



**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS
FOR THE RECORD**

Following a Hearing on
**CBO's Request for Appropriations
for Fiscal Year 2026**

Conducted by the
Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives

On April 9, 2025, the Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch of the House Committee on Appropriations convened a hearing at which Phillip L. Swagel, the Congressional Budget Office's Director, testified about the agency's appropriation request for fiscal year 2026.¹ After the hearing, Chairman David Valadao, Ranking Member Adriano Espaillat, and Vice Chair Riley Moore submitted questions for the record. This document provides CBO's answers. It is available at www.cbo.gov/publication/61406.

Chairman Valadao

Question. You note that 48 percent of your budget request (\$2.8 million), if fully funded, would go toward enhancing your cybersecurity and IT infrastructure. Do you anticipate these levels to be recurring annual costs or onetime costs that we could see at lower levels over time for maintaining these enhancements?

Answer. CBO is requesting a \$2.8 million increase in nonpersonnel costs to support a combination of onetime and recurring investments in cybersecurity and information technology (IT) infrastructure and operations that are essential components for protecting sensitive data and enabling advanced data analysis capabilities. The portion of the funding for cybersecurity is aligned with the agency's strategic priority of implementing what is termed a zero-trust security architecture, which requires identity and device verification before granting access to network systems or data.

About one-third of the requested increase, or roughly \$900,000, is for onetime costs for IT infrastructure, including high-speed network hardware such as switches, routers, and firewalls, as well as document management software. Those items will ensure the reliability and scalability of CBO's network and will enhance work processes and improve records management and compliance with related requirements.

The remaining two-thirds, or approximately \$1.9 million, is for recurring costs for infrastructure and operations, including expanded cloud storage, high-speed Internet service, and key cybersecurity tools

(such as ThousandEyes for network visibility, Check Point security licenses, Cisco Secure Network Analytics [formerly Stealthwatch], and iBoss Cloud Security). Those tools are necessary to monitor, detect, and prevent cybersecurity threats in real time. The increase in recurring costs reflects a mix of increased usage by employees and higher costs for services and tools.

Altogether, the \$2.8 million increase reflects a proactive approach toward cybersecurity and IT modernization and is necessary to maintain the integrity, security, and performance of the agency's operations.

Question. We know the impact that a CBO score can have on a bill's ability to become law. Please describe how you support the Appropriations Committee as we develop bills to bring to the floor?

Answer. CBO works for all Congressional committees, and the Appropriations Committees receive priority. CBO is committed to supporting the Appropriations Committees throughout the legislative process.

The agency provides data and information as the Appropriations Committees consider both annual appropriation bills and supplemental appropriation bills, in addition to distributing reports to interested parties within the Congress that break down account-level details of the budgetary effects of proposed appropriation legislation. CBO's cost estimates of appropriation bills show the budget authority and outlays that would result if the legislation was enacted. (That information takes a different form in the cost estimates that the agency is required by law to prepare for authorizing bills.)

CBO's detailed reports for annual appropriation bills show estimates of the discretionary budget authority and outlays that would occur in that year, including the estimated budgetary effects of provisions that make changes in mandatory programs. Separately, CBO provides a tabulation of the budgetary effects of those changes for each of the next 10 years. In addition, for appropriation bills that are ordered reported by a committee, the agency provides an estimate of the outlays resulting over the next 5 years from the budget authority provided in such bills.

The details of the budgetary effects are presented on CBO's "Status of Appropriations" page on the agency's website. In addition, the agency publishes a report early

1. See the testimony of Phillip L. Swagel, Director, Congressional Budget Office, before the Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch of the House Committee on Appropriations, *The Congressional Budget Office's Request for Appropriations for Fiscal Year 2026* (April 9, 2025), www.cbo.gov/publication/61287.

each year that tracks authorizations of appropriations that have specified expiration dates and identifies appropriations that are provided for authorizations that have expired or that will expire by the end of the current fiscal year.

Similarly, CBO's detailed reports for supplemental appropriation bills also provide information detailing the estimated budget authority and outlays in the current year and for the next 10 years. In addition, the agency regularly updates historical information about supplemental appropriations and makes those updates available on its website.

Question. In your testimony, you highlight the work that CBO is doing now in providing technical assistance to Members in addition to its scoring of major legislation. How do you decide when to support Members with technical assistance and when to develop a full score, and how does this work affect the workload of your staff?

Answer. One of CBO's most important objectives is to review each piece of legislation ahead of consideration on the floor. The agency is required by law to produce a cost estimate once an authorizing committee orders a bill to be reported for consideration by the full House or Senate.

In addition, CBO fulfills numerous requests for technical assistance as committees are crafting legislation, as amendments to bills are being debated, and at other stages in the legislative process. The agency's analysts often provide preliminary estimates to committee staff, helping them weigh different options for achieving legislative goals.

CBO recognizes that Members of Congress who are not Chairs or Ranking Members of committees want more analysis from the agency, and CBO's analysts offer as much service as possible as time allows. The agency aims to be as responsive and timely as possible, while facing intense demand and strained resources in many areas.

Technical assistance for Members can take many forms, depending on the complexity of the bill, what other legislation is being considered at the time, and whether the information is necessary for budget enforcement. The information CBO provides can be a range of numbers, a point estimate, a determination of whether the bill would increase direct spending or revenues, or an explanation of key levers determining the budgetary effects.

For example, CBO reviews proposed amendments to legislation and assesses for each whether the amendment

would affect direct spending or revenues, as that information is needed for budget enforcement. The agency's analysis of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025 is an example. CBO reviewed 3,563 amendments and provided such feedback. Of those amendments, 752 were reviewed when the bill was being considered by the House Armed Services Committee, 1,778 (submitted by 353 Members of the House) were reviewed before the bill was considered on the House floor, and 1,033 (submitted by 94 Senators) were reviewed before consideration on the Senate floor.

In some instances, CBO can and does provide more robust information (usually by phone or email) than the examples mentioned if, for instance, a bill is similar to legislation the agency has reviewed in the past.

Ranking Member Espaillat

Question. Across the Legislative Branch, many requested increases have been compounded due to a failure to complete the 2025 appropriations process. Please explain the impact of the full-year continuing resolution on your current budget and how it affects your requests for fiscal year 2026. In addition, please detail which services to Congress will be impacted if your budgets remain frozen through fiscal year 2026.

Answer. In 2025, under a full-year continuing resolution, CBO will maintain its staffing at about 270 employees, although as described in the agency's budget requests for this year and next, it believes it needs 285 employees to better meet its responsibilities under the Congressional Budget Act. Under the full-year continuing resolution, CBO is focusing on the highest-priority current needs, including preparing cost estimates, providing technical assistance as legislation is developed, and analyzing the economic and dynamic budgetary effects of proposed policies.

CBO is reducing expenditures elsewhere, by deferring hiring for some positions and deferring some activities, including not undertaking some longer-term improvements in its IT infrastructure. Some of the deferred activities for IT are included in the request for 2026 (as discussed in the answer to a question from Chairman Valadao above). Also, CBO is undertaking incremental funding for some services this year, even though doing so means that the agency is unable to take advantage of annual contracts with lower costs.

Operating at its fiscal year 2025 level in fiscal year 2026 would cause the agency to shrink, diminishing CBO's effectiveness. CBO would be unable to fill positions for staff who leave and would forgo adding analysts in areas of intense Congressional interest, including immigration and border security, dynamic policy effects, and health care. Such a reduction in staffing and forgone staffing would result in an uneven mix of skills and potential gaps in the agency's responsiveness to the Congress in producing cost estimates and reports and providing technical assistance. Extending this year's level of funding to next year would also preclude improvements in CBO's cybersecurity and IT infrastructure that the agency believes are necessary.

Vice Chair Moore

Question. My understanding is that CBO is currently reviewing the budgetary impact of "severance" or royalty tax on coal on federal land. I know there are concerns that cutting the royalty tax would potentially decrease the revenue intake. As CBO assesses this, I encourage you to look at the State of West Virginia. We did this while I was the state treasurer. There was an initial decrease in intake, but in the out-years we saw a substantial increase. Decreasing tax liability freed up capital for companies to open additional mines and resulted in a production increase.

Will you commit to ensuring the example of West Virginia is reviewed in any analysis CBO produces on this issue?

Answer. Yes.

