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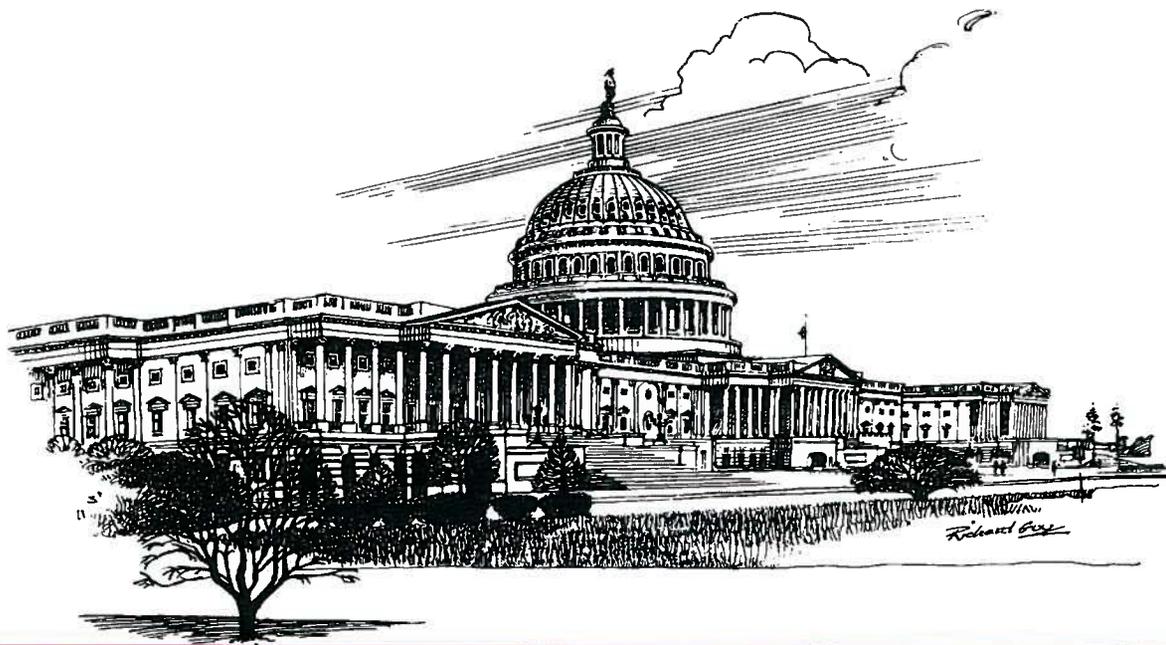
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*Office of Inspector General  
Audit Report*

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*House Operations Assessment  
Office of the Clerk  
Report No. 07-CLK-07  
July 13, 2007*



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*U.S. House of Representatives*

**James J. Cornell**  
Inspector General

**Office of Inspector General**  
**U.S. House of Representatives**  
Washington, DC 20515-9990  
**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** The Honorable Lorraine C. Miller  
Clerk of the House

**FROM:** James J. Cornell  
Inspector General 

**DATE:** July 13, 2007

**SUBJECT:** Audit Report - House Operations Assessment Office of the Clerk  
(Report No. 07-CLK-07)

This is our final report on the operations risk assessment of the Office of the Clerk. The objective of this review was to provide a high-level assessment of the Clerk's operations to identify areas of risk that may need immediate attention. Overall, we found that the Clerk's management, administrative controls, and program procedures and controls over operations were adequate and effective. We identified one risk in the area of succession planning.

In your May 23, 2007 response (included as an appendix to the report), you indicated that corrective actions have already addressed the risk identified in this report. We have reviewed the response and consider the corrective actions taken by your office to be appropriate and adequate to address the risk. We consider this issue closed.

We appreciate the courtesy and cooperation extended to us by your staff. If you have any questions or require additional information regarding this report, please call me or Dave Smith at (202) 226-1250.

**cc:** Speaker of the House  
Majority Leader of the House  
Minority Leader of the House  
Chairman, Committee on House Administration  
Ranking Member, Committee on House Administration  
Members, Committee on House Administration

# House Operations Assessment – Office of the Clerk

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# House Operations Assessment – Office of the Clerk

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## ➤➤➤ Executive Summary

This high-level assessment of the Office of the Clerk identifies areas of risk within the Clerk's operations.

### **Summary Results of Assessment**

Overall, we found that the Clerk's management, administrative controls, and program procedures and controls over operations were adequate and effective. The one exception was succession planning which warrants management's consideration for action or future audit assistance to explore possible mitigation strategies. Succession planning is not fully developed and documented to provide knowledge transfer for strong continuity of operations in the event of personnel loss.

#### **Action for Consideration:**

The Clerk should assess the risk of its weak succession planning, and explore possible solutions to mitigate the risk.

### **Office of the Clerk's Response**

In her response dated May 23, 2007, the Clerk concurred with the weakness identified and has taken corrective actions to address the issue. Within the Office of Legislative Operations the Clerk has developed a comprehensive succession plan to mitigate the risk of disruption in House operations. The complete response is contained in the Appendix.

### **Office of Inspector General Comments**

We consider the proposed actions to be appropriate and responsive to the issue identified. The corrective action satisfies the intent of the Action for Consideration and we consider it closed.

# House Operations Assessment – Office of the Clerk

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## ➤➤➤ Results of Assessment

**Medium Risk Area:** Succession planning was not fully developed and documented to provide continuity of operations in the event of a loss of key/senior personnel.

**Problem:** Office of the Clerk did not have documented succession plans that clearly defined roles, responsibilities, cross training, or on the job training necessary to ensure a smooth transition if one or more of the senior officials retire or leave for other employment. Although the everyday responsibilities, special processes, and procedures for the Clerk’s office were known, many were not documented. Recently, a retiring senior official took the time to document these critical operational elements developed through years of experience. However, recent turnover of key personnel highlights the need to hire and train new individuals, transfer knowledge among existing staff members, and document information to better plan for the continuity of legislative operations. Since the Clerk’s organization fulfills critical functions, including running House Floor operations and generating the Congressional Record, the organization must operate in an extremely responsive manner to support Members and adapt to varying schedules and requests with little notice ensuring the smooth operation of the legislative process on the House floor.

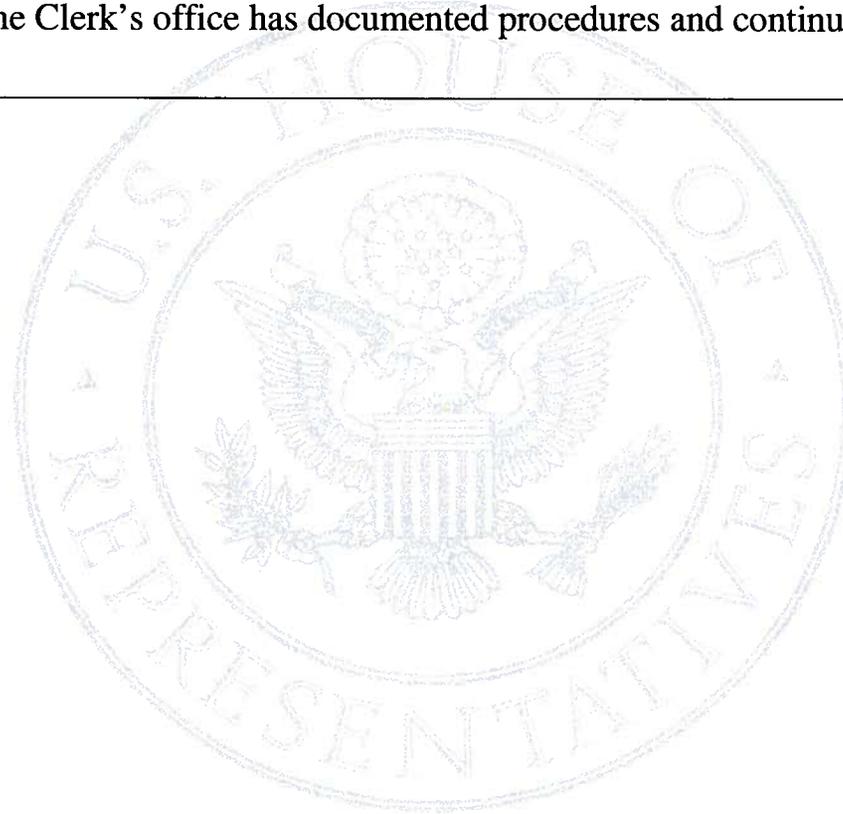
**Why We See It As A Risk:** Turnover or the sudden loss of key staff with the resulting loss of knowledge and experience can adversely affect the continuity of operations needed to effectively and efficiently carry out the mission of the Office of the Clerk and adequately support House operations. In addition, roles within the Clerk involve long learning curves, on-the-job training, and staff who exhibit a great degree of flexibility and adaptability. As a result, planning for the replacement and preparation of new staff to assume responsibilities is integral to continued operation of the Clerk’s organization.

**Standard:** William J. Rothwell, Ph.D. in his *Ten Key Steps to Effective Succession Planning* states that succession planning is “... to ensure the continued effective performance of an organization, division, department, or work group by making provision for the development, replacement, and strategic application of key people over time.”

## House Operations Assessment – Office of the Clerk

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**Clerk's Corrective Action Plan:** The Clerk concurs with the identified risk area and has documented procedures. The Clerk's immediate office has already documented the following special procedures: organization of a new Congress; opening day of Congress; joint session for counting of the electoral vote, and reapportionment/certificate of entitlement (done every 10 years). In addition, the Legislative Resource Center and the Office of Legislative Operations have procedural manuals in place. The Clerk's office has documented procedures and continues to assess the remaining scope of the project.



# House Operations Assessment – Office of the Clerk

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## BACKGROUND

The Clerk of the House is responsible for the administration of many of the legislative and Floor activities of the House. The duties of the Office of the Clerk (Clerk) include:

- a. Prepare the roll of Members-elect.
- b. Call the Members-elect to order at the commencement of each Congress.
- c. Accept the credentials of the Members-elect.
- d. Make the entries and journals of the proceedings of the House, including floor and Committee proceedings.
- e. Endorse bills passed by the body.
- f. Read the required papers in the House.
- g. Receive messages from the President and from the Senate on behalf of the House.
- h. Distribute House and Senate documents to House staff and distribute House documents to the public.
- i. Serve as custodian of all House records and documents.
- j. Maintain the House voting machine.

## OBJECTIVE

The objective of this operations review was to provide a high-level assessment of the Clerk to identify areas of risk that may need immediate attention.

# House Operations Assessment – Office of the Clerk

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## SCOPE

We reviewed the Clerk's operations during the period August 2006 through February 2007. To assess the management and direction of the Clerk, we reviewed the office's management oversight, including mission development and implementation; top management direction and oversight; policies, procedures, and standards; long range planning and budgeting; project planning and implementation; performance measurement practices; the program office's administrative controls; and audit follow-up.

## METHODOLOGY

The review used a risk-oriented approach to fully address the review objectives. Specifically, we analyzed program documentation, conducted interviews of House management, and performed limited testing of program controls in order to make our assessment of whether or not the House mitigates the most significant deficiencies. Although not an audit, this review followed, to the maximum extent possible, established Federal auditing standards and guidelines.

LORRAINE C. MILLER  
CLERK

H-154 THE CAPITOL

DEBORAH M. SPRIGGS  
DEPUTY CLERK

JORGE E. SORENSEN  
DEPUTY CLERK

Office of the Clerk  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-6601

May 23, 2007

Mr. James J. Cornell  
Office of the Inspector General  
H2-386 Ford HOB  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Cornell:

After reviewing your Draft Audit Report - House Operations Assessment for my office, I have evaluated the areas of concern and concur with your assessment. I have also assessed the risk's associated with the continuity of House operations, as it relates to the Office of Legislative Operations and have developed a comprehensive succession plan to mitigate the risk of disruptions in the House operation.

Please find attached a copy of the Office of Legislative Operations Succession Plan. Also, do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

With best wishes, I am

Sincerely,



Lorraine C. Miller

LCM/hlb

Attachments