Again, when I was here as the Rules Committee staff director, we had a variety of factors that we weighed. One of the factors that my bosses impressed upon me was always trying to give the minority as many amendments as we could. My target was always about a third.

On the one hand, that does reward some more serious lawmakers; on the other hand, if those got politically dicey, we would actually go to the less serious amendments and make those in order to try and balance out the number, to be perfectly candid.

Mr. MORELLE. Well, may I just say, too, I think I struggle with this a little bit because I am not really sure what the goal is, you know?

Like, we clearly want to give you the resources to be able to do a quality job of introductions.

To your point, Mike, and your—it hits a certain date, and then you only get 10 more introductions—

Mr. CAREY. Yes.

Mr. MORELLE [continuing]. after that date. You know, I mean, is it workable? Yes. You have to really think about, after the deadline

comes, what I am doing here. We had a lot more local things that were, you know, "I need to fix this bridge" or, you know, at the State level.

You served at the State level, Norma. You were at one point in the legislature.

Mrs. TORRES. Uh-huh.

Mr. MORELLE. It is a little different than here.

I struggle—you do not want to limit people—I mean, we are legislators. We should have the ability to introduce legislation based on, you know, demands of our constituents, what we think the American people want. I do not love limiting it.

I also recognize this explosion makes it almost impossible—

Mr. HALPERN. Yes.

Mr. MORELLE. Frankly, for the amount of bills that actually become law, the number—you know, the ratio of introductions to those that get signed by the President must be—I mean, it has got to be *de minimis* as a percentage, tiny.

Mr. HALPERN. Nine out of every 10 measures that get introduced have no further independent action.

Chairwoman BICE. Ninety percent?

Mr. MORELLE. There you go. 90 percent do not even do anything.

Mr. HALPERN. Ninety percent. It is within a tenth of a percent, basically, 112th Congress through current.

Mr. CAREY. Many of bills which we draft are intended to become amendments to other vehicles that are moving.

Chairwoman BICE. Of the—

Mrs. TORRES. Or language in the—

Mr. CAREY. Yes. In fact, we draft them in such a way that they will be easily converted to an amendment to some other bill.

Chairwoman BICE. In the 10,000, roughly, what percentage of that is amendments?

Mr. BURKE. Is amendments? I—well, those are just bills.

Chairwoman BICE. Oh. Oh, I see.

Mr. BURKE. The plus—10,000 is only bills. The amendments are—

Chairwoman BICE. On top of that.

Mr. BURKE [continuing]. on top of that.

Chairwoman BICE. How many amendments would you say you process?

Mr. BURKE. You know, I do not—I could try to get that information for you. I do not have it off the top of my head.

Chairwoman BICE. I think that is just as important, because that is a piece of the puzzle that is missing. If you are doing 30,000 amendments—which, I am guessing it is probably more than that—that is as complicated as the 10,000 bills being drafted.

Mr. BURKE. Well, the problem when we have, like, an NDAA situation once a year is that it is an all-hands-on-deck situation. At that point, we ask our entire office, even the people who know nothing about defense law—like, "Emergency." We all chip in.

We do have sort of a prioritization, is the way that we—you know, we ask our clients to prioritize, what are your top 10, what are your top 20, so at least I know what are we supposed to be focusing on. We do not want to—we want to try to do a better job on the ones that have the most chance of being offered.

Mr. MORELLE. I am—I am sorry.
Chairwoman BICE. It is OK.

Mr. MORELLE. I am sort of curious. I mean, it sounds to me, in just the 6 years I have been here, there has been an explosion in the number—the NDAA is a good example—of both amendments in HASC and then amendments in Rules on the NDAA. I am sort of curious, like, what—

Chairwoman BICE. Is there overlap? Is that what you are wondering?

Mr. MORELLE. No. No. Partly that, but also just you wonder, why is this happening?

Mr. BURKE. Uh-huh.

Mr. MORELLE. Why has it gone from, you know, I do not know, 100, 200 to 1,200? I mean, in a relatively short period that number has exploded.

Again, maybe there is not an easy explanation, but what is going on that would account for that kind of increase?

Mr. BURKE. Well, one possible explanation—one possible explanation, especially because I am involved in, like, an international legislative drafting conference, so comparing us to other drafting offices around the world, you know, we get a lot of outside-stakeholder text—

Mr. CAREY. Yes.

Mr. BURKE [continuing]. in this body. I mean, a lot. Those can be some of the hardest to draft. It might sound simple, “Here is the text,” but, actually, those can be some of the very hardest requests we get, because we then have to try to understand it, see whether it accomplishes the client’s policy, not just the stakeholder’s policy, maybe reverse-engineer some lobbyist’s text in order to confirm—so those are very hard.

I am sort of afraid that AI may actually make this worse if suddenly we are getting 30,000 drafts from AI. Like, how do we—I did not get to my—you know, the second idea is, I would love to lean into our teaching role. Because a role which we perform, which is almost equally as important as drafting, is working with our clients in collaborative drafting sessions to explain, this is how the bill works, you know, this is why we are asking—

Mr. MORELLE. Yes.

Mr. BURKE. We love that. Half the people in my office could have been teachers in another life.

Chairwoman BICE. I think that might be something we should talk about maybe in a different setting, and that would be your office, maybe through CAO or some other vehicle, having some training sessions with staff on why you do the things you do. Right? Because I think most of us—I do not know that staff would actually know, necessarily, why this is important.

I am going to pivot for a second to Hugh and talk a little bit about this.

I cannot for the life of me understand why this is important. What does it matter? I am being serious. I do not know why the size matters.

Mr. HALPERN. Readability.

The short answer is that the current report format does not support features that people want.

Chairwoman BICE. OK.

Mr. HALPERN. It does not support color. It does not support images. It does not support any of that stuff in any kind of readable format.

Chairwoman BICE. Right.

Mr. HALPERN. The current format is designed because I can fit 64 of these pages on an aluminum sheet on an offset press, and that keeps costs for print down.

Chairwoman BICE. Got it.

Mr. HALPERN. We do not live in the print world. We live in the digital world—

Chairwoman BICE. Right.

Mr. HALPERN [continuing]. although I still have to produce print output.

What ends up happening is, frankly, Committees will go off on their own and, sort of, hire a graphic artist and do something beautiful without working with us. Then we have to reverse-engineer that document into a system where we can make the digital content there available on a permanent basis with the digital standards that the House and Senate have adopted.

Mr. MORELLE. Are you suggesting, by going to these, that you will not do that any longer? If somebody comes up with a beautifully—

Mr. HALPERN. My goal is—

[Crosstalk.]

Mr. MORELLE [continuing]. say, “Hey, it is A, B, or C”?

Mr. HALPERN. “A, B, or C. Or, if you go with this and you want a custom cover, we can do a custom cover for you, but the inside stays the same.”

That will enable us, down the road, when we build operating systems, for you to work in Word or whatever the editor is of your choice, and then we can give you good digital output, good structured data output, and typeset-ready output as well.

Mr. CAREY. You mentioned focus groups and trying to figure out—who are the focus groups?

Mr. HALPERN. We started with House and Senate officials, so Clerk, Secretary, parliamentarians—

Mr. CAREY. OK.

Mr. HALPERN [continuing]. bill clerks. We then moved to the staff of the Joint Committee on Printing, our oversight folks, and then House and Senate Committees.

We got a variety of different reactions depending on—particularly amongst the Committees, and, frankly, different reactions depending on House and Senate.

Mr. MORELLE. When you say “committees,” do you mean staff?

Mr. HALPERN. Committee staff.

Mr. MORELLE. OK. Because we did not—I mean—

Mr. CAREY. Yes, I did not—

Mr. MORELLE. I would be like—I am with Stephanie—I do not want to put words in your mouth—like, “Here it is. That is it. We are done. That is it.”

Chairwoman BICE. Yes. Unfortunately, that is not how this place works, Joe. You and I both know that, so—

Mr. HALPERN. That is how we started. We were like, this is where we want to go—

Mr. MORELLE. That one is the one that allows for color and graphics and stuff?

Mr. HALPERN. All of those things.

Mr. MORELLE. Yes. I mean, why don't you just go one, you can use color or you cannot?

Mr. HALPERN. For instance, the appropriators, who have a stake, were like, "We do not like that. We want to stick with this." There is always—

Chairwoman BICE. Careful, Hugh. Careful.

Mr. CAREY. Always listen to Ways and Means. That is all you have to do. Whatever Ways and Means says, that is where we should go.

Chairwoman BICE. Trust me, I know, I agree. They also will not go to electronic voting, so I understand.

OK. We are running a little short on time, but I just have a couple of other things. I want to give Ms. Szpindor the opportunity to talk a little bit about the H.R. application that you talked about earlier.

Ms. Szpindor. Yes.

Chairwoman BICE. This H.R. application is going to be built regardless of whether or not the Modernization Subcommittee engages. Is that true?

Ms. SZPINDOR. It depends on Appropriations giving us the money to do it.

Chairwoman BICE. We coming back to Appropriations here.

Ms. SZPINDOR. Where we thought it could be helpful was as we explore what other options we could do and do some prototyping of that to see how people like those options.

There is the capability to really completely change how people interact.

Chairwoman BICE. I will use an example in my office, my personal office. We have recently acquired HOPS, which is a system that allows for electronic submission of PTO—

Ms. SZPINDOR. Yes.

Chairwoman BICE.—time, because there was not a great tracking system. I think that is sort of the type of program that you are—

Ms. SZPINDOR. Those type of things, yes. HOPS has been out there for a long time and served a good use, but we see opportunities to move beyond and do something a little bit more interactive.

Mr. MORELLE. Is this a system that we will build?

Ms. SZPINDOR. We will—

Mr. MORELLE. There is no off-the-shelf House of Representatives—

Ms. SZPINDOR. No, we will not build it ourselves. We will go out—the next step for us to do is a competitive RFP process for vendors. There are some vendors we have looked at already that we think could provide us the type of technology that we would want to use.

Mr. MORELLE. These are people who work for large corporations and—

Ms. SZPINDOR. They are large H.R. and payroll organizations, yes.

Chairwoman BICE. Before I get too far down the road and we have to wrap up, I just want to say thank you to Catherine and Kevin for your help with our closed captioning initiative.

Ms. SZPINDOR. Yes.

Chairwoman BICE. That has been pretty important.

As you all probably know, this Committee has been focused on some of the modernization recommendations, and disability accessibility across the House writ large has been one of the things we have focused on. We have done our ADA access ramp, and now this is sort of the next phase of that, looking at whether or not we can provide closed captioning on the House floor as well as within the Committees.

Thank you guys for your work in partnering with us on that initiative.

Mr. MORELLE. Yes.

Chairwoman BICE. Mr. Morelle, do you have any additional questions that you would like to ask our panelists?

Mr. MORELLE. The Modernization Initiatives Account was cut, I think, under the CR, by 80 percent. Is that—

Chairwoman BICE. No.

Mr. MORELLE [continuing]. true or not true? No?

Chairwoman BICE. No.

Mr. MORELLE. OK.

Chairwoman BICE. No. It was actually not—they had already funded part of it through March. We did it—they did not give the entire amount because they would have been sort of doubling up, if that makes sense.

Mr. MORELLE. OK.

Chairwoman BICE. Right?

Mr. MORELLE. OK. I am just—that is what I am—

Chairwoman BICE. Rob, am I right on that?

Mr. ROB SAR. \$2 million in addition to the prorated amount.

Chairwoman BICE. Correct. They had already given us the prorated amount from October 1 through March 14, so then March 14th through September was at a prorated amount.

Mr. MORELLE. You had the resources to be able to do what you needed to—

Chairwoman BICE. The MAI account is different, Joe. That is actually something that we, as a Committee—

Mr. MORELLE. Right.

Chairwoman BICE.—managed that. Those dollars are not necessarily—

Mr. MORELLE. Gotcha.

Chairwoman BICE. They have the ability to tap that. That is why they are here today, is to make recommendations to us on things we could actually help them with.

Ms. SZPINDOR. I will take all I can get.

Chairwoman BICE. Thanks for that, Joe. Appreciate it.

Mr. MORELLE. Sorry.

Chairwoman BICE. Yes.

I really appreciate the insight. Certainly, some of the things that we are looking at really are focused on one-offs, meaning, you know, how can we help either with pilot programs or, you know,

sort of, certain specific areas that we can do that would be immediately helpful to the House.

Some of the other concerns that were brought up from a staffing perspective, I fully recognize we have a challenge with that. Maybe not something that the Modernization and Innovation Subcommittee can help with *per se*, but I think we can advocate to figure out what makes sense for you all.

Any other last thoughts that you all would like to provide this group before we leave?

Ms. SZPINDOR. Other than, there are a couple of other things that we have already been engaged in that are going to continue to evolve that we will need your support with. Those primarily are some of the things that Ken and the digital services team and some of the things that we are involved in that I think are going to make a huge difference. Sometimes little steps can create some very important differences in how you do things.

Chairwoman BICE. Absolutely.

Mr. HALPERN. The only other thing I would add just as a general matter is, we all work really well together, you know, whether I am talking with the Clerk about how we better meet the volume of material that they are sending us or working with Warren on data standards.

We are all here to serve the Members, and it is incumbent on us to tell you where we are seeing pinch points——

Chairwoman BICE. Uh-huh.

Mr. HALPERN [continuing]. so that we can work with you to try and address those.

I think as a general matter, everybody at this table, we all know each other, we have all worked together for a long time, and we are all trying to row in the same direction.

Chairwoman BICE. Well, I appreciate that.

I think that is why we are part of the Subcommittee, is to try to figure out what can we do to be helpful to you all to actually improve processes, whether it is updating how things are printed or, you know, the eHopper discussions that we have had. Obviously, Leg. Counsel is a little tasked, and certainly H.R. can be a challenge.

That is why we are here, is to figure out how can we be helpful to you. We very much appreciate your thoughtfulness in putting these ideas together so that, once we start looking at modernization initiatives for the next year, we will have an idea of what is important to your entities and what we can do to support that.

With that, I think we are done. Thank you very much.

[Whereupon, at 3:56 p.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

