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GPO

OVERSIGHT OF THE GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE IN A DIGITAL-FIRST ERA

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

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C O N T E N T S

Page

OPENING STATEMENTS

Chairman Bryan Steil, Representative from the State of Wisconsin 1
Prepared statement of Chairman Bryan Steil 3
Ranking Member Joseph Morelle, Representative from the State of New York 3
Prepared statement of Ranking Member Joseph Morelle 5

WITNESS

Hon. Hugh Halpern, director, Government Publishing Office 6
Prepared statement of Hon. Hugh Halpern 9

QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD

Hon. Hugh Halpern answers to submitted questions 32

OVERSIGHT OF THE GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE IN A DIGITAL-FIRST ERA

January 22, 2026

COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, D.C.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:06 p.m., in room 1310, Longworth House Office Building, Hon. Bryan Steil [Chairman of the Committee] presiding.

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

Staff present: Mike Platt, Staff Director; Abby Salter, Deputy General Counsel; Dan Durak, Professional Staff; Jessica Smith, Deputy Director of Oversight; Jordan Wilson, Director of Member Services; Kristen Monterroso, Director of Operations; Evan Van Orman, Professional Staff; Annemarie Cake, Professional Staff and Deputy Clerk; Jamie Fleet, Minority Staff Director; Khalil Abboud, Minority Deputy Staff Director; Matthew Schlesinger, Minority Senior Counsel for Oversight and Investigations; and Owen Reilly, Minority Senior Counsel.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. BRYAN STEIL, CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION, A U.S. REPRESENTATIVE FROM WISCONSIN

Chairman STEIL. The Committee on House Administration will come to order.

The title of today's hearing is "Oversight of the Government Publishing Office in the Digital-First Era."

I note a quorum is present.

Without objection, the chair may declare a recess at any time.

Also, without objection, the hearing record will remain open for five legislative days so Members may submit any materials they wish to be included therein.

Thank you, Ranking Member Morelle, Members of the Committee, and our witness, for participating in today's hearing.

This is the first full Committee oversight hearing for GPO since 2020. Our purpose here today is twofold. First, to examine the current work of GPO, including successful initiatives and ongoing challenges; and second, to discuss how the agency is adapting to the digital-first era and evaluate what statutory reforms may be necessary.

Over its 165 years, the Government Publishing Office has effectively delivered on its mission to provide trusted information from the Federal Government to the American people. Its vision is "America Informed."

When it first opened its doors—coincidentally, the same day President Lincoln was inaugurated in 1861—GPO was directed to carry out printing authorized by Congress, Federal agencies, and the courts.

Today, their role is broader. Today, 1,600 employees at GPO operate distribution centers nationwide to fulfill the publishing needs of every branch of Government.

One great example is the passport book, which GPO has produced for the State Department for a hundred years. It also produces credentials for agencies and products used for Presidential inaugurations and the State of the Union address.

As the agency develops plans to use the latest technologies, we will explore how GPO is adapting its business operations to meet customer needs.

Another example of GPO's expanded mission is the Federal Depository Library Program. Formally established by Congress in 1962, this program provides nationwide public access to Government information by sharing published resources with a web of libraries across the country.

On top of that, in recent decades GPO has transformed its digital operations to continue meeting the needs of people where they are at.

One notable example is the website GovInfo which GPO maintains to provide permanent public access to Government information online.

At the start of the year, GPO announced it had surpassed 15 billion retrievals of Government information through GovInfo.gov.

Finally, as a legislative branch agency, GPO also ensures lawmakers can effectively do their job of representing the American people.

Some of their services to Congress include printing and publishing committee reports, reviewing and editing legislative text prior to online publication, and daily publication of the Congressional Record, which documents the proceedings and debates of this body for history.

While GPO has effectively performed and adapted to needs over its 165-year history, changes are undoubtedly necessary to keep pace with the private sector, to ensure we meet the evolving needs of our Government, and to continue serving the American people.

In today's digital-first era, the work of the GPO has become more critical than ever both for the institution and for Government as a whole.

Thank you for being here today. And I look forward to hearing your testimony, Director Halpern.

With that, I will yield to the Ranking Member, Mr. Morelle, for his opening statement.

[The prepared statement of Chairman Steil follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION BRYAN STEIL

Thank you, Ranking Member Morelle, Members of the Committee, and our witness for participating in today's hearing. This is the first full committee oversight hearing for GPO since 2020. Our purpose here today is twofold.

First, to examine the current work of GPO, including successful initiatives and ongoing challenges. Second, to discuss how the agency is adapting to the "digital-first era," and evaluate what statutory reforms may be necessary. Over its 165-year history, the Government Publishing Office has effectively delivered on its mission to provide trusted information from the Federal Government to the American people. Its vision is "America Informed." When it first opened its doors, coincidentally the same day President Lincoln was inaugurated in 1861, GPO was directed to carry out printing authorized by Congress, Federal agencies, and the courts.

Today, their role is broader. Today, the 1,600 employees at GPO operate distribution centers nationwide to fulfill the publishing needs of every branch of Government. One great example is the passport book, which GPO has produced for the State Department for 100 years. It also produces credentials for agencies and products used for presidential inaugurations and the State of the Union address.

As the agency develops plans to use the latest technologies, we will explore how GPO is adapting its business operations to meet customer needs. Another example of GPO's expanded mission is the Federal Depository Library Program. Formally established by Congress in 1962, this program provides nationwide public access to Government information by sharing published resources with a web of libraries across the country.

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In today's digital-first era, the work of GPO has become more critical than ever, both for this institution, and for Government as a whole. Thank you for being here today and I look forward to hearing your testimony, Director Halpern.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JOSEPH MORELLE, RANKING MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION, A U.S. REPRESENTATIVE FROM NEW YORK

Mr. MORELLE. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for your opening comments, and thanks for calling this hearing together.

Again, welcome back to your old stomping grounds, Director Halpern. It is nice to see you once again.

Under the heading—we used to say this in Albany all the time—under the heading of "everything has been said but not by everybody," let me make a few comments.

I was going to begin my remarks by talking about March 4, 1861, that consequential day, not only Abraham Lincoln's inauguration, but I have been scooped on that, the beginning of the Congressional Printing Office.

And so I appreciate that, the long history, and one of our true institutional treasures. I think we believe that. And I appreciate all the comments by the chair that I agree with relative to the incredible work you do. We have relied for that 165 years on GPO to carry out our Article I responsibilities and duties.

Ensuring over the decades that it has grown into the world's largest and most celebrated information organization takes the support and the partnership of Congress.

And I think, as you noted, the Government Publishing Office now. I do not know why we still say Printing Office. I apologize for that. I should get more with the 21st century.

It does recognize it is a modern digital-first publishing service for all three branches, and it is also, remarkably, a largely self-funded agency, which is something I think most taxpayers would be happy to hear.

You continue to produce, as the chair mentioned, essential printed materials like the Congressional Record, Federal Register, and U.S. passports, and now provides ebooks, digital publishing services, mobile access, and so much more—indicative of the way that Americans get their information now. You have kept with the times and continue to adapt to that.

And those innovations have lowered costs, increased efficiency, and strengthened public access—still so vital, public access to Government information—all saving taxpayers money while enhancing that transparency and that accountability.

And particularly, I think, in an era marked by misinformation, by fractured media, coordinated efforts to distort the public record, the role of trusted Government, authoritative information is indispensable, which is why your mission, keeping America informed, has never mattered more.

The chair mentioned the Federal Depository Library Program and how important that is to the more than a thousand, I think, depository libraries across the country that you serve, which includes—I will just make a public service announcement for the Rochester Public Library that I am privileged to represent, as well as the Rush Rhees Library at the University of Rochester.

Those are two of those libraries that provide the public in my community with a vast and constantly evolving body of information from the Government—newly issued and revised documents to resources on health, careers, military, science, and so much more.

In addition, the FDLP plays a critical continuity of Government role by ensuring Federal information is preserved and available in disperse locations, so it is distributed information.

I am interested in hearing today about the challenges you may face in administering the program as digital materials become predominant, difficulties depository libraries may encounter in managing tangible collections that have outgrown their physical space—obviously something to be concerned about—and recommendations to further modernize the programs that you may have.

And I look forward to discussing, I think, some of the broader challenges you may face. Workforce, I assume, is skewing older, and I am interested in hearing about plans to ensure critical skills and institutional knowledge are successfully passed on and preserved to the next generation.

The Committee, particularly the Subcommittee on Modernization and Innovation, which my good friend Mrs. Bice leads, has spent time discussing how increasing the volume of legislation introduced each Congress strains legislative capacity. I am curious whether or

not efforts to alleviate that strain, such as allowing Members to waive GPO proofreading, have been effective.

The Committee has also spent—and I will close with this—has spent a significant time examining the impact of the Loper Bright decision on institutional capacity.

And as Congress is required to draft legislation that is more specific, more technical, more complex, more detailed, needing more and more information, I would welcome your perspective, Mr. Director, on the challenges that may pose for the GPO as we go through and enter into that sort of new era.

Once again, thank you to you and your staff, thank you for being here today, thanks for all that you do.

And certainly thank you to the Chairman for holding this important hearing.

I yield back.

[The prepared statement of Ranking Member Morelle follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION JOSEPH MORELLE

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Chairman STEIL. Always a Rochester plug, but a Rochester library plug today. That was well done.

Thank you. The gentleman yields back.

Without objection, all Members' opening statements will be made part of the hearing record if they are submitted to the Committee clerk by 5 p.m. today.

As our witness today, we have Hugh Halpern, Director of GPO. Director Halpern was nominated by President Trump and confirmed by the Senate in December 2019. Prior to that role, he was director of floor operations for then-Speaker Ryan and served on half a dozen committees during his 30 years of service to the House.

We are pleased to have you back with us today in the House. Director Halpern, you are now recognized for 5 minutes to provide your opening statement.

STATEMENT OF HON. HUGH HALPERN, DIRECTOR, GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

Mr. HALPERN. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Morelle, all of the Members of the Committee. I am pleased to appear back in my old stomping grounds here in the House.

I am here on behalf of GPO's 1,625 craftspeople and professionals, all of whom work to support Congress and our vision of an "America Informed."

As the Chairman mentioned, this is a big year for GPO. Along with the Nation's 250th birthday, GPO turns 165, and we celebrate a century of producing the U.S. passport.

As you know, GPO runs like a business and we charge our customers for the work we do. I am pleased to announce that we have just successfully completed our annual financial statement audit, and that shows that we ended Fiscal Year 2025 with total revenue of just over $1.3 billion.

While we have a diverse portfolio product supporting all three branches of Government, I am focusing my remarks today on the work we do for Congress.

When people think of GPO, they often picture us as a building filled with printing and binding equipment. While we are, most of the work we do for Congress is essentially document conversion. We receive paper documents, typically with a basic electronic file, and we need to convert them into easily accessible structured data

files that can be distributed both digitally and in print. That is where our work is. It is not in the printed output.

Unfortunately, GPO's software stack, which Congress also uses to produce its own official documents, has not kept pace. Replacing our legacy composition engine with our new XPub product will allow us to round trip electronic files in the legislative branch's native XML format. We are making progress with this transition.

Now, when I worked in the House, I was always told that XPub was 2 years away. That was more than 8 years ago. At the risk of being my own punchline, I am pleased to report that we are in the user testing phase of our release for bills, resolutions, and amendments, and we hope to move to production by the end of the calendar year.

It is a very complicated project with multiple House and Senate dependencies, but everybody is working together to bring it in for a landing.

One area where I am pleased to report that we have a new product available today is our Model Context Protocol server for GovInfo, our trusted digital repository for Government information.

Our MCP server, which is today in public preview, will allow LLMs and other AI models to access GovInfo without having to separately train on it. That means when it is integrated with these services, you can ask Copilot, ChatGPT, Claude, or Gemini your question and it can respond with up-to-date, accurate Government information.

We believe that this is a far better approach than building our own chat interface for GovInfo. We are really excited to see what the community can do with these new capabilities.

GPO's single biggest challenge is the age of its workforce. Our median age is 54. The Federal average is 47. When I started at GPO at the end of 2019, almost half of the agency was eligible to retire in 2027.

The good news is we have already pushed that cliff back to 2030 through targeted recruiting, apprenticeships, on-the-job training, and a recent graduate program.

We are going to continue investing in our next generation to ensure that we have the people we need to deliver for our customers. That also means we have got to work smarter with the people we have.

Let me give you one example related to our chronic backlog in processing bills.

With the support of the Modernization and Innovation Subcommittee, under the leadership of Chair Bice and Ranking Member Torres, we created a partnership with the Clerk and provided Members with the option to opt out of having their bills proofread by GPO.

While I still believe that our proofreading process yields a higher-quality product, we have seen that we can produce these bills much more quickly if a Member is willing to accept that risk.

Only about 9 percent of our bills are processed using this option, but among those that are, we can generally batch process them in as little as 20 minutes and quickly move them into production, often making them available on the next day.

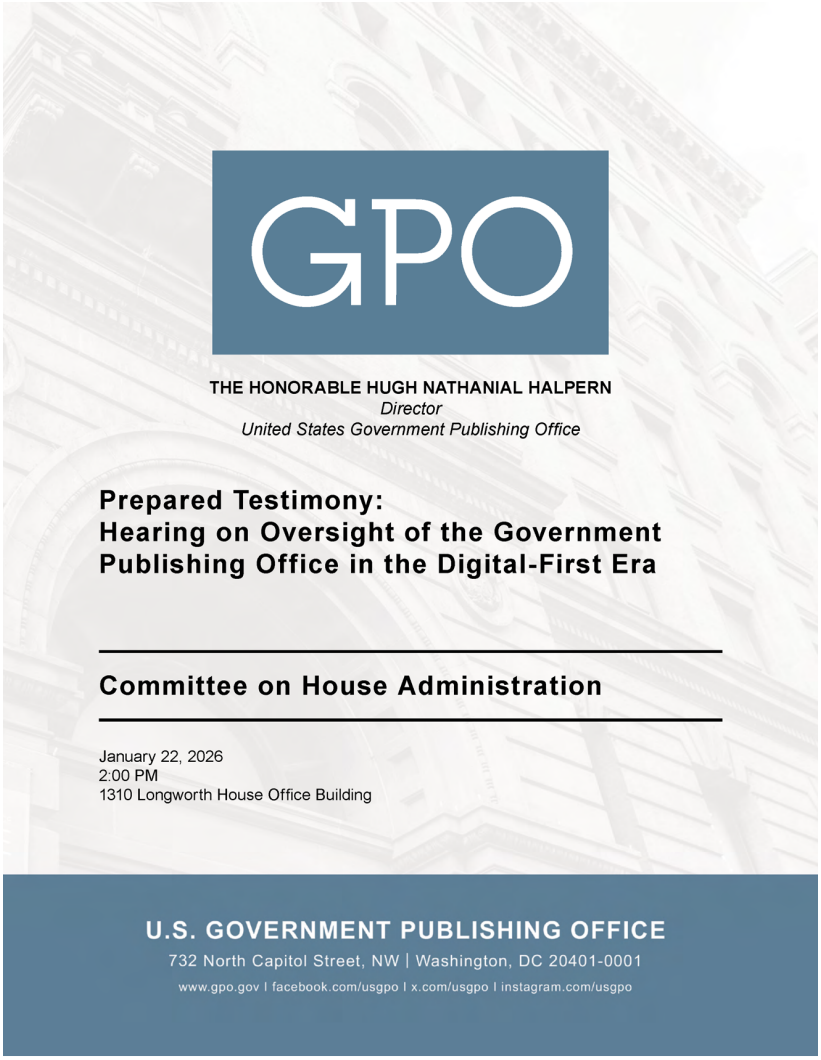
Last, just a brief note. The GPO's statutes need to be updated. They were written for the world of print, not our digital present, and I look forward to working with the Committee to ensure that our statutes facilitate and do not impede our work.

Since I last appeared here, a great deal has changed. In that time, we have seen nearly a 400-percent increase in monthly GovInfo retrievals and our annual passport production has nearly doubled. Our gross revenue is up over $392 million in that same period. None of that would have been possible without the support of this Committee.

Chairman Steil, Ranking Member Morelle, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am open to whatever questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Halpern follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. HUGH HALPERN




U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE
710

Chairman Steil, Ranking Member Morelle, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Government Publishing Office and its 1,625 professionals and craftspeople. We provide publishing and manufacturing services for all three branches of Government and pride ourselves on delivering high-quality products under tight timeframes as we work to fulfill our vision of an *America Informed*.

This year marks several milestones for GPO. As America celebrates its 250th anniversary, GPO will celebrate its 165th year of operation and a century of producing the U.S. Passport.

GPO is a rare entity in the Federal government—we operate like a commercial enterprise, billing our customers for the products and services we provide. While I am still awaiting the final results of our audited financial statements, I anticipate that our revenue for FY 2025 will be approximately $1.3 billion. The fact that we are an entity within the legislative branch only further distinguishes us from other agencies.

GPO's single largest product is the U.S. Passport, and we are proud of our partnership with the Department of State to produce what is today the world's most secure identity document. However, some of our most labor-intensive and important work is what we do for Congress, and I plan on spending most of my time today discussing that critical work.

Transitioning GPO to a Digital-First Era

When people think of GPO, they tend to think of us as a building filled with printing and binding equipment, and that is our focus. However, in fact, most of the work we do for Congress, along with the work to produce the Federal Register, is essentially document conversion.

We receive documents, typically accompanied by an electronic file of varying quality, and we need to convert them into easily accessible electronic files that can be distributed both digitally and in print. That's where our work is; it's not in the printed output.

A good example of this is that in the 1990s and early 2000s, the daily circulation of the Congressional Record was around 25,000 copies; today we produce a little over 1,000 printed copies and the rest of the demand is served digitally. Similarly, we used to produce around 32,000 copies of the Federal Register each day and we currently only print about 100 copies.

That change drove a change in the printing technologies we employ. Approximately six years ago, GPO transitioned most of the production of its daily publications from traditional offset presses to digital inkjet. This enables us to economically produce a significantly smaller number of printed copies while incorporating features our customers demand, such as color, without the high setup costs associated with traditional printing.

Our Current Workflow for Congress

For our work for Congress, the original paper document is the official version and we usually get an accompanying electronic file, which could be a text file, scanned PDF, Word file, or structured XML. Our job is to (1) ensure that the electronic file and official paper version match and (2) prepare the file for publishing by transforming it into our proprietary typesetting language.

When this workflow emerged in the 1980s, it was designed to produce printed output, represented by the PDF file we are all familiar with today. As a result, GPO's software stack was integrated into most official workflows, whether legislative drafting or the preparation of official documents by the Clerk.

PDF files are excellent representations of printed output, but they aren't well-suited for formatting information for modern devices, such as phones or tablets. Just think about the effort required to read legislative language in a PDF on a phone. It's not a great experience.

In the early 2000s, the legislative branch began to shift its process for creating official documents to use structured data files based on the extensible markup language—or XML—standard. This standard continues to evolve, and the legislative branch now has its own XML standard for legislative documents, known as United States Legislative Markup (USLM), which is being gradually implemented.

Unfortunately, GPO's current software stack has not modernized along with the legislative branch standards. Today, GPO still uses its original digital composition engine—known as MicroComp—and has "bolted on" additional functionality to deliver features like searchable files, web comparability, and other features requested by our legislative branch customers.

This means that much of our current workflow is transforming files from one format to another. Sometimes, that means translating an XML file into our typesetting formats and back again. In other cases, we take paper documents or Word files and transform them into structured data files. While we've developed some automated tools to facilitate these processes, many of them are nearing the end of their useful life and still require a significant amount of manual intervention.

XPub

GPO has a long-standing project to move from its legacy composition engine to a product that can "round-trip" XML files. We have named this product XPub, and it is based on a commercial XML publishing platform with significant customizations for our documents and environment. XPub has been in development for more than a decade, and we are near deployment of the initial modules.

We have designed the deployment of XPub around each class of publication. The first module that we hope to deploy into production this year will provide output for bills, resolutions, and amendments. Earlier this month we completed the first phase of user acceptance testing with the House Clerk and the Senate Secretary and hope to begin the second phase with a wider group of users this spring.

We are also moving forward with a limited rollout of another XPub product, known internally as XPub Horseshoe. This is our internal workflow system, which, when fully deployed, will transition our work from our current paper-based workflow to a fully electronic process. We will start running this system to produce the Federal Register this year in parallel with our existing process. As the workflow for the Federal Register is like the process for the Congressional Record, we expect that this product will also yield benefits for Congress soon.

XPub will bring countless benefits to GPO and our customers alike. We will be better able to ingest files that begin as Word or XML and work on them natively in XML. This will enhance the accuracy and efficiency of our work for Congress, ultimately yielding better results for our customers and end-users. It will also enable us to deliver better end products, such as a more robust web view of legislation.

This is a large and complex software development project. It has multiple dependencies, both inside GPO and with our customers. While I would have preferred that we were further along than we are now, the Committee should be fully assured that this is a priority for GPO and me personally, and we are continuing to make measurable progress.

Leveraging AI Technologies for Our Customers and the Public

Artificial Intelligence applications are the technology watchword of the moment. GPO has always been willing to adopt new technologies when we can show that they will deliver value for our stakeholders. We are continuing to evaluate internal AI and machine learning tools, like Microsoft CoPilot for general applications and Schematron for validating structured data files. We are currently testing concepts and applications using large language models (LLMs) that can:

- Automate the creation of contract terms to support acquisitions professionals;
- Build cataloging records of government publications to improve information management;
- Promote cybersecurity by enabling rapid detection and analysis of threats and anomalies; and
- Perform cost analysis of acquisition cost proposals.

Giving LLMs Access to Real Government Information

Our most tangible step with respect to AI to date has been the public preview of a Model Context Protocol (MCP) server for GovInfo, our trusted digital repository. The primary issue for most LLMs is that their access to training data is limited, and they may not provide the most accurate answers to questions because they are constrained by the data on which they were trained. Our MCP server will give most LLMs easy access to GovInfo's updated repository of government information, including congressional documents, court opinions, and countless other resources, all without requiring updated training.

GovInfo is a wealth of information for those looking for government information. GovInfo just celebrated its 15 billionth retrieval from the repository and its predecessors. It currently contains more than 3.2 million packages and over 21 million granules, each equivalent to an individual element, such as an item in the Congressional Record.

We believe that this approach is preferable to deploying our own LLM chatbot. Given the known issues surrounding LLM hallucinations, providing users with the ability to easily use their preferred model allows GPO to deliver this capability without compromising our commitment to delivering accurate government information.

GPO

Ensuring the Future of GPO's Workforce

Investing in new technology is not an end unto itself. New technology is merely a force multiplier for our team. And making sure we have a team that is ready to meet our customers' challenges is job one.

GPO's headcount is down significantly from its 1970s high point of nearly 8,500 people. Today, we are just over 1,600 teammates, which I believe is about the right size for our team.

However, GPO's workforce is older than the Federal average. The median age of a GPO teammate is 54 years old, while the Federal median is 47.

Our current strategic plan highlights GPO's challenge in maintaining and reinvigorating our team. We identified the age of our workforce and their proximity to retirement as a key test. At the time we developed the plan, we estimated that half of our team would be eligible to retire by 2027, making it one of the most critical challenges we faced.

The good news is that through the actions we have taken over the last several years, we have pushed back that date. Our current estimates indicate that we won't reach that point until 2030, and this does not account for further efforts to recruit the next generation of teammates. We've also seen that, on average, our teammates tend to stay about six years beyond their retirement eligibility.

Developing GPO's Next Generation

As I assumed leadership of GPO, it was clear that we could no longer rely on the same old practices to ensure our team was ready to tackle the challenges of the future. The general decline in the printing industry meant that we no longer had a ready supply of talent that was eager to join GPO. To ensure we have the right people for the future, we would need to be more creative in recruiting and developing our own talent.

We took some concrete steps to recruit and develop the next generation of GPO teammate:

- We restarted our apprentice program, which will add 25 journeypersons to our skilled trade positions, graduating 4 proofreaders, 2 bookbinders, 4 platemakers, and 4 press operators, with another 11 proofreaders set to graduate in February.
- We also shortened our apprenticeships from three years to two, with a greater emphasis on on-the-job training.
- We also created a path for production technicians, a brand-new on-the-job training program for individuals with an aptitude for working in a manufacturing environment. They are learning alongside our journeyperson bookbinders, making passports and Smart Cards, and we've graduated 30 with another 46 still in the program.
- For our professionals, we have had three recent graduate classes to bring talented recent grads into GPO as specialists in IT, contracting, personnel, printing, and other disciplines. To date, 43 people have graduated from the program, and an additional 31 are expected to complete it within the next year. We will consider

running future recent graduate programs depending on our staffing needs in these areas.

- We have also sought to find exceptional talent from other areas of the Federal government, and are extremely fortunate to have been able to hire Julie Balutis, formerly the Director of Grants Policy and Management at IMLS, to serve as our new Managing Director of Library Services and Content Management (LSCM), where she will help us fulfill our goal of a Digital-First Federal Depository Library Program.

That isn't to say that we are without challenges. We have particular crafts where GPO has a majority of teammates who are already eligible to retire. For instance, among our teammates who staff the proofroom, more than half are eligible to retire today. They are very much the backbone of our document conversion work. While they all deserve to enjoy the retirement they earned, we need to ensure that we have enough people to continue this important work.

We're utilizing as many tools as possible to address that critical need. I have already mentioned our apprentices. We have also revised our candidate screening process to broaden our search for individuals with the right skills and to prioritize the use of work sample assessments, helping ensure we hire the most skilled journeypersons. This process has been working, and we hope to have the proofroom fully staffed by the end of the calendar year.

Following the Path to GPO's Future

As Congress has evolved, so has GPO. We have adopted new technologies to meet our customers' operational tempo and demands for more flexible products. We do our best to hold down costs while maintaining our level of service. Because GPO's production work for Congress and our Federal Register customers is so closely intertwined with their work, all these changes are the proverbial engine upgrade while the plane is in flight.

This presents us with a particularly difficult set of challenges as we prepare to wrap up the execution of our current strategic plan and set up the plan for the next five years. We need to continue—and in some cases accelerate—our changes while maintaining our capability to address our customers' reliance on existing workflows.

To continue our efforts at improvement, we must be willing to engage on two levels: (1) the "micro" level, looking for improvements in even our most basic workflows, and (2) the "macro" level, asking ourselves the important questions about how GPO is structured and whether that makes sense for our next decade.

Attacking Calcified Processes

As examples of recent improvements in our workflows, I have two successful examples to share. Both focus on processing bills and other legislative measures.

As this Committee is aware, GPO has been experiencing an ongoing problem with processing bills in a timely manner. Much of this stems from the volume of introduced legislative measures. Between the 112th and 118th Congresses, there was about a

50 percent increase in the number of measures, reaching over 23,000. GPO was consistently behind in processing bills, with a backlog exceeding 1,000 measures at times. These measures are processed by a small team of highly trained proofreaders, all experts in the intricacies of legislative language.

Our efforts were primarily focused on prioritizing our workflow, asking customers to highlight the most important measures, and attending to those first. We addressed the others as time allowed. This understandably left many of the Members upset at the length of time it was taking us to process their introduced measures.

Managing Administrative Overhead

As we analyzed the bill data from the 118th Congress, we learned that while the number of bills and the processing time continued to climb, the number of pages we had to proofread decreased. We discovered that the driver behind the increased processing time was the fixed amount of time required for each measure to perform basic administrative tasks—such as printing, logging the measure into our tracking and accounting systems, and other overhead activities. This type of work takes approximately 10 minutes per measure and was performed during our second and third shifts, when our bill end team was at work. The more bills we had, the longer this step took, regardless of the number of pages that needed to be read.

By moving work on this administrative overhead to the day shift, we were able to free up resources to focus on proofing and processing the actual measures themselves when our experts were working. As a result, we have been able to keep the average number of measures pending in the bill end under 300 for much of 2025.

Processing Bills Without Proofreading

As a result of the important work of the Committee and its Modernization and Innovation Subcommittee, led by Chair Bice and Ranking Member Torres, we began a program in partnership with the Clerk to allow House Members to "opt out" of proofreading for their introduced measures.

Under this program, if a measure is prepared by the House Office of Legislative Counsel and a Member opts to forego proofreading at the time they introduce the measure through the E-Hopper, GPO will process the measure without our traditional review, doing cursory checks for completeness. We will then move the measure into production, making it available online and printing the usual number of copies in our digital print center.

While it is still in the early days, we have seen success in shortening our production cycle for those measures. We can process them as a batch in as little as 20 minutes, compared to the three to seven days required for measures prepared through our traditional process. For those measures, they cost about $4-6 per page less than those processed traditionally.

Since this pilot began, we have processed a total of 1,426 bills, and of those measures, 144 or 9 percent, have opted to forego proofreading. While we believe that GPO's traditional process yields a higher-quality end product, we are pleased to provide an alternative option for Members who want faster availability for their introduced measures and are willing to accept the risks associated with skipping the proofreading process.

These two examples illustrate the benefits of identifying existing bottlenecks and taking straightforward, common-sense steps to alleviate them. We plan to explore other processes that may benefit from a similar treatment.

Beyond processing bills, the Committee has also encouraged our efforts to streamline administrative processes, promote operational efficiencies, and save time for our customers. You supported our work to transition away from the time-consuming and laborious paper-based congressional detail billing process which frequently led to billing backlogs exceeding a year in many instances. That transition, initiated in the House during the last Congress, has now been completed on the Senate side and it is saving GPO employees and Committee staff hundreds of hours a year while ensuring integrity to GPO's billing for the 58 GPO teammates serving as details on Capitol Hill.

Focusing on Fundamentals

GPO continues to evolve to meet the needs of its customers. Unfortunately, its statutes limit our ability to make fundamental changes.

Title 44 was written for the age of print. It makes assumptions about the way GPO operates that haven't been true for decades. Sometimes, we have been able to squeeze modern practices into the liminal spaces between the letter of the law and modern practice. In other cases, we have relied on the guidance of the Joint Committee on Printing to help us navigate the statutory inconsistencies and conserve taxpayer resources.

Like an old house, we know that the bones are good: GPO serves its customers government-wide; we provide the public with free access to government information; and we avoid duplication and waste wherever possible. But also, we know that the systems need a comprehensive overhaul. For instance, when we began providing free digital access to Government information in the 1990s, we simply "bolted on" a new statute without revising any of the underlying provisions.

While this approach works for a while—and in GPO's case, a long while—it's not a substitute for taking a reasoned approach toward fixing GPO's statutes. Every Congress since I've been at GPO, we have supplied our oversight committees with a variety of proposed legislative changes that could put GPO on a more secure footing in the future. These are small things, such as adding "publishing" to the list of services that GPO can provide, and big things, like a complete rewrite of the provisions governing the Federal Depository Library, so that the statute reflects our "digital-first" present.

From my perspective, I am in favor of legislative changes that update our statutes to reflect current practice and are flexible enough for the future to allow GPO to meet the needs of our customers without requiring changes to the law. I believe that our prior legislative submissions meet those tests, and I would welcome the opportunity to work with the Committee to see them enacted.

GPO

Conclusion

Over the past six years, I have had the pleasure of serving as GPO's Director, and I have witnessed the skill and dedication of our team. They come to work each day, committed to delivering for our customers, whether they are a Member of Congress, a librarian, or a passport holder. My job, both now and in the future, is to make sure that they have the tools they need to help us realize our vision of an *America Informed*. Thank you for your support of our team's efforts.

A great deal has changed since I first testified before the Committee on House Administration in March of 2020. Back then GPO was reporting approximately 34 million monthly information retrievals on GovInfo—today we get more than 165 million per month. We were also producing about 15 million annual passports for the State Department—in FY 2026 we are shooting for 27 million. And while change is inevitable, it is critical for GPO that we look to the future with a mindset for continuous improvement.

Chairman Steil, Ranking Member Morelle, and Members of the Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before the Committee today, and to work with all of you. This kind of oversight work helps us tell our story and learn where we can be better.

I know that I have covered a lot of ground, and there are likely topics that I have not addressed in my statement that may interest you. I stand ready to answer any questions that you may have and appreciate the opportunity.

GPO

Hugh Nathanial Halpern, *GPO Director*

Hugh Nathanial Halpern is the U.S. Government Publishing Office (GPO) Director, the agency's chief executive officer. The agency is responsible for publishing and printing information for the three branches of the Federal Government. Halpern is the 28th person to lead GPO since the agency opened its doors for business on March 4, 1861, the same day Abraham Lincoln was inaugurated as the 16th President of the United States. President Donald Trump nominated Halpern to be GPO Director on October 17, 2019, and the U.S. Senate confirmed him on December 4, 2019.

Biography

Prior to coming to GPO, Halpern held a succession of leadership positions during his 30 years on Capitol Hill. He served as the Director of Floor Operations for the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives. In that role, Halpern was the highest-ranking floor staffer in the House and served as Speaker Paul Ryan's Chief Advisor on all procedural matters. He managed the daily floor operations of the House, served as the liaison to all leadership offices, and oversaw legislative interactions between The White House, House and Senate. In 2018, he received the John W. McCormack Award of Excellence, the highest award given to a staff member in the House. The award recognizes a lifetime of bipartisan service to the House.

In addition to his position in the Speaker's Office, Halpern has more than a decade of experience serving on the senior leadership staff. He has a proven track record of successfully leading teams to achieve results.

During his career, he served half a dozen different committees in both policy development and procedural roles. During his 11 years on the House Committee on Rules, Halpern served as Staff Director leading the management and terms of debate on the House floor. In 2001, he was named General Counsel by Chairman Mike Oxley for the newly established House Committee on Financial Services. During his tenure, the committee provided legislation addressing terrorist financing and money laundering, improving investor confidence in the wake of the Enron and WorldCom scandals and granting consumers important new tools to fight identity theft. During the 1990s, Halpern served on the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, where he handled a variety of legislative issues, including automobile safety, insurance, FTC consumer protection and tobacco regulation. Halpern began his career in Congress as an intern for Rep. E.G. "Bud" Shuster in 1987.

Halpern served a number of temporary positions during his time on Capitol Hill. He was the Parliamentarian to the First Select Committee on Homeland Security, which created the Department of Homeland Security, General Counsel to the Select Committee to investigate the voting irregularities of August 2, 2007, and Assistant Parliamentarian to the 2008, 2012, and 2016 Republican National Conventions.

A native of Hollidaysburg, PA, Halpern received bachelor's and master's degrees in Political Science from American University in 1991 and 1992, respectively. He also received a law degree from George Mason University in 1997. Halpern has been included in Roll Call's list of 50 most powerful Congressional staffers 14 times and featured in a National Journal profile as one of "The New Power Players" on Capitol Hill.



GPO

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Chairman STEIL. Thank you very much, Director.

I will begin our questions, followed by the Ranking Member. I recognize myself for 5 minutes.

I want to start off with GPO's role for a hundred years in the passport operation. As we look back a handful of years ago, there were significant delays as it relates to passports. Obviously, there is a role of the State Department, GPO.

Was part of that delay the result of GPO technology? Could you provide a little bit of color as to what that delay was and how some of that has already been solved in ways that GPO is analyzing a potential future increase in the demand for passports?

Mr. HALPERN. Absolutely.

It is important to remember GPO produces the blank passports. The State Department then adjudicates and personalizes. During my tenure, supply has never been a real issue in backlogs.

That said, the State Department keeps increasing their orders. This year it is a record 27 million. We are on track to provide that number of passports this year to the State Department.

We have boosted our capabilities to deliver passports to the processing centers in a timely fashion. For instance, we just opened up a new distribution facility adjacent to our Pueblo distribution facility where we can ensure that West Coast processing facilities will be within 1 day's delivery time for passports, much like East Coast and southern processing centers.

We continue to work with our State Department customer to make sure that we deliver the supplies they need.

Chairman STEIL. I am going to bring you all the way down. You think, from the supply side of GPO, you think you can meet the demand that is there.

Mr. HALPERN. We believe we can.

Chairman STEIL. OK.

Mr. HALPERN. We are continuing to hire folks. We need to make sure that we have——

Chairman STEIL. Understood. Only cognizant of the time. We could go for 5 hours talking about it. That is helpful to know as I think making sure that these are processed quickly is really important.

Mr. HALPERN. Absolutely.

Chairman STEIL. Let me shift gears a little bit into the business model.

Uniquely, GPO is largely self-funded, about a 90/10 ratio, 10 percent appropriated by Congress, 90 percent billing your customers, if you will.

As you look out at the change in the business model from printing into more of a digital framework, do you think you can maintain that balance? Can you improve upon that balance? How do you look out in the future?

Mr. HALPERN. Absolutely.

The short answer is that our pricing structure is focused on what it takes for us to produce the entire item. Let me give you an example. The Congressional Record is a good example.

We bill that at several hundred dollars per page, and that includes everything from doing the document conversion to laying it out to ultimately producing it online and in its tangible format.

One price covers everything. That has worked really, really well for us. We adjust those prices as we need to.

We realize that both Congress and some of our executive branch customers are increasingly price conscious. We are looking for new investments in technology and other things to drive those costs down.

Chairman STEIL. With my 90 seconds remaining, I want to touch base on that technology. Some of what you talked about earlier I think was quite interesting about how you are converting hard text into digital format.

Obviously, AI has a huge opportunity and just broadly technology writ large. When we think about that conversion process, what it looked like even five or 10 years ago, we are light years ahead of where we were.

Do you utilize AI? Do you think you have the technology needed? How do you think that will transform GPO?

Mr. HALPERN. We use machine learning and associated technologies in a variety of different places. We are looking very closely at solutions.

One thing that we have deployed recently is a technology called Schematron which can figure out if our structured data files are internally consistent and flag problems before they become bigger problems.

We still have not found a good substitute for a GPO proofreader. They have been doing this work for years. They know how you talk and they know what that is supposed to look like. Their job is to make sure that they are faithfully presenting your remarks in the Congressional Record or in your bill or whatever, and we have not found a machine that can do that as well as our well-trained folks yet.

I think we are open to looking at a mix of technologies that can really let our people do the work they do best and try and clear out some of that more routine scut work.

Chairman STEIL. Very good. Thank you very much, Director. Thanks for being here. Welcome back to the House.

Mr. HALPERN. Thank you.

Chairman STEIL. I yield back.

I now recognize the Ranking Member, Mr. Morelle, for questions.

Mr. MORELLE. Thank you. Thank you Mr. Chairman.

In your testimony, you talk about Title 44, which governs much of GPO's activity, which I think, as you said, was written for the age of print and no longer reflects how GPO operates today.

With much of our publications needing to move to digital formats, are there statutory printing obligations that you currently have which you think no longer serve your mission or customers that we should be thinking about?

Mr. HALPERN. The way GPO is structured and the way Title 44 is structured is GPO is governed by the Joint Committee on Printing, which this year is chaired by the Senate, but in the past it alternates between the House and the Senate.

The JCP, working with GPO, has found ways to sort of, as I like to put it, operate in the liminal spaces of our statute, so that we can usually find ways to get around some of the more rigid parts of Title 44.

A good example is the number of printed copies we are supposed to make is written in statute. That does not make any sense anymore. Addressing what we call the usual number to reflect the current practice where we work closely with JCP and the Clerk and the Secretary of the Senate to make sure that we are not overproducing things that people do not need.

We have submitted to this Committee and to the Senate a series of legislative proposals, some big, some very small, and we are happy to talk with you all about what the right package there looks like.

Mr. MORELLE. Well, and I would certainly defer to the Subcommittee chair on Modernization and the Ranking Member, Mrs. Torres, to take those up.

I think it is interesting, not only here in Washington, but my prior life in the State legislature in New York, how many things get written into statute that make no sense. I mean, when you think about it over time, it is like every time we have to change a number, we have to go back and rewrite or change the law and it does become outmoded. There are probably better ways to do it.

I would certainly, Mr. Chair, look forward to working with you and the Subcommittee chair and Ranking Member to make that easier.

If you were asked what is one legislative change for the Committee to prioritize as it relates to GPO, are there any thoughts that you have about ways we can continue to serve the mission but make it easier, more effective, more efficient, or things that you just think, "OK, why do we have to do it this way?"

Mr. HALPERN. There are a number of changes, one of which—a good example is——

Mr. MORELLE. I would like a good example. Do not give me a bad example.

Mr. HALPERN. I have got plenty of bad ones.

Mr. MORELLE. Give me a good one.

Mr. HALPERN. A good example would be the fact that our statutes do not spell out the fact that we can provide publishing services in addition to printing services for a lot of our customers.

The addition of just that one word vastly expands what we can provide our personnel, whether it is our congressional customers or our executive branch customers, because we are not doing as much printing anymore.

Really what we are doing is helping folks prepare these documents. At the end of the day, if you need a set number of printed copies, we have got the machinery to do that.

That is not the No. 1 thing we do anymore.

Mr. MORELLE. Got it. OK. That is very helpful.

I think, again, I would defer to my colleagues, but I think we are all looking for ways to continue the mission and make sure that at the end of the day the most important thing is that the information is made available to taxpayers and the citizens so that they can continue to feel like they have transparency and access to the Government.

It is no—there is no secret that when Abe Lincoln was inaugurated 165 years ago today, and the—or not today, this next month, March—and the Government Printing Office, it was just different,

done differently, and you could not foresee the world as it is today. We want to make sure we keep present and keep active.

I have other questions that related to your comments to "bolt on" to digital capabilities in the absence of formed law, but I think I will defer. We can have further conversations.

In the interest of time and the fact that I have 6 seconds left, let me just conclude by thanking you again for being here, for your leadership, your team.

Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity to ask some questions. I yield back.

Chairman STEIL. Thank you. The gentleman yields back.

The gentleman from Virginia, Mr. Griffith, is recognized for his 5 minutes.

Mr. GRIFFITH. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I greatly appreciate it.

Mr. Halpern, good to see you.

Mr. HALPERN. You too, sir.

Mr. GRIFFITH. Hope you are doing well.

Mr. HALPERN. Thank you.

Mr. GRIFFITH. Earlier this Congress, I introduced H.R. 6028, the Legislative Branch Agencies Clarification Act. One of the things that the bill does is it transfers the power to appoint the Director of the GPO from the President to a congressional commission consisting of House and Senate leadership as well as the chairs of the House Administration Committee and the Senate Rules Committee.

Do you agree with me that these changes would help strengthen transparency, continuity, and accountability at GPO compared to the current appointment process?

Mr. HALPERN. Absolutely.

The GPO provisions in your bill actually do three things, and they are all very important.

First is, as you mentioned, it addresses the constitutional issues surrounding the appointment of the Director.

There are two other constitutional issues where we have been sort of operating in that liminal space between the executive and legislative.

One is what we call the print mandate, the requirement that people use GPO. The executive branch has said that is unconstitutional since the mid-1980's. We have sort of skirted around that and we kind of ignore it these days, but it is still on the books.

The last place, which in my opinion is just as important as the appointment of the Director, is our personnel system. Through sort of a fluke from President Harding—I believe it was President Harding, maybe it was President Cleveland—but by executive order they placed GPO's personnel system under what today is OPM. I think that provides the same kinds of constitutional conflicts that we get from the print mandate and others.

I believe that the series of reforms you have got in your bill would serve GPO well into the future, both with respect to our obligations to the legislative branch but to all of the other work we do as well.

Mr. GRIFFITH. I appreciate that. We are going to blame it on Harding because Coolidge's secretary, which would now be the

chief of staff, was a former Congressman from the Ninth Congressional District of Virginia.

Mr. HALPERN. There you go.

Mr. GRIFFITH. It is going to be Harding's fault, not Coolidge's. I am just saying.

That said, let me show my ignorance on something, because I am always trying to learn stuff.

I heard and was interested in your testimony where you said that the processing bills without proofreading. Is that before it comes to me for me to file?

Mr. HALPERN. No, sir.

Mr. GRIFFITH. It is after that.

Mr. HALPERN. What happens today for a bill that goes through the normal process is we receive from the Clerk the——

Mr. GRIFFITH. After passage.

Mr. HALPERN. After introduction.

Mr. GRIFFITH. After introduction. OK.

Mr. HALPERN. We receive the paper version, the manuscript, from the Clerk. We also usually, but not always, get an electronic file that goes with it. If you went to Leg Counsel, that is great for us, because we get a really good electronic file. Sometimes we only get a Word file. It does not help us all that much.

My team's job is to make sure that that paper, because that is the official document of record, matches that electronic file.

Mr. GRIFFITH. OK.

Mr. HALPERN. We often have questions. Sometimes there is a discrepancy between the two, or sometimes, because my folks look at literally thousands of bills a week, they are pretty good at going, "Did you actually mean to leave off three zeros in this figure?"

Mr. GRIFFITH. If we use the AI concept, is there some way that if there is a glitch—because every now and then there will be—that we can catch that?

Mr. HALPERN. We hope so. I have got high faith in my team that we are going to catch stuff.

There is a lot of stuff like capitalization or how you structure some of these typographic styles. That stuff we can probably get through some sort of automated system.

It is that more refined view where the guys who proofread—guys and gals who proofread bills—they are kind of like well-trained paralegals. They know what they are looking at. Free them up to see if they can spot the bigger mistakes.

Mr. GRIFFITH. My time is running out.

Would you go back and double-check AI every so often?

Mr. HALPERN. Yes. I think we would——

Mr. GRIFFITH. Samples? Core samples?

Mr. HALPERN [continuing]. we would have first cut on low-level stuff and then have our people——

Mr. GRIFFITH. I am sure Mrs. Bice is much better versed on this, but I think it is a good plan. I just wanted to make sure that I understood exactly what it was, because if it is before it is introduced, I am proofreading it.

Mr. HALPERN. Right. Absolutely.

Mr. GRIFFITH. I yield back.

Chairman STEIL. The gentleman yields back.

The gentlewoman from California, whose home district will be about a hundred degrees warmer than mine this weekend, Representative Torres is recognized.

Mrs. TORRES. Come to my district. Always invited.

Chairman, I think this is one of the best meetings that we have had where there is, like, you have already asked all my questions, and it is really great.

I want to follow up on the passport question that the Chairman asked. If we have a surge, all of us are encouraging our constituents to apply for their American passport. If we have a surge, are you prepared to deal with that?

Mr. HALPERN. We believe we are.

Mrs. TORRES. OK.

Mr. HALPERN. We manufacture passports in two locations, one here in D.C., right on the other side of Union Station, and the other in Stennis in Mississippi.

Both of those facilities run most of the week. Stennis runs basically all day, every day. We found it is more efficient to run four 10-hour days with our folks. We run two of those shifts a day. Then in Stennis we also run a weekend shift, a Friday, Saturday, Sunday shift.

Mrs. TORRES. OK. That could be scaled up if needed.

Mr. HALPERN. Right. Right.

Mrs. TORRES. OK.

Mr. HALPERN. We can hire more people to do that.

At some point we will just run into a—our machines will have a top-level capacity. We are in the process of replacing some of those machines with more modern equipment that will have better uptime, better processing speeds, all in preparation for the next version of the passport when State is ready to move forward with that.

Mrs. TORRES. OK. As you know, Modernization Chair Bice and I are working on how to best modernize the legislative branch systems, including GPO.

I am concerned that Congress is asking you to serve the public with a budget that has not kept pace with how people access information anymore. The Fiscal Year 2026 funding level for GPO is $800 million.

Can you talk a little bit about your budgetary needs and what is it that you need?

Mr. HALPERN. Sure.

As I mentioned, we are largely self-funded. For Congress, you give us about $80 million a year for those programs.

Mrs. TORRES. The price for the passports went up.

Mr. HALPERN. Price for passports went up. Just to give you an idea of the cost structure, it depends on the year and depends on quantity. We charge the State Department someplace between $23 and $25 dollars per book.

Sometimes they will give us a supplemental order, an extra million at the end of a year. We will have already recouped all of our overhead costs. We can drive that individual piece down to basically the cost of materials and a little bit of labor.

In terms of the work we do for Congress, we are within the budget that you all have given us. It is a difficult estimating process for

us. Based on historical data, we estimate what your volume will be in a particular year and try and match that with the appropriate level we get for that.

Where we actually run into a much tighter budgetary situation is with the Federal Depository Library Program. That is a purely appropriated program.

The good news is we have driven down the costs of that program, because it is now largely digital. It is just feeding off of the files we are creating every day.

With that said, we still have librarians and other really highly skilled professionals in that unit, and those personnel costs continue to increase.

In terms of——

Mrs. TORRES. I am going to stop you there, because we are running out of time, and I really want you to tell our Members—or at least to say it out loud once more—how many amendments Members of Congress file.

Mr. HALPERN. I apologize, I actually do not have up-to-date numbers. In terms of bills, we are well up over 7,000. Last Congress it was almost 23,000 measures between the House and the Senate. Each one of those my team needs to read—it is a little different this year—and make sure that we are accurate.

It is difficult work. I can give you a small recent example, less with a bill, but with the work we do on legislation.

There was a large insert into the Congressional Record just a couple of weeks ago and we did not get the underlying Word document. All we got was a scanned version. We actually had to do that—we had to read that document twice.

Mrs. TORRES. Wow.

Mr. HALPERN. Once was convert that scanned document into a text file and make sure that that translation was accurate; and then engross all of the handwritten changes and things like that with that scanned document.

If we are getting good files on the front end, that can help us speed up that process, but——

Mrs. TORRES. Thank you.

Thank you, Chairman, for your generosity in time.

Chairman STEIL. Thank you very much. The gentlewoman yields back.

The gentlewoman from Oklahoma, who is the chair of the Subcommittee on Modernization, who has been ingratiated into this issue, is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. BICE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Director Halpern, it is great to see you again.

Mr. HALPERN. Always.

Mrs. BICE. Glad to have you with us.

I want to also thank you for your work with the Modernization Subcommittee and the Clerk's Office to pilot the waiving proofreading option for bill introductions.

I was able to have a little sidebar with my colleague from Virginia to explain sort of the reasons for the waiving of proofreading. I think it has been, I would say, successful in trying to help reduce the number of bills that you are having to proofread, but also getting things through the pipeline a bit quicker.

Thank you for your work on that issue.

Last year, I also introduced legislation to remove the printing requirement for the Constitution Annotated, CONAN, and replace it with a digital-only version. According to the CBO, replacing the print version of CONAN with the digital version, which is already publicly available and out there, would reduce the Library of Congress' operating costs by $4 million over the next several years.

The Library has actually hosted CONAN on their website since 2019. It is easily searchable, accessible, and provides links to Supreme Court decisions, and it is being updated real time by CRS, which is incredibly important.

Despite this, we are still spending a tremendous amount of money on producing hard copies of it, because it is required by statute. You addressed previously there are many of these areas that have been codified in statute that you are required to print, and I would love the opportunity to work with you to find some ways to reduce that burden.

My assumption would—and this is the first question—be that many of the printed documents or books that you are currently producing are available online. Is that correct?

Mr. HALPERN. Absolutely. Almost everything is available online, either through GovInfo or some other fashion. Yes.

Mrs. BICE. Great. I think there is an opportunity for us to be able to scale that back, still providing transparency for the American people if they want to read these documents, but saving taxpayer money because they are available digitally, and when the original statutes were written, that was not an option.

Mr. HALPERN. Absolutely. If I can just sort of fill in there just a hair.

One of the changes—and I cannot take credit for this, this was happening as I arrived at GPO—but one of the changes we made was shifting from traditional offset printing to digital inkjet technology for a lot of our more routine documents.

Offset printing requires large quantities to be economical. That first copy that comes off of the press costs you thousands of dollars and everything else is just pennies, whereas digital inkjet, it is a per copy cost. You are paying for ink and materials and that machine.

As a result, a digital inkjet press does not care whether we are printing 10 copies of something or 10,000 copies of something.

That allows our process to be a lot more economical, a lot more automated, and really help drive down those costs, and we are always looking for technologies that will enable us to do things like that.

Mrs. BICE. What would you say is the percentage of documents that are now being printed using digital rather than offset?

Mr. HALPERN. I can get you that exact number. It is most of our daily publications, so the Congressional Record, Federal Register, CFRs.

We are getting ready to retire one of our big offset presses that we purchased about 10 years ago, because we can supplement all of the work that we were doing.

That machine gets used for hearings, big reports, that kind of thing. We can do all of that through digital inkjet and the cost is a lot lower.

Mrs. BICE. I like saving taxpayer money, so it is great to hear that.

Let me pivot, if I may, to your website talks about ten different use cases for AI that are being utilized, piloted, or currently under review, and as the Subcommittee on Modernization, that is something that we are looking at. How do we properly and responsibly bring AI into the legislative discussion here and be able to utilize it?

Our offices are actually adopting Microsoft Copilot to be able to allow for speedy access to information through email or calendar review and utilizing AI.

Talk a little bit about what you are doing on the AI front.

Mr. HALPERN. Sure.

It is probably not a lot different than what the House is doing sort of on the administrative side. For instance, we are using Copilot to help draft contract terms for our acquisitions professionals. Again, need a human being on the other side of that to make sure you are doing it right. I got a lot of lawyers who need to make sure that we are——

Mrs. BICE. Do not want to lose their job?

Mr. HALPERN. Exactly. They also need to make sure we are getting this right, because the cost on the other side if we do not get it right can be big.

Things like that. Using it for internal administrative stuff. I will fully tell you, when it comes time for annual reviews and I get pages and pages and pages of stuff, I am like, "Hey, Copilot, can you put this into a couple of paragraphs for me to stick in the form so that we capture this," and it does a pretty good job of that.

We are also looking to use AI tools to help with our cataloguing activities with the Federal Depository Library Program.

We still need good, experienced librarians and catalogers to get that work done. If we can—just like I was talking about with bills—if we can get the machine to do the more rudimentary, the sort of initial tasks, and then free up our people to do the work that they need to do, that is really the best use of this technology.

Mrs. BICE. Thank you so much for being with us this afternoon, Dr. Halpern.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman STEIL. The gentlewoman yields back.

We believe one more Member is literally outside the door, so we are going to pause for 30 seconds with the blessing of the Ranking Member. If he is here, we will continue. If he is not, we will wrap up. We will just hold for just a moment.

[Pause.]

Mr. HALPERN. I am used to this from my days running the floor.

Chairman STEIL. As director of House operations, this would be called a regular Thursday in your book.

Mr. HALPERN. I have heard more than one time people yelling "one more" from the back of the chamber.

Mr. MORELLE. I apologize, I do have to leave. I do want to thank you again.

Mr. HALPERN. Absolutely.

Mr. MORELLE. I look forward to staying in touch.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman STEIL. Thank you, Ranking Member.

Not that any of us have too many things to do on a day where they have moved votes up from yesterday due to the weather, so everybody is getting a little bit double booked this afternoon. We appreciate everybody bearing with.

We will now recognize the gentleman who is probably out of breath from a short jog across campus, Mr. Carey, for 5 minutes.

Mr. CAREY. Mr. Chairman, I do appreciate your indulgence. There is a little bit of a line outside the Ways and Means Committee, as you can imagine.

It has been truly my honor to support our Chairwoman Bice in her initiatives to modernize the House through the efforts of the Modernization Committee, and a significant aspect of our work is the implementation of the AI technologies for congressional offices and administrative staff.

Breathe.

In this regard, Chairwoman Bice and I are constantly looking to understand how other Government offices are incorporating AI and machine learning systems into their daily operations.

Which brings me to the GPO's Model Context Protocol, or the MCP.

The Model Context Protocol is an open-source standard that allows connecting artificial intelligence applications to external systems.

In short, the public can use this protocol to examine the troves of data and better understand Government information.

Can you share a little bit more about this development, and as you share that, maybe explain kind of in layman's terms so people can understand exactly what that—as you are describing what you are doing, describe what it means.

Mr. HALPERN. Sure.

The Model Context Protocol—and I will preface this with I am not an expert in constructing APIs and these similar kinds of things, but I will do my best.

The Model Context Protocol is an avenue in for these other kinds of LLMs and other kinds of AI models so that they can utilize our depository of data and use it without having to constantly train on it ahead of time.

It is a lot more efficient, particularly for a dataset that changes literally every day, multiple times a day. Every time we upload a new addition of the Congressional Record or a new group of bills that have been introduced the day before, that dataset changes.

This enables your AI tool, whether it is Claude or Gemini or ChatGPT or whatever, it gives those tools a root into our dataset so that it can effectively query that dataset, find the answers it is looking for, and then present that back.

Everybody was talking about at the beginning of sort of this AI revolution, like, what chatbot are we going to adopt for GovInfo, and that is not the best use of our resources, because folks on the outside are going to be a lot smarter about this than we can be.

Mr. CAREY. I appreciate that.

I know we only have a minute 44, and, obviously, your role in the processing and publishing of bill texts that are online and I think—and, obviously, you worked on the Hill, as many of us have over the years, whether in this capacity or at the staff level.

One of the things that I have found, that it is very easy to get the bill text, but to upload—and I am sure this is complicated—what exactly are kind of the synopsis of the bill.

Then I was finding just the other night trying to put together some remarks as related to blockchain and bitcoin and the complexities therein, even when you have a breakdown, it gets to be more complicated.

One of the things that I have discussed with our team is the possibility of somehow—and I know most of these are all verbal—but somehow a visual application as it relates to the structure and the contents of a particular piece of legislation and vis-à-vis also the synopsis of that legislation.

In going through some of the things that you have done—and I know I am cutting into your time—but it is something that I want to continue to work on, my team will be working with you on that.

I appreciate you coming back to your old stomping grounds and look forward to working with you in the future.

Again, Mr. Chairman, thank you for indulging me to be in two places at once. With that, I yield back.

Chairman STEIL. The gentleman yields back. It is the only thing no one can do, be in two places at one time, although sometimes we wish we could.

Appreciate everyone's participation.

I want to thank you, Director, for coming before us today. The Members of the Committee may have some additional questions for you, and we ask that you please respond to those questions in writing.

Without objection, each Member will have five legislative days to insert additional material into the record to revise and extend their remarks.

There being no further business, I thank the Members for their participation.

Without objection, the Committee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 2:58 p.m., the Committee was adjourned.]

QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD

Committee on House Administration

Oversight of the Government Publishing Office in a Digital-First Era
January 22, 2026

Majority Questions for the Record for GPO Director Hugh Halpern

1. **In 2022, the Director's Task Force on a Digital FDLP identified specific steps to maintain public access to tangible copies of publications, digitize and ingest information to GovInfo, and to develop the metadata and inventory components to track and manage collections.**

    a. **Can you share with us the progress to date on implementing recommendations from the Digital FDLP Task Force?**

Library Services and Content Management (LSCM) has been working to implement the Task Force Recommendations since 2023. A detailed tracker was maintained early in the process and may be of interest https://www.fdlp.gov/about-the-fdlp/Action-Items-to-Implement-a-Digital-FDLP .

To date, the biggest visible change has been specifying the program as digital-first along with the creation of a list of Limited Print Distribution (LPD) titles. This reduced the number of print items distributed to libraries by a factor of 10. Core titles were selected to remain available in print, as recommended by the Task Force. A list of LPD titles can be found at https://www.fdlp.gov/sites/default/files/file_repo/print-distribution-titles-list-version3-2026-01-30.pdf , and their distribution is available via https://fdlp.gov/depository-tools/print-distribution-dashboard.

Other program updates and adjustments related to our digital transition are available at https://www.fdlp.gov/project/digital-fdlp-implementation.

There are also additional Task Force recommendations that require legislative action to be implemented. Fortunately, most of those were included in H.R. 9490, the GPO Modernization Act of 2024, which Chairman Steil introduced in the last Congress. We are grateful for his leadership and proud to have worked with the Committee on efforts to modernize the FDLP. We hope to have an opportunity to advance those provisions this year.

    b. **How will you ensure that access to tangible copies of publications will remain for those who do not have digital access?**

Ensuring continued access to tangible copies of publications in an age of digital media remains a top priority. Even today, not everyone has online access, and GPO is committed to making public information available to all. The historic print collections (c. 1814 – 2024) remain in depository libraries with preservation and collaborative management support from LSCM. The LPD copies (2024 -) are carefully distributed across geography and library types, including libraries that lend materials to other libraries for their users (Inter-Library Loan, or ILL). Depository libraries provide public access to digital copies in their facilities, and many offer printing options. The library community and LSCM continue to review options for print-on-demand (other than a standard office printer), and while there are encouraging advances (including at GPO), these services are not yet feasible for the FDLP.

Some agencies choose to discontinue their printed publications, meaning they are not available for distribution even in limited form, and sometimes not available in a similar format (e.g. PDF) for digital access. In part because of LSCM training offerings, dedicated FDLP librarians are experts in finding and using government information, even as formats shift from print to digital datasets. They are available to assist researchers in understanding how to discover and use new forms of government information.

2. **According to title 44, the Congressional Directory is a document that must be printed each Congress under the direction of the Joint Committee on Printing. This includes listings of each member of Congress, federal officials, and other data. In addition to a printed component, GPO posts the Directory online GovInfo.gov.**
    a. **How much does it cost for GPO to print and distribute the mandated copies of the Congressional Directory?**

The average cost to produce, print and bind the "bylaw" copies of the past four Congressional Directories—from the 115th through the 118th Congresses—was approximately $862,000. The printing and binding costs represent a fairly modest share of those overall production costs, and amounted to an approximate $49,000 in the 119th Congress.

Included in that cost of production is the cost of producing the electronic version and making that publicly available for free. Our records show that there were 3.8 million retrievals of the Congressional Directory from GPO's GovInfo in calendar year 2025.

The number of pages in each directory varies, and the cost is largely dependent upon the number of pages. Starting with the 119th Congress, the directory underwent significant changes to streamline and expedite production, resulting in a reduction in printed pages.

b. What is the average amount of time it takes to produce the Congressional Directory? What are some factors that contribute to delays?

The compilation and production of the Congressional Directory can take anywhere from 12 to 24 months. On average, it takes about 16 months. Per the Joint Committee on Printing (JCP) Directive, changes implemented in 2025 for the 119th Congress have significantly reduced compilation and production times.

There are several factors that contribute to long production times, including delays in receiving responses from agencies, Members' offices, and committees. The verification of counties, zip codes, municipalities, and townships from individual district listing, descriptive and statistical information, as well as judicial and executive information, can be time-consuming. The JCP, in collaboration with GPO, identified ways to improve production efficiency to reduce duplicative work by eliminating certain data from the Congressional Directory, starting with the 119th Congressional Directory.

The actual printing of the publication is not a significant component of the overall production time; however, GPO's intention is to continue working with JCP to reduce that production time in the future.

3. **Throughout U.S. Code and statute are several provisions that define a role for GPO to print and bind publications produced by Congress and federal agencies. Often Members receive mandated copies of reports that are easily accessible online and end up disposing of physical copies they have received from GPO.**
    a. **Does GPO have a way to measure the number of documents which are printed, but ultimately not utilized by Member offices, federal agencies, or the public? In other words, is there an evaluation of the printing being completed to see if the number of printed copies can be reduced?**

The production of extraneous or unneeded and unwanted physical copies of Government publications was a significant issue ten or more years ago, while the early transition to digital publication began. That transition is considerably further along today, and in recent years, GPO has worked hand in glove with our customers, including Congress, to largely eliminate unwanted tangible copies.

For example, in the 1990s, the daily circulation of the Congressional Record exceeded 20,000 copies. Today, that figure is down to around 1,200 copies, most of which are provided to institutional customers who explicitly want tangible copies.

Fundamentally, GPO produces what our customers ask us to produce and what they pay for, and they often change the quantity and distribution of publications we help them create. We are certainly always available to respond to requests through either our Congressional Customer Service office, or Governmental Affairs office.

b. Is there a process that GPO maintains to collect feedback from Members or that allows Members to opt-out of receiving physical copies of publications?

If Members receive publications they do not want, they can contact our Governmental Affairs office at (202) 512-1968.They can also use the online form found at https://www.gpo.gov/who-we-are/our-agency/publication-distribution-update-form.

c. Do you have recommendations for limiting the amount of government documents that are printed?

As described above, GPO endeavors to limit the production of tangible documents to those that are necessary. Because Congress continues to rely on paper as the medium of record, some printed copies will always be required. By investing in digital printing technology, such as digital inkjet and toner-based presses, GPO strives to keep production costs as low as possible.

4. GPO has been working with the National Archives and Center for Legislative Archives to secure space with enough storage capacity to meet 50 years of congressional work. As project manager, GPO has been working with the National Archives, Secretary of the Senate, and Clerk of the House to build out this project.

a. Can you provide an update on this project and lay out next steps?

The first phase of the CLA project, which consists of more than 30,000 square feet of archival space on the 3rd floor of GPO's Building A, was completed in 2020 and has been operational since. Opening this space solved the need for immediate and mid-term congressional archival space.

The second phase, for an additional 32,000 square feet of space on the 4th floor of GPO's Building A, is currently under development. Funding to build out the project was originally provided in fiscal year 2017. Once complete, this component of the project will bring the total archival capacity to 50 years.

Construction on Phase II has been bifurcated into two stages. There is currently $7.9 million in funding appropriated to complete the first stage of construction, which GPO is about to put out to bid. Following completion of that stage, additional resources will be required in future years to equip and furnish the space. Because the first Phase of the CLA project is open and operational, with capacity for several years to come, there is no imminent need to fully equip and furnish the Phase II space at this time.

Because sufficient resources are in place to complete the facility's basic construction, the decision was made to move forward before construction costs rise. Decisions regarding equipping the facility can be addressed later.

b. How is GPO reconfiguring its storage needs to maintain tangible copies – and of important publications?

GPO maintains two significant warehouse/distribution facilities. One is in Laurel, Maryland, and one is in Pueblo, Colorado. In recent years, GPO has sought and secured JCP approval to remove redundant publications from storage after confirming with the Superintendent of Documents that sufficient tangible copies had been retained and made available to the public.

We are confident that we have sufficient space to hold adequate copies of those publications for which there is a public interest in tangible copies.

5. In the 118th Congress, the GPO Modernization Act of 2024 (H.R. 9490) included language that would permit GPO to accept gifts, bequests, and donations, aligning with other legislative and federal agencies.

a. How could this authority be used to help advance GPO's mission to ensure public access to government public information?

Granting GPO the authority to accept gifts would significantly boost the Agency's ability to deliver Government information to the American people. First, it would facilitate the acceptance of bequests of important published materials that might be suitable for the FDLP or digitization. Secondly, it would also permit GPO to accept products offered by vendors for testing and evaluation, which we cannot do today.

But perhaps the most significant way such authority would be of value to GPO is that it would provide a means to significantly expand collaborations with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to promote transparency in government. For example, this provision would allow GPO to accept digital publishing supplies, such as tagged files, metadata, and

computer code, from NGOs with a demonstrated commitment and expertise in this area of public policy.

GPO could then use those building blocks to accelerate the development of digital publishing solutions for GPO's congressional and Federal agency customers to meet their goals for expanded accessibility and transparency. GPO could build specialized solutions for Federal customers that incorporate enough common standards to be interoperable with the wider world.

The types of expanded collaborations fostered by this proposed GPO gift authority could bridge the gaps between the needs of the open government advocacy community and the practical limitations that confront many congressional offices and Federal agencies.

6. **GPO successfully launched a public website to receive and make available congressionally mandated reports under legislation enacted in 2022. This centralized repository contains access to several hundreds of reports from federal agencies and was set up ahead of schedule by GPO.**
    a. **Does GPO have any data on the agencies and reports that are required to be available through this repository, but which have not yet been submitted?**

As of February 20, 2026, GPO's CMR site contains 856 reports from 88 Federal agencies. Each Federal agency is responsible for determining which, if any, of its reports meet the definition of "congressionally mandated report" and are required to be submitted under the Access to Congressionally Mandated Reports Act. A record of each report submitted to the House of Representatives and the Senate is published in the House and Senate Executive Communications sections of the daily Congressional Record, but these records are insufficient to determine whether a report meets the definition of "congressionally mandated report" (Pub. L. 117-263, Sec. 7242(2)).

Records of reports submitted directly to congressional committees or subcommittees are not published in the Congressional Record, and there is no comprehensive list of the statutory requirements for reports submitted to congressional committees or subcommittees. These insufficiencies inhibit GPO's ability to determine which reports should have been submitted for publication on GovInfo.

    b. **What approaches are being taken to ensure agencies comply with this legislation, and how can GPO receive access to applicable reports?**

The Access to Congressionally Mandated Reports Act places the responsibility for submitting reports on Federal agencies (Pub. L. 117-263, Sec. 7244(a)) and restricts the

GPO Director from publishing any congressionally mandated report received from anyone other than the agency head, or designated officer or employee (Pub. L. 117-263, Sec. 7244(e)).

To facilitate submission by Federal agencies, GPO has taken the following actions:

1. Published and actively maintain A Guide for Federal Agencies to Comply with the Access to Congressionally Mandated Reports Act (https://www.gpo.gov/how-to-work-with-us/agency/congressionally-mandated-reports).
2. Continued to enhance the Congressionally Mandated Reports Submission Portal.
3. Conducted biannual outreach to registered agency submitters with reminders about the requirement to submit reports, and links to resources.
4. Responded to submitter login account requests and questions about submitting congressionally mandated reports within 1 business day.

Committee on House Administration

Oversight of the Government Publishing Office in a Digital-First Era
January 22, 2026

Minority Questions for the Record for GPO Director Hugh Halpern

1. **How were GPO's receipts affected by last year's government shutdown?**

The lapse in appropriations significantly affected GPO's first-quarter of FY 2026, resulting in a loss of approximately $15 million for the quarter. GPO's three primary business units were impacted the most—Government Integrated Print Services (GIPS), Government Secure & Intelligent Documents (GSID), and Government Publishing & Print Procurement (GP&PP).

Overall, GPO's October revenue fell by $29.2 million or 26.6 percent from the same month last year, while November was $20.1 million or 19 percent less than the prior November. Through the first quarter of FY 2026, GPO's revenue is $51.6 million—or 15.9 percent—less than the first quarter of FY 2025 and is off from the FY 2026 budget by $57.1 million, or 17.3 percent.

The GIPS business unit is funded by its production of congressional publishing and agency work, including one of GPO's core products—the Federal Register. During the lapse, the volume of House work dropped substantially, and Federal agencies dramatically decreased publishing in the Federal Register. Through the first quarter of FY 2026, GIPS revenue is down by $8.9 million—or 39 percent—from last year.

GSID, producer of Series A passports for the State Department and smart cards for agencies, continued operations during the funding lapse. Production of Series A books was slightly behind plan in Q1. This caused Q1 revenue to fall short of the FY 2026 plan, but was within the range of expected outcomes. Q1 revenues for GSID's smart card business line are off by $3.3 million from Q1 of FY 2025, driven largely by the funding lapse. The shortfall versus the FY 2026 plan is even greater—$5.9 million.

The GP&PP business unit derives most of its work/revenues from Executive Branch agencies and experienced a relative stoppage of incoming orders during the lapse. This business unit's revenue is recorded when jobs are shipped. Through Q1 of FY 2026, revenue is off by $33.7 million, or 31.3 percent. Comparing FY 2026 to plan, actuals are off by $36.2 million (32.8 percent).

Beyond these three business units, our Sales & Distributions business unit also received far fewer work requisitions from customer agencies. In October, revenue was $980,000 (44.5 percent) less than the prior October. Workload recovered quickly in November for this business unit. As the shortfall from the prior November was down by only $291,000.

2. **Has GPO's ability to serve Congress and the public been negatively affected by last year's government shutdown?**

The 2025 lapse in appropriations had a profound and multifaceted impact on GPO, disrupting operations, finances, and workforce stability. While mission-critical functions such as passport production and essential congressional support continued, non-essential activities were suspended, creating significant backlogs in production, acquisitions, and billing.

These operational delays compounded financial strain, with October revenue falling 20 percent below historical averages and resulting in GPO's first unplanned monthly loss in three years. The Agency also faced a weakened cash position, delinquent vendor payments totaling over $108 million, and the forfeiture of prompt-payment discounts worth approximately $97,000.

Business units experienced uneven effects. Non-revenue and support units were equally impacted. Agency Financial Management faced nearly 3,000 unpaid invoices, while IT and acquisition services faced heightened cybersecurity risks and strained vendor relationships.

Most notably, morale deteriorated across all units, exacerbated by pay uncertainty and canceled employee programs, underscoring the human cost of prolonged funding lapses. The proofreaders and keyboard operators who work on congressional materials were particularly hard-hit, as they had to work during the entire shutdown without pay.

3. **Do you believe legislative branch agency heads like the GPO Director should be appointed by Congress rather than the President? Why or why not?**

As I noted in the hearing, I support the GPO-related provisions contained in H.R. 6028, the Legislative Branch Clarification Act introduced by Mr. Griffith. Those provisions address three main areas, which are critical for GPO's future in a post-*Chadha world:*

1. It models the appointment of the GPO Director after the mechanism used to appoint the Architect of the Capitol, ensuring that the Director is fully a legislative branch officer.

2. It ends the so-called "print mandate," requiring the executive branch to use the GPO only unless it receives the express permission of Congress. This provision has effectively been a "dead letter" for decades, as the Department of Justice has advised agencies that the requirement is unconstitutional, and GPO has successfully competed for Federal agency work since then.
3. It removes GPO's personnel system from the Office of Personnel Management's oversight and places it fully within the legislative branch.

These changes will place GPO on par with other legislative branch agencies and prepare us for a future where we can continue to serve all three branches of government from within the legislative branch.

We are also interested in pursuing additional legislative reforms to help GPO modernize and appreciate Chairman Steil's introduction of H.R.9490, the GPO Modernization Act of 2024 in the last Congress.

4. **XPub, which is intended to replace MicroComp for digital composition, has been in development for about a decade. You mentioned in your testimony that you would have liked GPO to be further along by now, though you have made significant progress.**

    a. **What were the primary obstacles—be they technical, institutional, or otherwise—that slowed progress on XPub?**

The replacement of MicroComp with XPub is a generational transition for our customers and GPO alike. Our composition engine is a core component of Congress' official document production software stack, and replacing it is akin to changing an aircraft's engines while in flight.

XPub is built around a commercial XML publishing platform, XML Professional Publisher (XPP). GPO chose XPP largely because it is both powerful and heavily customizable, allowing us to automate processes throughout the workflow. Deployment of this platform is critical for our customers who rely on our software for their mission-critical needs, as well as GPO, where XPP will drive the shift from a paper-based workflow to a modern, digital proofroom.

Delays in development and deployment stem from a variety of vectors. Congress' own requirements, including typographic fidelity and reinforcement for COOP events, all led to long development times. For instance, maintaining absolute typographic conformity with MicroComp's output required both the design of custom typefaces and additional coding

by XPP's publishers. GPO also had to reverse-engineer the legacy typographic logic, as there was no documentation describing how those rules operated in MicroComp.

Similarly, as we get closer to deploying XPub for bills, resolutions, and amendments, differences in IT environments across the Senate, the House, and the GPO are also slowing progress. We experienced performance issues in the House that didn't occur in the Senate or GPO. This is largely due to legacy elements in the House editing software that were not present in the other implementations. We are seeing continued progress in addressing those issues as we proceed with phase two of our user acceptance testing and are committed to working with our partners to resolve them as quickly as possible.

b. Have there been lessons learned that you can apply to future projects?

With any project of this size and scope, there are always lessons, both from what we did right and areas where we should have done better.

As I mentioned previously, we needed a better understanding of the environments in which we are deploying. This work will benefit GPO and our customers as we deploy other XPub modules, such as the Congressional Record and committee reports and hearings, and ensure that we have a better sense of areas to monitor as the House and Senate evolve their editing environment.

Similarly, we have seen benefits from both how we built a team from the ground up to support XPub and how we are initially deploying XPub Horseshoe, our internal workflow system for the Federal Register. Our Horseshoe product operates in parallel with our legacy workflow, allowing us to discover issues sooner and expose our team to the updated system. We benefit from both valuable feedback and buy-in from our subject-matter expert teammates. Likewise, our team supporting XPub is a mix of new teammates and "old-hands," with representation from our recent graduate cohorts bolstering the team's performance.

c. Are there particular metrics you intend to look at to assess the success of XPub once deployed?

XPub must be successful. Replacing MicroComp is overdue and represents a potential critical point of failure in the legislative document production workflow. We will closely monitor the product's reliability and performance as we continue deployment. Ideally, XPub will be largely invisible to our users, allowing them to focus on content creation rather than the technical tools that produce the output.

5. **You mentioned in your testimony that there was a roughly 50 percent increase in the number of measures introduced between the 112th and 118th Congresses. This has resulted in a significant backlog of bills to process. You partnered with the Subcommittee on Modernization and House Clerk to provide Members the option to waive GPO proofreading so the bills can be processed more quickly.**

    a. **Has this initiative meaningfully reduced the backlog?**

Overall, we have seen a meaningful reduction in the backlog in the bill end. The average number of bills pending in the bill end over the last 12 months was 338 versus 469 for the prior 12-month period.

Given the small number of measures in which the sponsor has waived proofreading, this change has not yet had a meaningful impact on the backlog. While this initiative has contributed to a 99 percent faster turnaround rate of the waived bills themselves, it has not meaningfully reduced the overall backlog as they constitute just 9 percent of all bills introduced. The greatest impact has come from other workflow improvements.

    b. **You noted that measures processed without proofreading can be completed in as little as 20 minutes, compared to three to seven days under the traditional process. How should traditional process. How should Members weigh speed against quality when deciding whether to opt out?**

As I said during my testimony, I firmly believe that allowing GPO to perform its traditional functions yields a higher quality product. Our trained proofreaders regularly catch typographic and consistency errors that improve the quality of introduced measures. With that said, to date, there have not been any star prints (reprinting due to mistakes) of waived bills. We haven't yet encountered a conflict between speed and quality yet on these waived bills, but that is in part because these measures tend to be shorter bills. Ultimately it is up to the measure's sponsor whether they want the benefit of GPO's full service.

    c. **Have there been any significant downstream consequences like errors or Member concerns stemming from waived proofreading?**

Significant downstream consequences have not yet occurred from waived proofreading. About two percent of the bills where the sponsor has waived proofreading have not been eligible for expedited processing, most often because they were not drafted by the House Office of Legislative Counsel and we do not have a complete electronic file. Additionally,

even though our teams aren't formally proofreading these bills, when they see something erroneous, they will still work to address the issue prior to printing if possible.

d. How, if at all, can you use artificial intelligence to reduce the backlog?

AI investments show initial promise in alleviating redundant proofreading tasks, but we are not particularly close to deploying products that can significantly reduce our bill backlogs. GPO has built the Schematron expert system into XPub for XML/USLM data file validation and it is showing promise for validating structured data files. However, for the near- and mid-term, we are focusing on attracting and training new talent to help build our workforce.

e. In your testimony, you mentioned moving administrative tasks to the day shift greatly reduced the number of pending measures. Are there other processes within GPO that could yield similar gains?

We continue to look for process improvements to drive innovative change. We have some AI pilot projects we are exploring, but nothing yet seems to hold enormous promise. The biggest single obstacle to productivity in the execution of congressional work remains critical workforce shortages.

One of the four strategic goals of our FY 2023-FY 2027 Strategic Plan is to achieve operational excellence, and the managing directors of GPO business units are charged with continually exploring and evaluating ways of improving efficiency. With one of our aging Agency's difficulties being hiring and retaining talent, we have undertaken several of our hiring and training processes to ensure that GPO has pipelines of promising talent to meet critical needs in the years ahead. These initiatives include our Recent Graduate Program, designed to attract young professional talent, our reestablished Apprenticeship Program, and our Production Technician development program.

6. GPO has proposed a comprehensive rewrite of the FDLP provisions of Title 44 to reflect the digital-first reality.

a. What are the top three most urgent FDLP changes needed to ensure continued long-term public access and preservation?

The program needs an updated, modern definition of government information and lifecycle management to remain aligned with and relevant to information management services. The proposed §1900 included in our proposed legislative package provides an

outline of definitions and services that will resonate with stakeholders and make the program's relevance clear to current practitioners.

The program's partnership with Depository Libraries, especially Regional Depository Libraries, needs to be rebalanced to reduce the space and cost burdens to libraries. The traditional role of Regional Libraries needs to be adjusted to focus on coordinating and supporting selective libraries, reducing the need to maintain a comprehensive tangible collection in their own facilities. Improved inventory management support from GPO will help existing libraries better share the responsibility and costs of maintaining the tangible collections needed for preservation and access.

To remain a key source of Government Public Information, the program must increase digital acquisition and the preservation of agency digital information. An important way to increase agency understanding that digital publications are in scope of FDLP—and that GPO should be notified of new digital content from agencies—is the proposed §1902(b)(2) of our legislative reform proposal.

b. How does the current statute constrain GPO's ability to support depository libraries that may be struggling with space, digitization, and resource limitations?

Many of our longest-serving regional depositories have severe space restrictions and large legacy tangible collections. The current statute, even with a relevant JCP waiver, severely restricts how regional depositories may manage their collections. GPO has tools to support shared collections in regional depositories, but these do not necessarily align with best practices for shared collection management. In the worst case, this lack of flexibility can lead regional libraries to relinquish their designations to manage their collection space.

Digitization of the entire legacy tangible collection remains a GPO goal. This work is expensive and must be done in collaboration with libraries, as GPO does not have its own collection. While GPO can assist libraries that wish to digitize their government information, limitations on gift authority can make collaborations complex and dependent on GPO's limited capacity to participate.

c. If Congress fails to address the FDLP statute, what risks do you foresee over the next decade?

Without changes to Title 44 chapters 17, 19, and 41, the FDLP and public information programs would continue to operate under current law, much of which dates to the 1960s and earlier. The GPO has been able to make some adjustments to the FDLP with the

guidance and approval of the Joint Committee on Printing, but gaps between the statute and better operations remain. Key risks in the next decade are:

- loss of library community support and libraries relinquishing depository status if more modern, collaborative collection management is not undertaken;
- gaps in the National Collection of U.S. Government Public Information if increased digital acquisitions, preservation, and collaborative collection management are not the focus of the program; and
- reduction in public access if modern cataloging and indexing, and metadata distribution methods aren't adopted to support access and digital reformatting.

Ultimately, without reform, GPO and the FDLP will need to continue working in the liminal spaces of the statutes, and we will rely heavily on the JCP to navigate any uncertainties.

7. **Beyond FDLP reform, what are the agency's top three most urgent proposed legislative changes and why are they important?**

GPO supports the GPO-related reforms contained in Representative Morgan Griffith's bill, H.R. 6028, the Legislative Branch Agencies Clarification Act, which would clarify the appointment process for the GPO Director and Deputy Director, create a GPO Human Capital Management System to enable GPO to attract and retain talent, and reaffirm GPO's ability to perform publishing services for our Federal customers. I believe that these reforms will resolve long-standing uncertainties with respect to GPO's status and will allow us build a foundation for the future within the legislative branch.

Beyond that bill, the proposed GPO reforms contained in our 2026 legislative proposals would also address critical needs and help GPO modernize.

8. **You testified that the median age of a GPO employee is 54, and that at one point half the workforce was projected to be retirement-eligible by 2027. How confident are you that current recruitment and apprenticeship efforts are sufficient to avoid a loss of institutional knowledge?**

The good news is that we have already moved that retirement cliff back to 2030, and I am hopeful and encouraged that we can continue that progress. That figure does not include new hires, and our findings indicate that, on average, our teammates tend to remain about 6 years beyond their retirement eligibility.

We took some concrete steps to recruit and develop the next generation of GPO teammates:

- We restarted our apprentice program, which will add 25 journeypersons to our skilled trade positions, graduating 4 proofreaders, 2 bookbinders, 4 platemakers, and 4 press operators, with another 11 proofreaders who graduated in February.
- We also shortened our apprenticeships from 3 years to 2, with greater emphasis on on-the-job training.
- We also created a path for production technicians, a brand-new on-the-job training program for individuals with an aptitude for working in a manufacturing environment. They are learning alongside our journeyperson bookbinders, making passports and Smart Cards, and we've graduated 30 with another 46 still in the program.

For our professionals, we have had three recent graduate classes to bring talented recent grads into GPO as specialists in IT, contracting, personnel, printing, and other disciplines. To date, 43 people have graduated from the program, and an additional 31 are expected to complete it within the next year. We will consider running future recent graduate programs depending on our staffing needs in these areas.

That isn't to say that we are without challenges. We have crafts where GPO has a majority of teammates who are already eligible to retire. For instance, among our teammates who staff the proofroom, more than half are eligible to retire today. They are very much the backbone of our document conversion work. While they all deserve to enjoy the retirement they earned, we need to ensure that we have enough people to continue this important work. However, we have also changed how we recruit proofreaders and onboarded an additional 6 journeyperson proofreaders during our March 9 onboarding cycle.

9. **Does GovInfo include accessibility features that allow individuals with disabilities to use the platform?**

The U.S. Government Publishing Office continuously works to ensure GovInfo web pages comply with Section 508 and W3C Web Accessibility Initiative accessibility design guidelines. Accessibility is also a key consideration when GPO designs and develops new GovInfo web functionality. GPO staff and contractors receive training on and have experience with web accessibility.

In addition, a GovInfo development and support contract includes tasks such as performing accessibility reviews and improving GovInfo web pages. The vendor must provide personnel who have knowledge and experience implementing web functionality according to accessibility standards, such as Section 508, WCAG 2.0, WAI-ARIA, and a dedicated Web User Interface Design Engineer works on the GovInfo web page accessibility features.

GPO uses an Agile software development process for GovInfo, and accessibility tasks are performed during design, development, and testing. This includes conducting accessibility reviews using the NVDA screen reader, providing keyboard navigation, and employing other browser accessibility tools at various points throughout the development release cycle. GPO follows current best practices by producing well-formed, semantic HTML for GovInfo web pages. This HTML provides the foundation for GovInfo accessibility features.

For example, GPO uses a combination of labels, typography, and an accessible color palette to make GovInfo web pages accessible. Labels for headings, interactive elements, and images are incorporated to support plain-language, descriptive text. Images also include alternative text ("alt text") when the image is not viewable. In addition, typography is designed to support written content for readability, scanning, and wayfinding on web pages. The typography also supports user preferences for font size and page zoom levels. The GovInfo color palette supports visual accessibility by maintaining contrast, and GovInfo relies primarily on text-based user wayfinding rather than color or pattern alone. GPO provides information about GovInfo accessibility at https://www.govinfo.gov/about/policies#accessibility. If a user notifies GPO of accessibility barriers with GovInfo web pages, the barriers are addressed as part of the GovInfo iterative Agile software development process.

10. Are there drawbacks or limitations to the incorporation of artificial intelligence into GPO operations?

At the direction of the Committee on House Administration and the Senate Rules Committee, GPO has worked to position the Agency at the forefront of legislative branch efforts to understand, evaluate, and, ultimately, incorporate AI technologies into our workflows.

Our Chief Information Officer, Sam Musa, and his IT colleagues have led GPO's efforts to establish a framework to approach these promising technologies. Their efforts have included creating an official GPO AI policy, establishing a GPO AI Governance Committee, and developing an overarching Agency-wide AI Strategy. They have also led to the development of several AI pilot projects designed to test the utility of AI applications in various GPO operational areas.

While GPO's experience with AI applications is at an early stage, there do not yet seem to be any red flags that would cause GPO to abandon its current efforts to evaluate specific AI applications. But as with any new technology, there are bugs, such as so-called "hallucinations," that need to be fully assessed and interrogated. GPO will not deploy new

technologies in production capacities without rigorous analysis and high levels of confidence.

11. Are there particular roles or activities within GPO for which use of artificial intelligence is not practical or effective?

GPO is currently evaluating AI pilot projects in areas we think may hold promise, including contract review and evaluation, basic proofreading and copyediting, and cybersecurity threat detection. In each pilot, our goal is to evaluate whether AI technologies can assist our teammates and enhance their productivity.

But there are some areas where we can't yet see a role for potential AI applications. For example, our bindery workers possess skills that require great manual dexterity and precision. It's hard to see how AI applications could help such skilled artisans.

This is a fast-moving and evolving area of technology, however, and we are evaluating things on a case-by-case basis. We are fully committed to exploring AI applications that enhance productivity and improve operational efficiency.