

Statement of
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Office of Compliance
Before the Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch,
Committee on Appropriations, United States Senate
Fiscal Year 2016 Budget Request
July 31, 2015

Madam Chairwoman Capito, Ranking Member Schatz, and Members of the Legislative Branch Subcommittee, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to submit for the record, this statement regarding the budget request for Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 for the Congressional Office of Compliance (OOC).

In its 2016 budget request, the OOC seeks an appropriation of \$4,020,000 for FY 2016, the same amount as the FY 2015 budget request and an additional \$61,000, or 1.5% over the FY 2015 enacted amount. This increase will allow us to make necessary improvements to protect our website www.compliance.gov to comply with existing cybersecurity standards and to build into the site the capacity to host on-demand on-line interactive training modules that we are developing for Congressional employees. The CAA requires the OOC to carry out a program of education for Members of Congress and other employing authorities of the Legislative Branch. As approximately half of Congressional staff members are working in district and state offices instead of on Capitol Hill, our focus has shifted to e-learning as a means of carrying out our statutory educational mandate.¹ We recently completed our first on-line module, on sexual harassment, and plan for more on other employment issues, such as the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). A comprehensive training program, as envisioned in the Congressional Accountability Act (CAA), continues to be one of the most effective investments an employer can make in reducing complaints and improving worker productivity and reducing absenteeism and employee turn-over. With readily available, user-friendly training modules, we expect to reach more employees.

Looking forward to FY 2016, we will continue to cross-train our small staff of 22 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions and leverage our already lean operations with short term contracts for services. For example, we have used our occupational health and safety (OSH) specialists to conduct our ADA inspections to identify barriers to access for persons with disabilities. We have also used contractors to supplement those inspections so we could cover more areas and buildings. Following enactment of the Office of Compliance Administrative and Technical Corrections Act of 2015, we have increased our use of outside mediators, who are reimbursed with a flat fee per mediation. This request contains sufficient

¹ Public Law 104-1, Section 301(h)(1).

funds to maintain a new case management system that we developed with FY 2015 funds. We are working to add an e-filing component to the system. We are also enhancing our video teleconference equipment to save money on hearing officer travel for cases in district and state offices, and for providing technical assistance and training. The balance of our 1.5% budget increase is for cross-servicing providers (Library of Congress, National Finance Center) and other equipment, services, and supplies needed to operate the OOC.

For 20 years now, the OOC has served Congress as a third party neutral for disputes and as an educator for workplace rights. The OOC has made significant contributions to the safety of Congressional workplaces through its OSH biennial inspections and OSH case work, and it has used its ADA inspections and ADA case work to eliminate barriers to access to Congressional facilities and programs for persons with disabilities. Each of the OOC's five Board members received new 2 year terms in FY 2015.² They have an ambitious agenda for their remaining time, including but not limited to, publishing new ADA, FLSA, and FMLA regulations for approval by Congress. The OOC staff will act on those initiatives as well as continuing to provide quality services to the Congressional community on a day to day basis.

I am available to answer any questions or address any concerns the Chairwoman, the Ranking Member, or any of the Legislative Branch Subcommittee Members may have.

Barbara J. Sapin
Executive Director

² The Board members count as one FTE and are paid by OOC on a "while-actually-employed" basis.