



CRS

ANNUAL  
REPORT

FISCAL YEAR 2015







# ANNUAL REPORT

Congressional Research Service  
Library of Congress  
Fiscal Year 2015

To the Joint Committee on the Library  
United States Congress

Pursuant to  
Section 321  
Public Law 91-510

Mary B. Mazanec  
Director

January 2016



CREATORS HELD THE WORLD THE WORLD IS MINE



# DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



Mary B. Mazanec, *Director*

From international conflicts and humanitarian crises, to immigration, transportation, and secondary education, the Congressional Research Service (CRS) helped every congressional office and committee navigate the wide range of complex and controversial issues that confronted Congress in FY2015.

We kicked off the year strongly, preparing for the newly elected Members of the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress with the tenth biannual CRS Seminar for New Members, and wrapped up 2015 supporting the transition to a new Speaker and the crafting of the omnibus appropriations bill. In between, CRS experts answered over 62,000 individual requests; hosted over 7,400 Congressional participants at seminars, briefings and trainings; provided over 3,600 new or refreshed products; and summarized over 8,000 pieces of legislation.

While the CRS mission remains the same, Congress and the environment in which it works are continually evolving. To ensure that the Service is well positioned to anticipate and meet the information and research needs of a 21st-century Congress, we launched a comprehensive strategic planning effort that has identified the most

critical priorities, goals, and objectives that will enable us to most efficiently and effectively serve Congress as CRS moves into its second century.

Responding to the increasingly rapid pace of congressional business, and taking advantage of new technologies, we continued to explore new and innovative ways to deliver authoritative information and timely analysis to Congress. For example, we introduced shorter report formats and added infographics to our website CRS.gov to better serve congressional needs.

It is an honor and privilege to work for the U.S. Congress. With great dedication, our staff creatively supports Members, staff and committees as they help shape and direct the legislative process and our nation's future. Our accomplishments in fiscal 2015 reflect that dedication.



NOT PERISH FROM THE EARTH THAT THIS NATION UNDER GOD SHALL HAVE A NEW BIRTH OF FREEDOM - THAT THE PEOPLE BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE



ABRAHAM LINCOLN  
FREDERICK E. GANNETT 1865

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## I. CRS SERVICE TO CONGRESS

**T**he Congressional Research Service works exclusively and directly for all Members and Committees of Congress in support of their legislative, oversight, and representative functions. The Service is committed to providing Congress research, analysis, and informational support of the highest quality in forms that are the most useful and appropriate. Principles guiding the work of the Service, in accordance with its charter, are encompassed in the CRS mission:

*CRS serves Congress throughout the legislative process by providing comprehensive and reliable legislative research and analysis that are timely, objective, authoritative, and confidential, thereby contributing to an informed national legislature.*

Through the years CRS has improved its research and information assistance, enhanced timely delivery, convenience, and accessibility. It has created new products and services and drawn upon improved technology in information processing and transmission. The Service has become increasingly responsive to the changing demands on Members' time and has sought to establish better ways to provide needed analysis and information. Efficiency of service has become even more important in times of marked fiscal constraint.

In FY2015 the Service offered Congress multifaceted, in-depth support across a wide spectrum of complex and diverse problems as Members work to address these concerns and to develop effective policy tools to deal with them. Ongoing violent conflicts abroad, political upheavals, power disputes, nuclear proliferation pressures, and major refugee and humanitarian dilemmas were among the foreign policy issues confronting lawmakers in the past fiscal year. Domestic policy challenges included reform of the Department of Defense, immigration, surface transportation, the expiring provisions of Medicaid, reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and issues associated with same-sex marriage. Consistent with its broad congressional mandate, CRS provided a wide variety of products and services to meet the needs of Congress as it faced these and other policy challenges of the nation.

## INDICATORS OF CRS PERFORMANCE AND PRODUCTIVITY

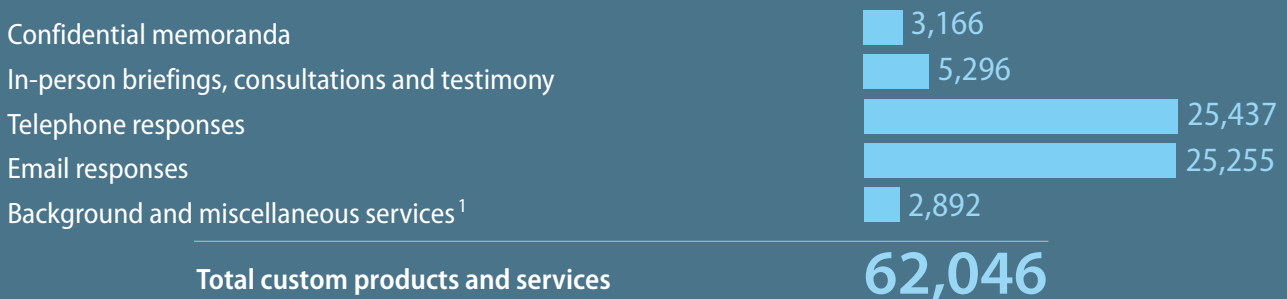
In FY2015 Members and committees received analysis and information from CRS through nearly 597,000 requests for products and services, including approximately 62,000 requests for custom analysis and research. In addition, more than 7,400 congressional participants attended CRS seminars, institutes, and training sessions.

By the end of the fiscal year CRS produced more than 1,200 new reports and other online products. Congressional clients viewed CRS.gov pages more than 2,274,000 times. CRS analysts summarized more than 8,200 bill versions for Congress.gov and the Legislative Information System. CRS served 100 percent of Member and standing committee offices. The following table provides more details of CRS performance.

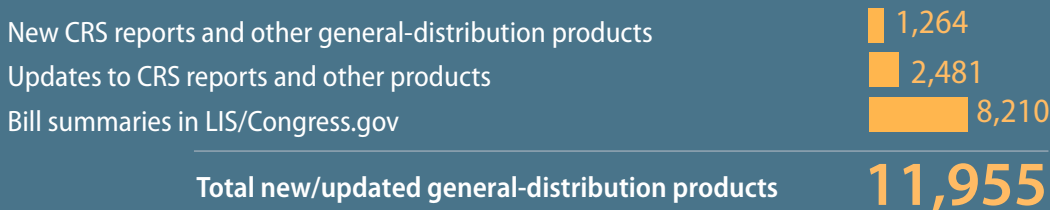
## FY2015 CRS SERVICE TO CONGRESS: A SNAPSHOT

The following are selected data on products and services provided to Congress during FY2015. These data are derived from the CRS request management system, Web metrics application and other applications that measure output. CRS support for Congress also comes in the form of personal client interactions that may not always be captured by these systems.

### CUSTOM PRODUCTS AND SERVICES



### GENERAL-DISTRIBUTION PRODUCTS



<sup>1</sup> Summary of categories with small total counts, such as revising existing reports upon demand for a specific client, supplying DVDs of a recorded event, sending non-CRS created materials, etc.



## WEB ACTIVITY

**2,274,272** Congressional Views on CRS.gov Pages <sup>2</sup>

<b>852,469</b> CRS Report and General Distribution Product Views	<b>45,246</b> Appropriations Status Table Views	<b>38,958</b> Legal Sidebar Views	<b>5,866</b> Find an Analyst Page Views	<b>4,663</b> Video Views (Video Briefs and Recorded Events)
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**3,200** MyCRS Subscriptions  
(approximate active users at year end)

## OTHER DATA

**10,411**  
CRS reports and product titles  
available at year end

**100%**  
Member/standing  
committee offices provided  
custom services<sup>3</sup>

**7,438**  
Congressional participants  
in seminars, institutes and  
training programs

<sup>2</sup> Includes the selected highlights indented below plus other pages on CRS.gov such as the home page, issue pages, and event pages.

<sup>3</sup> Percentage for which at least one custom service was provided during the year, rounded to the nearest 1 percent.





## II. LEGISLATIVE SUPPORT TO CONGRESS

**CRS** supported Congress in FY2015 throughout all stages of the legislative process and across the full range of active public policy issues. CRS assisted in examining the nature and extent of problems facing Congress; identified and assessed policy options; helped with hearings on policy proposals and on implementation of existing policies; supported congressional review of nominations and treaties; and provided products, consultations, and briefings to address issues on the congressional agenda. The following discussion summarizes selected milestones in CRS legislative assistance for FY2015.

## MAJOR ISSUES OF THE YEAR

**Appropriations.** CRS maintains an interdivisional team of analysts who are responsible for producing annual appropriations reports, responding to cross-cutting appropriation requests, and providing a range of different products related to the appropriations bills throughout the fiscal year. Members of the team are also responsible for maintaining and updating the most popular CRS product: the Appropriations Status Table. During this fiscal year CRS analysts, information professionals, and technical support personnel developed a new, nimble, and exhaustive version of the table that provides improved service to congressional staff who track appropriations bills. One outgrowth of this project was the development of a database of appropriations legislative actions dating from the mid-1970s. This unique database enables CRS to respond more quickly and more authoritatively to congressional requests pertaining to appropriations.

**Budget, Debt, and Deficit.** Throughout the year CRS provided analytic support on a variety of policy issues related to the federal debt and deficit. At the beginning of the year, CRS supported the continuing congressional debate over the FY2015 and FY2016 federal budget. Experts supported the debate by analyzing budget trends and the impact of recent legislation and examined a number of specific issues such as the impact of the Budget Control Act of 2011 (P.L. 112-25) on federal spending and issues associated with reaching the debt limit. Congress called on CRS to address reductions to spending implemented as part of the Budget Control Act sequestration process, the potential consequences of reaching the debt limit, the long-term sustainability of the debt and deficit, and approaches to address the long-run budget deficit.

**Comprehensive Energy Legislation.** In FY2015, for the first time since the passage of the Energy Independence and Security Act (P.L. 110-140) in FY2008, there was movement on major energy legislation in Congress. CRS assisted with briefings, memoranda, support for

committee markup, and new products as Congress addressed electric grid modernization, security, and reliability; carbon capture, utilization, and storage; renewable energy incentives; oil and natural gas supply and trade; energy efficiency; and energy sector regulation.

**Congressional Oversight.** CRS provided support for committees in both chambers in their efforts to conduct oversight for the entire range of executive branch activities. Experts offered written analyses and conducted numerous briefings to assist Congress with both its investigative and oversight functions. Attorneys presented a seminar on congressional oversight and investigations at the CRS New Member Seminar in Williamsburg, which provided new Members with a practical look at the mechanics of congressional oversight and various challenges and legal concerns that may arise as they participate in committee-based oversight. CRS attorneys also worked extensively to analyze and advise Congress on both the legal principles governing the standing of Members of Congress to bring lawsuits to challenge executive branch actions and on a specific lawsuit that could impact the scope of executive privilege and Congress's ability to obtain information from the executive branch.

**Constitutional Law.** CRS attorneys continued to update the Senate document *Constitution of the United States of America: Analysis and Interpretation* to reflect the work of the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, holding that the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution requires states to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples and to recognize same-sex marriages formed in other states, raised a host of questions about how constitutional protection of same-sex marriage interplays with religious freedom. CRS attorneys advised Congress on such issues as the obligations of marriage officiants to perform or facilitate same-sex marriage ceremonies, civil rights protections for same-sex couples and religious objectors, potential protections for religious social service providers in federally funded programs, and the impact on the

tax-exempt status of religious entities that object to same-sex marriage. CRS attorneys also advised Congress on whether owners of public accommodations may be required to serve same-sex couples, whether health care providers may be required to provide medical treatment regardless of a patient's sexual orientation, and whether religious institutions must provide housing to same-sex couples. Policy analysts addressed other constitutional issues such as the potential use of an Article V convention to propose amendments to the Constitution and an alternative method of electing the President through the National Popular Vote Initiative.

***Country-of-Origin Labeling (COOL) for Meat.***

Mandatory country-of-origin labeling (COOL) for meat sold at retail went into effect several years ago as required by the 2008 farm bill. However, Canada and Mexico challenged COOL in the World Trade Organization (WTO), claiming that COOL harms their livestock sectors. Between 2009 and 2015 the WTO ruled four times that COOL for beef and pork violates U.S. WTO obligations. Throughout this lengthy challenge process and the complex legislative debate in 2015 on how to forestall trade retaliation by Canada and Mexico, CRS was in the forefront by explaining the consequences of legislative options.

***Defense Reform.*** CRS assistance to Congress as it considered reforms for the Department of Defense included analysis of national security strategy, analysis and options regarding major military space programs, the future role of nuclear weapons and long-term requirements for maintaining an effective nuclear force posture, and issues pertaining to the future composition of the military services. The Defense Department's acquisition policies and practices were another source of concern, particularly weapons systems cost-overruns and general efficiencies associated with acquisition practices. Military personnel issues included implications of the defense drawdown on the force structure and composition of the military services; military retirement reform; the planned integration of women into combat

roles and units; diversity in the armed forces, professional military education; and the Selective Service System.

***Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).***

During this fiscal year the House and Senate each passed comprehensive reauthorization bills to amend and extend the ESEA. In support of these efforts, CRS analysts provided ongoing technical and analytical support to congressional staff working on the development and refinement of proposals that would make substantial alterations to ESEA grant-making approaches, funding allocation procedures, and the educational accountability provisions enacted under the No Child Left Behind Act (P.L. 107-110). CRS prepared simulations to model the distributional effects of proposed changes to several of the ESEA's grant allocation formulas, provided legal interpretations delineating the potential effects of proposals, and prepared numerous reports clarifying the potential reach of reauthorization proposals and examining the comparability of proposals included in different bills. CRS attorneys reviewed draft bills and briefed Members on legal issues.

***Federal Health Insurance Programs.*** In 2015, to assist Congress in passing the Medicare Access and CHIP (State Children's Health Insurance Program) Reauthorization Act of 2015 (MACRA, P.L. 114-10) and several other bills with health insurance provisions, CRS identified and evaluated policy alternatives, prepared legislative support documents, provided hearing support including expert testimony, and analyzed how these issues might potentially interact and affect Medicare, Medicaid, and CHIP beneficiaries, health care providers, and the federal budget. In support of MACRA, CRS analyzed the problematic predecessor formula for calculating updates to Medicare payment rates to physicians and assisted with the development of legislative options for replacing the formula. CRS also examined extending funding for CHIP and for the Community Health Centers Fund through FY2017 and extending and making permanent expiring provisions in Medicare, Medicaid, and other programs.

**Financial Regulation.** CRS supported congressional deliberations on the reauthorization of the Export-Import Bank and the legal, policy, and budgetary consequences of the expiration of the Bank's general statutory charter. CRS legal experts consulted with lawmakers on congressional oversight of the administrative implementation of the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act (P.L. 111-203). Attorneys wrote extensively on state and federal enforcement actions against, and legal settlements with, financial institutions stemming from their mortgage servicing and mortgage-backed securities activities. CRS addressed legal issues associated with other financial regulation issues, including state efforts to legalize medical and retail marijuana, economic sanctions programs administered by Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control, and Puerto Rico's financial difficulties.

**Global Trade.** Trade-related issues on the congressional agenda to which CRS analysts responded included reauthorization of the U.S. Trade Promotion Authority (TPA), negotiations on the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) Free Trade Agreement (FTA), the U.S.-EU Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (T-TIP), U.S. trade relations with China and other major economies, and reauthorization of trade preference programs for Sub-Saharan Africa and other developing countries. Additional trade policy issues for which CRS provided support were U.S. economic sanctions against Russia, policy issues involving U.S. trade relations with China and India, and legislation enacted in June 2015 to reform and reauthorize the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) (P.L. 114-27), a U.S. regional trade preference program for eligible countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

**Immigration.** Immigration was a major focus during the 114th Congress, largely because of President Obama's announcement that the executive branch is addressing immigration in the absence of congressional action on comprehensive immigration reform legislation. CRS reported on legal issues raised by the executive branch's November 20, 2014 announcement,

including challenges subsequently brought against certain initiatives, developments involving so-called "sanctuary" jurisdictions that decline to honor some or all "immigration detainers," privacy issues relating to the disclosure of Social Security numbers, and the relationship between citizenship status and Social Security numbers.

**Implementation of the Iran Nuclear Agreement and Sanctions.** CRS supported Congress as it tracked, responded to, and deliberated over long-standing negotiations between Iran and the United States and other international powers regarding Iran's nuclear program that culminated in the July 14, 2015, Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). As Congress reviewed the plan of action during the period called for in the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act (P.L. 114-117), CRS analyzed what the agreement did and did not require of Iran, the United States, and the other parties; the current status of Iran's nuclear program; and the role that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) would play in the implementation of the agreement and the follow-on inspections regime. Experts assisted with issues such as how the deal might alter Iran's regional policies, including aid to terror groups; and how key U.S. partners in the region, including Israel and Saudi Arabia, viewed the agreement. CRS also examined the sanctions provisions of the agreement, including which sanctions were designated to be lifted, which ones would remain, which sanctions would be brought back into effect if warranted, and the nature of the authority to waive or lift sanctions on Iran.

**International Law and Foreign Affairs Powers.** In addition to legal support to Congress during the negotiation and culmination of the international agreement concerning Iran's nuclear program, CRS attorneys reviewed court cases against Iran that have resulted in monetary judgments against the nation and examined *Zivotofsky v. Kerry*, a case that might potentially have broader implications for the understanding of the constitutional allocation of foreign affairs powers between Congress and the President.



Other legal issues for which Congress sought assistance were the allocation of war powers between Congress and the President; how the War Powers Resolution and previous statutory authorizations to use force may apply; and the detention and trial of persons captured in the conflict with Al Qaeda, in particular those held at the U.S. Naval Station in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. As the deadline for reauthorization of expiring provisions of the USA PATRIOT Act (P.L. 107-56) approached, CRS legal experts assessed the validity of the National Security Agency's intelligence surveillance programs and addressed the timing of the sun-setting provisions and the newly enacted authorities.

***Islamic State and the Syrian Civil War.*** Concern about the Islamic State in the Middle East and North Africa region played a large role as Congress and the administration looked at a range of crises ranging from the Syrian civil war to developments in Iraq and beyond. CRS assisted Congress by analyzing the international struggle against the Islamic State and other terrorist groups, not only in Syria and Iraq, but also in Libya, Yemen, Egypt, and various sub-Saharan African countries. Congress also sought CRS assistance as lawmakers questioned presidential authority to engage in military operations against the Islamic State and debated options for new or revised congressional authorization for the use of military force. Congress called on CRS to analyze the administration's Train and Equip Program and other assistance efforts to enable vetted Syrian rebel groups to counter terrorism. CRS also responded to congressional interest in the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian conflict as well as that conflict's devastating toll on civilians and the refugee crisis it has created, the impact of Russia's increasing involvement on behalf of Syrian President Assad, and activities of the Islamic State and other violent jihadist groups in Africa in the context of building partners' counterterrorism capabilities.

***Legislative Process.*** Analysts specializing in legislative process offered assistance to lawmakers in understanding complex congressional rules and practices related to the consideration of legislation from introduction to

enactment. Of particular note were CRS analysts' efforts to provide procedural assistance to a new partisan majority in Senate committees, including work to help set up the initial committee organizational meetings. CRS analysts undertook projects related to the changing use of the filibuster and of the cloture rule in the Senate, researched privileges of the House, and analyzed a variety of statutory rulemaking provisions. They provided information related to attempts to use the expedited procedures of the Congressional Review Act (5 U.S.C. Secs. 801-808) to disapprove regulations and assisted in the debate over renewing the expedited procedures of the Trade Promotion Authority.

***Planned Parenthood Funding, Family Planning Services, and Fetal Tissue Research.*** When the Center for Medical Progress released a series of videos that accused the Planned Parenthood Federation of America of profiting from fetal tissue research, the videos heightened congressional interest in fetal tissue collection and donation practices and the operations and federal funding sources available to the Planned Parenthood Federation of America and its affiliated health centers. CRS provided analytical support and consultative service to Congress as it held hearings, introduced legislation, and debated about fetal tissue donation in response to the videos, and whether FY2016 funding that might go to Planned Parenthood could be redirected to federal health centers without causing a loss of access to health care for those who would otherwise be served at a Planned Parenthood affiliated health center.

***Proposal to Define "Waters of the United States."*** The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Environmental Protection Agency jointly finalized a rule in May 2015 defining the scope of waters protected under the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. Secs. 1251-1387). The proposal revises regulations that have been in place for more than 25 years. The revisions are a response to the 2001 and 2006 Supreme Court rulings that interpreted the regulatory scope of the Act more narrowly than previously, but created uncertainty about the precise effect of the Court's decisions. CRS provided extensive support

for Congress by helping to define the scope and potential implications of the proposal and assisting Members who have offered legislative options to address concerns largely seeking to block the rule. The rule became effective in August 2015, but early in October a federal court blocked the rule's implementation nationwide.

***Regulations and Rulemaking.*** Members of the 114th Congress expressed interest in the issuance and implementation of rules promulgated by federal agencies. CRS experts assisted by explaining and evaluating the executive orders and statutory requirements that govern the current rulemaking process. Analysts examined several legislative proposals pending before the 114th Congress that would change the rulemaking process. CRS also supported various committees and Member offices as they sought to identify and track specific types of regulations such as “major” or “economically significant” regulations.

***Response to the Ebola Outbreak.*** The unprecedented Ebola outbreak in West Africa called for a CRS Service-wide response. Experts coordinated a report exploring the legal and policy aspects of travel from affected countries to the United States, covering transportation, immigration, and health issues, as well as the balance of individual rights and public health goals. Analysts and attorneys from across the Service addressed an array of congressional questions and concerns, including federal and state authority to impose quarantine and isolation requirements, legal authority to restrict foreign travel, authorities governing border entry, the applicability of the World Health Organization's International Health Regulations, and the role of the Defense Department in providing assistance to stricken African countries. CRS supported Congress throughout its consideration of \$5.4 billion in emergency supplemental appropriations to fund U.S. efforts to address the outbreak abroad and strengthen detection and control efforts at home.

***Surface Transportation.*** Surface transportation was one of the major issues facing Congress in FY2015, as the law authorizing federal highway and public transportation

programs, extended at the start of the fiscal year, was scheduled to expire in May. Federal taxes dedicated to these programs do not generate sufficient revenue to support the current level of spending. Congress has been particularly interested in exploring the possibilities of attracting private capital to build transportation infrastructure, but CRS reports and briefings have emphasized that private capital is a viable alternative only for a limited number of projects. CRS provided extensive support on financing issues and also on automotive safety and railroad issues. Congress provided a short-term extension of the authority into early FY2016.

***Taxation.*** When Congress sought to develop a compendium of tax expenditures, CRS analysts provided an assessment of each one. Analysts also responded to corporate-tax related matters, particularly on international corporate migration. There was general interest throughout Congress over the various tax reform proposals that were being floated by Members, the White House, and outside think tanks. CRS fielded questions on how much the corporate rate could be reduced, whether businesses would change their structure in response to a reform, and how American multinational corporations avoid taxes. CRS analysts responded to questions surrounding the Affordable Care Act (P.L. 111-148, as amended) and analyzed provisions such as the excise tax on high-cost employer-sponsored health coverage and the implementation of the so-called “employer mandate.” As Congress began debate on extending a series of temporary tax preferences (so-called “tax extenders”), which expired at the end of CY2014, Congress requested CRS assistance with analysis of the potential policy and economic consequences of the tax preferences.

***U.S.-China Relations in the Global Context.*** CRS provided expertise and analysis to Congress as it examined expanding U.S.-China cooperation in addressing global and regional challenges such as climate change, the weak global economy, the Iranian and North Korean nuclear programs, Afghan reconstruction, and global pandemics. CRS also assisted



Congress regarding increasing friction in the U.S.-China relationship deriving from such issues as China's use of coercive tactics in its maritime disputes with neighbors; China's harsh treatment of activists, dissidents, and ethnic minorities; Beijing's new and pending legislation related to national security; and its resistance to calls for more democratic electoral reforms in Hong Kong. CRS examined the implications of China's use of extensive land reclamation to create artificial islands in the South China Sea, alleged Chinese involvement in cyber-espionage and cyber-theft against U.S. targets, and China's extensive military modernization, economic reforms, the potential for U.S. businesses in China, and China's efforts to broaden and deepen its economic and diplomatic engagement in other regions, particularly in Central Asia and in South and Southeast Asia.

**Wildfires.** At the end of the fiscal year the 2015 fire season was already the fourth-largest in terms of acreage burned, with drought conditions exacerbating the intensity and frequency of wildfires. Wildfire spending has more than doubled since the 1990s. A significant portion of that increase is related to rising costs of suppressing fires, even during years of relatively mild wildfire activity, although the costs vary annually and are difficult to predict in advance. As Congress debated the level and direction of federal spending on wildland fire management, CRS provided lawmakers with analysis and evaluation of congressional proposals to reform federal wildfire suppression spending.

## FOREIGN RELATIONS, DEFENSE, AND TRADE

**Defense Budget.** CRS analyzed the potential impact of reduced spending due to sequestration on a range of issues associated with U.S. defense policy, national security spending priorities, and overseas military operations, especially in the Middle East. As is its tradition, CRS also hosted the first assessment for congressional staff of the Administration's proposed FY2016 defense budget, and throughout the year offered frequently updated summaries of highlights of the FY2016 defense authorization and appropriations bills as they moved through the Congress. Other CRS assessments of defense budget-related issues included the impact of a continuing budget resolution and the Budget Control Act of 2011 (P.L. 112-25) spending caps on the Pentagon budget, the Army's future proper active duty/reserve component mix, the militarization of law enforcement and the Department of Defense's "1033 Program" that provides excess defense equipment to law enforcement entities, the impact of a potential government-wide shut-down on DOD active-duty operations, and the implications of reducing cost-of-living benefits for military retirees. CRS also assessed DOD funding requests for certain weapons systems and issues such as the reauthorization of the Defense Production Act of 1950 (P.L. 81-774), subject to the regular congressional budget and oversight process.

**Europe and the Western Hemisphere.** Congress called on CRS as it watched Great Britain's referendum on the future of Scotland, Scotland's subsequent national election, and the UK's vote on a possible exit from the European Union; terrorist incidents in France; and Europe's contributions to the conflicts in Ukraine and Syria. CRS monitored the peace process in Colombia and tracked evolving U.S. policy toward Cuba. CRS experts recommended speakers and served as moderators in the congressionally sponsored program series entitled "Latin America on the Rise," first launched at the beginning of the 113th Congress. The series, designed to engage experts with congressional staff, has addressed such issues as education, freedom of the press, rule of law, private

investment, development, and U.S. engagement in the region. CRS also assisted Members and staff of the various inter-parliamentary exchanges in which Congress engages in both Europe and the Western Hemisphere, including the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, the Transatlantic Legislator's Dialogue, the British-American Parliamentary Group, the Canadian-U.S. Inter-parliamentary Group, and the U.S.-Mexico Inter-parliamentary Group.

***Intelligence.*** CRS analysts addressed issues associated with the U.S. intelligence community, including congressional oversight; balancing competing priorities within the intelligence community; and its evolution, organization, and management. Congress called on CRS experts to examine security and privacy issues related to surveillance, including the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 (P.L. 95-511), the Central Intelligence Agency's use of enhanced interrogation techniques, covert operations, secrecy, and transparency. In this arena, CRS also addressed public access to the intelligence budget; the history, organization, leadership, management, structure, and budget process of the intelligence community; and oversight mechanisms within the intelligence community.

***International Finance.*** As the ongoing debt crisis evolved in Greece, CRS analyzed major new developments to resolve it, including the European and IMF financial assistance packages and Greek economic reform efforts, and the implications of these developments for the United States. Other critical issues for which Congress drew on CRS expertise included consideration of reforms related to the governance of the International Monetary Fund and the emerging economies' desire for a greater institutional voice in line with their growing role in the global economy. Major developments in the global economy, including slower growth in Europe and in emerging economies such as China and Brazil, and exchange rate and market volatility, were also active areas of CRS assistance.

***Military Health Issues.*** CRS analysts addressed a number of issues related to the health care provided to military service members, military retirees, veterans,

and their dependents and survivors. Of particular congressional concern was the level of transparency in the quality of care in the military health system. CRS supported Congress as lawmakers worked to increase the transparency of medical quality in the military health system and reviewed the recommendations included in the final report of the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission.

***Russia.*** Russia's annexation of Crimea and its deepening involvement in a pro-Russia, separatist uprising in eastern Ukraine was a notable focus of congressional concern on which CRS provided ongoing support. CRS also assessed close U.S.-European cooperation on economic and other sanctions imposed on Russia and on the provision of financial and material support to Ukraine to maintain that country's independence and sovereignty. Congress drew on CRS expertise to address implementation of the Minsk-2 peace agreement, the reform movement within the government of Ukraine, military tensions in eastern Ukraine, NATO's role in the ongoing crisis, Russia's broader strategy toward the alliance, Moscow's opposition to U.S. and NATO missile defense plans in Europe, as well as Russia's backing of the Assad regime in Syria.

***Strategic Transformation in South Asia.*** India is often characterized as a nascent great power and "indispensable partner" of the United States, one that many analysts view as a potential counterweight to China. For the past decade, the United States and India have been pursuing a "strategic partnership" based on shared values and apparently convergent geopolitical interests. CRS provided analytical support to Congress on numerous economic, security, and global issues and initiatives under way between India and the United States, and the role of Congress in identifying U.S. interests and options for advancing those efforts. CRS monitored the changing dynamics of India-China-Pakistan relations, as well Pakistan-India tensions, regional and global terrorism, the impact on the region of efforts to stabilize Afghanistan, nuclear weapons proliferation, links between Pakistan and indigenous American terrorism, human rights, and economic development. CRS experts

evaluated the apparent reversal of democracy in some parts of South Asia such as the Bangladeshi opposition's boycott of elections, the government's struggle with Islamic extremism, and continued efforts to address worker rights abuses. CRS also examined military intervention in governance in Pakistan and the situation in Sri Lanka, where presidential elections in late 2015 could usher in a new era of democratic governance.

***U.S. Alliances and Regional Politics in Asia and the Pacific.*** CRS assisted Members when Congress prepared for Japanese Prime Minister Abe's April address to a joint meeting of both Houses, and when lawmakers sought to deepen their understanding of Imperial Japan's treatment of other countries from 1910 to 1945. CRS provided research and analysis on the relaxation of the U.S. ban on lethal weapons sales to Vietnam, preparations for Burma's second round of parliamentary elections in November 2015, national ceasefire negotiations between the Burmese government and armed organizations long embroiled in ethnic conflict, and U.S.-Philippines military cooperation. Other assistance included support on such issues as political developments and human rights in Cambodia, Thailand, and Indonesia; and U.S. economic and security priorities ranging from the Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement to nuclear cooperation, hedging against Chinese military modernization, Taiwan's security, and countering threats from North Korea. CRS also assessed North Korea's nuclear and missile programs, its dire human rights situation, and leadership dynamics in Pyongyang.

## DOMESTIC SOCIAL POLICY

***The Affordable Care Act (ACA).*** During the past year Congress oversaw the implementation of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA, P.L. 111-148, as amended) at both the federal and state level; lawmakers also considered and enacted amendments to the law and studied the law's current effects on the federal budget, as well as implications for future federal outlays. CRS assisted Congress by providing overviews of the law's provisions and analysis of relevant federal

regulations, guidance, and other administrative policies pertaining to private insurance, public programs such as Medicaid expansion, and health care delivery issues. CRS experts also prepared information on implementation of the ACA (including state decisions regarding implementation, new programs and grants, financing, and impacts of the ACA on stakeholders); analysis of legislative proposals that would modify or repeal ACA, such as repeal of various health-related taxes; and analysis of topics ranging from the legal challenges to the ACA's premium tax credits to the law's contraceptive coverage requirement. CRS also compiled current and emerging legislation and litigation resources to more efficiently monitor relevant health reform issues.

***Child Care for Low-Income Families.*** The President signed the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 2014 into law (P.L. 113-186) on November 19, 2014, reauthorizing the primary source of federal grant funding dedicated to child care subsidies for low-income families. This marked the first reauthorization of the act since its expiration in 2002. The new law substantially strengthened requirements related to health and safety, licensing, enforcement, and quality of child care. CRS actively supported Congress throughout the reauthorization process by providing background and analysis of program funding and rules, technical and policy review of multiple drafts of legislation, estimates of effects of proposed changes in funding allocation formulas on states and tribes, and consultation with congressional staff tasked with preparing amendments on a range of issues for floor consideration.

***Child Nutrition Programs.*** CRS analysts helped Congress in its review of child nutrition programs (National School Lunch Program and certain other institutional food service programs) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). These programs were last reauthorized in the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (P.L. 111-296); some provisions were due to expire September 30, 2015. At hearings to examine how the programs currently operate, topics included payment and eligibility accuracy, nutrition

standards, and potential revisions to the programs that provide summer meals and snacks. CRS held an introductory seminar on child nutrition reauthorization, developed new reports explaining funding, eligibility rules, and current issues in the WIC and the child nutrition programs, and responded to hundreds of inquiries on a range of related issues. CRS also helped staff understand the role of the appropriations bills that fund these programs and the general provisions that direct them.

***Child Welfare.*** The majority of the child welfare programs Congress supports are devoted to increasing the safety, family permanency, and well-being of children. Funds are provided to state child welfare agencies, and most are made available to support children who have been removed from their families and placed in foster care or with new permanent adoptive families. Reforms discussed this past year at hearings and proposed in legislation (the Family Stability and Kinship Care Act, S. 1964) suggest policies that would redirect federal child welfare funds away from certain foster care spending and toward services to prevent the need for foster care. CRS facilitated congressional efforts to better understand current child welfare policy and addressed lawmaker concerns about the overuse of congregate care and the limited funding for preventing the need for foster care.

***Cybercrime.*** Some content on the Internet is designed to be separate from the surface content that can be accessed in daily searches. This other content is that of the Deep Web — and the further corners of the Deep Web, segments known as the Dark Web, contain content that has been intentionally concealed and potentially used for criminal or other malicious activities. As policymakers became more aware of the potential of nefarious activities that can occur in the Dark Web environment, coupled with the data breaches that have occurred over the past year (breaches at the Office of Personnel Management, Anthem Inc., and Sony Pictures), CRS analysts played a pivotal role in helping congressional staff understand how criminals exploit the Internet to carry out illegal activity. CRS analysts also helped staff prepare for hearings and frame the cybercrime issue in a more

holistic manner — one that involves not only malicious actors and their capabilities but law enforcement and the ability to counter criminals.

***Domestic Human Trafficking.*** The House passed eleven trafficking-related bills in the beginning months of the 114th Congress; and on May 29, 2015, Congress passed the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act (P.L. 114-122). CRS analysts provided information and analysis to Congress on a number of legislative proposals; reviewed draft legislation; provided technical assistance and legislative consultation during markup; and as the main piece of legislation moved to the floor, offered support during consideration of the various amendments to the bill and their potential impact.

***Federal Disability Program.*** Congress called on CRS as it expressed continued concern over the financial condition of the federal government's largest income maintenance program for individuals with disabilities: Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI). Under current law at the time the Disability Insurance (DI) Trust Fund, which finances the benefits and associated administrative costs of the SSDI Program, was projected to be exhausted by the end of 2016. If depleted, ongoing tax revenues to the DI Trust Fund would have been sufficient to pay only about 80 percent of scheduled SSDI benefits. In response to that shortfall, CRS supported a series of congressional hearings on issues related to the financing of the DI Trust Fund by providing background and technical information on trust fund exhaustion and information on payroll tax reallocations between the Social Security Trust Funds. CRS analysts also assessed the potential effects of several of the proposals on the employment and earnings outcomes of certain SSDI beneficiaries.

***Federal Pensions.*** Congress considered policy proposals to make a number of changes to the retirement benefits for federal employees under the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS), Federal Employees' Retirement System (FERS), and the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP). Lawmakers also considered making changes to the retirement benefits for certain senior-executive service (SES)

employees at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). CRS analyzed legislative proposals related to federal pensions, compared these legislative proposals to current law, provided in-person consultations to congressional staff, convened a CRS seminar on federal retirement issues, and supported the implementation of phased retirement under the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (P.L. 112-141), which authorizes federal agencies to offer a phased retirement option to eligible employees.

***Paid Leave.*** Congress considered several policy proposals to create entitlements for paid leave for certain employees such as the Healthy Families Act (H.R. 932, S. 497), the Guaranteed Paid Vacation Act (S. 1564), and the Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act of 2015 (H.R. 532, S. 2033). Other bills sought to create mechanisms for providing partial wage replacement to workers taking family and medical leave, such as the Family and Medical Insurance Leave Act (S. 786, H.R. 1439), the Federal Employee Short-Term Disability Insurance Act of 2015 (H.R. 2741), and the Wounded Warriors Federal Leave Act of 2015 (H.R. 313, S. 242). In support of this legislative activity, CRS analyzed and briefed congressional staff on relevant topics including paid leave proposals, general leave concepts, and the economic impacts of paid family leave. CRS also outlined the potential impacts of paid leave generally and for certain groups of workers, examined the literature, and catalogued relevant state laws.

***Pensions and Retirement Income Security.*** Retirement security issues continued to be a concern for lawmakers. CRS consulted with congressional staff in formal and informal briefings and a number of written products on a variety of issues related to pensions and retirement income security, such as proposals to improve U.S. households' access to, and participation in, retirement plans. CRS also assisted Congress on a number of specific complex policy issues that arose during the year. For example, CRS analyzed policy issues surrounding multiemployer- defined benefit pension plans and the effect their insolvency could have on the federal government's insurance program for private

pensions, the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC). Also of interest to many in Congress is a change proposed by the Department of Labor to the definition of investment advice within retirement plans. CRS responded to numerous requests related to this controversial proposal and wrote a report that provided necessary background and context for understanding the proposed change.

***Pharmaceutical Research, Development, Delivery, and Pricing.*** The 114<sup>th</sup> Congress held numerous hearings related to pharmaceutical research, development, and delivery. CRS supported congressional efforts on wide-ranging legislation, such as the 21st Century Cures Act (H.R. 6), as well as more narrowly focused legislation aimed at, for example, reducing prescription drug abuse or facilitating research into potential medical uses of marijuana. CRS provided overviews of the Act's provisions and an analysis of relevant federal statute, regulation, guidance, and other administrative policies; explored policy options to address the problem of prescription drug abuse; and supported congressional efforts to develop and refine proposals that would make substantial changes to the treatment of marijuana under the Controlled Substances Act (U.S.C. Sec. 801 et seq.) and the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (P.L. 75-717). CRS also provided analysis of growing spending for specialty pharmaceuticals as well as more general information about government spending for prescription drugs.

***Police Accountability and Use of Force.*** Several high-profile incidents occurred in the past year in which police officers were involved in the deaths of citizens, some of which led to a series of demonstrations around the country protesting the treatment of people of color at the hands of law enforcement. The incidents generated interest among policymakers regarding how to repair the apparently decreasing amount of trust between law enforcement and the public. As Congress grappled with ways in which the federal government could assist affected communities to repair their relationships with law enforcement, CRS analysts provided guidance and analysis on topics such as the

role of the federal government in local police matters, mechanisms to improve police-community relations, and the adequacy of law enforcement agencies' reporting of deaths of persons in their custody.

***Student Financial Aid.*** CRS assisted as Members contemplated comprehensive Higher Education Act (HEA) reauthorization proposals, adjustments to student loan repayment benefits, alterations to the design of Pell Grants, and changes to campus-based aid programs. Support included simulating the effects of varied changes to the federal need analysis formula, analyzing alternative student loan forgiveness options, and estimating the effects of making changes to income-based student loan repayment plans. CRS also prepared documents outlining the effects of the closure of a large chain of for-profit colleges on the student aid recipients attending those colleges and reviewed trends in and implications of student loan debt.

***Veterans Benefits.*** Congress continued its efforts to address delays in veteran patient care and sought to ensure that the Veterans Choice Program, established by the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-146), was implemented seamlessly by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). CRS analysts responded to numerous inquiries regarding the provisions of the Act that were presenting implementation challenges, resulting in confusion among veteran patients and VA staff; enumerated the different statutory authorities for care outside the VA health care system; and addressed the ongoing reform proposals and departmental efforts to modernize VA's health care system. CRS legislative attorneys and analysts assisted with numerous legal and policy issues regarding VA employee accountability, employee misconduct, VA employee whistleblowers, and due process protections in civil service employment. The Service also provided information to Members as they responded to thousands of constituent requests pertaining to service delivery needs in health care, employment, education, housing, and social services for veterans.

## GOVERNMENT AND THE ECONOMY

***Budget Process.*** CRS analysts assisted Congress in its examination of budget process issues, including the impact of budget control mechanisms on budgetary legislation. The Service assisted Congress in preparing for a budget resolution and a reconciliation bill, analyzed appropriations floor amendments and options for continuing resolutions, and provided information on budget process constraints on new authorization provisions, as well as on the implications of the expired provisions.

***Campaign Finance and Election Reform.*** CRS analysts and attorneys supported Congress with research and briefings as both chambers assessed the 2014 elections and prepared for the 2016 election cycle. Lawmakers called on CRS to provide rapid analysis of a proposal, contained in what became the FY2015 omnibus appropriations law (P.L. 113-235), that significantly altered party and political action committee (PAC) contribution limits — the first major statutory change to campaign finance law in more than a decade. Congress turned to CRS to assess how the changes were affecting parties and to help lawmakers decide whether additional legislation was needed. CRS experts offered support as Congress considered politically active tax-exempt organizations, super PACs, and proposals to alter the Federal Election Commission. As the nation's voting process continued to evolve after the 2014 elections, Congress called on CRS to examine proposals for automatic voter registration, identification requirements for voting, and military and overseas voting. Analysts and attorneys also continued to assist congressional clients in their efforts to amend the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (P.L. 89-110) following the 2013 Supreme Court decision in *Shelby County, Alabama v. Holder* that suspended pre-clearance of voting changes in certain states and jurisdictions.

***Census Bureau, Apportionment, and Redistricting.*** CRS legal and policy experts addressed the specific concerns of Congress related to Census Bureau operations and



appropriations, 2020 decennial census plans and testing, the American Community Survey, and the redistricting process. Other issues of interest included the need to control decennial census costs, Member and public perceptions of the American Community Survey, and redistricting in relation to the Voting Rights Act.

***Congressional Administration.*** CRS staff continued to assist congressional staff with the administration and management of Member offices within the legislative branch, including supporting new Members taking office for the first time in January 2015, as well as providing help throughout the year on congressional mass communications and mailings, commemorative works in the District of Columbia, technology management in Congress, congressional service tenure, and staff pay. CRS provided briefings on a broad range of topics including the legislative branch budget, administrative processes, the Member Representational Allowance, management of chamber officers, government information creation and dissemination, and casework. CRS consulted with lawmakers on congressional ethics, congressional advisory commissions, training of congressional staff and interns, ensuring Capitol Hill and district office security, travel policies and costs, congressional staff benefits, legislative branch agency appointments, and congressional nominations to service academies.

***Emergency Management Issues.*** CRS worked closely with Congress on issues of national preparedness, disaster response and recovery, and mitigation, with a focus on Members whose districts and states were affected by wildfires, flooding, and the Napa Valley earthquake. CRS responded to a multitude of questions related to the implementation of the Sandy Recovery Improvement Act (Division B of P.L. 113-2); FEMA disaster declarations, cost-shares, and preliminary damage assessments; public assistance; individual and household assistance; and the impact of the Budget Control Act (P.L. 112-25) on the provision of federal funding for disasters.

***Executive Branch Organization.*** Congress called on CRS to analyze legislative proposals that would reassign statutory functions, alter agency leadership arrangements, abolish agencies and functions, and reduce the size of the federal government. Lawmakers asked CRS to analyze and comment on alternative approaches to interagency coordination of policymaking and implementation in such areas as national security and homeland security and to help refine proposals for the creation of national commissions and similar temporary study panels that would examine a variety of policy issues and developments.

***Federal Grants Management.*** The current federal fiscal situation prompted Congress to examine several aspects of grants management, including identifying and preventing waste, fraud, and abuse; resolving unobligated balances in expired grant accounts; and reviewing the design and inherent mechanics of specific federal grants. CRS analysts reported on the effect of funding delays on federal grants management, delayed close-out of federal grants, federal grant databases and reporting requirements, and grants transparency in implementing certain provisions of the Digital Accountability and Transparency Act of 2014 (the DATA Act, P.L. 113-101). CRS experts consulted with Congress to develop ideas and conceptualize strategies for improving the performance and oversight of federal grants and review draft legislation.

***Federal Pay and Personnel.*** Issues related to management and administration of the federal workforce were subjects of broad and sustained interest for Congress. CRS provided briefings and written analyses for Members and committees on the various appointment authorities, position classification standards and qualification requirements for selected positions; federal pay schedules; pay adjustment processes; locality pay adjustments over time; a freeze on pay rates; critical pay authority; and performance and other types of awards and incentives. CRS analyses covered issues including the workforce characteristics of selected departments and agencies; policies governing

furloughs, reductions in force, and other statutory authorities to shape the size and composition of the civilian workforce; hiring flexibilities and removal procedures; the Senior Executive Service; the Federal Executive Boards; telework; executive agency policies and expenditures by executive agencies regarding conferences; and various approaches for recruiting and retaining an effective information technology and cybersecurity workforce.

***Federal Reserve and Monetary Policy.*** The Federal Reserve played a central role in the response to the financial crisis that began in 2007, when U.S. financial conditions deteriorated, leading to the near collapse of the U.S. financial system in September 2008. As a result, the Federal Reserve gained additional regulatory authority over large financial firms with the passage of the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act (P.L. 111-203). Many of the Federal Reserve actions, in both monetary policy and financial regulation, have proven controversial, and CRS has supported Congress in its oversight role. This included preparation for the semi-annual testimony required from the chair of the Federal Reserve and consideration of legislation on the Federal Reserve, such as a proposal to subject it to an audit by the Government Accountability Office. CRS helped Congress understand the tradeoffs inherent in legislation as the costs posed by regulation were weighed against potential benefits to consumers and the stability of the financial system.

***Firearm Regulations.*** CRS summarized legislative action in the 113th Congress on proposals considered in the wake of the December 2012 Newtown, Connecticut, tragedy. Some of those proposals addressed universal background checks, mental incompetency and firearms eligibility, and types of semiautomatic firearms capable of accepting interchangeable magazines. CRS analyzed the supplementary homicide reports compiled by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and developed a comprehensive data set of mass murders committed with firearms for a 15-year timespan. CRS experts similarly developed a

comprehensive data set for mass public shootings from 1970 to 2013. CRS continues to provide ongoing support on gun control and the federal regulation of firearms.

***Government Information Policy.*** CRS reported on government information policy and practices, including reports on legal access to federal records and the collection and retention of presidential records. Experts answered numerous requests seeking data on Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) processing and policies and on the creation and operations of the federal government's more than 1,000 federal advisory committees — which provide an opportunity for the public to participate in the policymaking process. CRS analysts and attorneys responded to requests about the requirements that agencies must follow to ensure the appropriate collection and retention of all records, including those created by electronic means; briefed lawmakers regarding policy options on the design of transparent advisory committees; and assisted with preparation of hearings related to proper records collection and the administration of FOIA.

***Government Procurement.*** Congressional interest in government procurement spanned a variety of issues and topics. Small business contracting and programs, domestic preference legislation and statutes (such as the Buy American Act, 41 U.S.C. Secs. 8301-8305), sourcing policy, project labor agreements, strategic sourcing, and suspension and debarment were among the procurement subjects of interest to Congress. Using the federal government's procurement database, CRS provided procurement data tailored to the needs of congressional requesters. The Service also provided policy and legal expertise to analyze draft or existing legislation and assist with hearing preparation. CRS attorneys prepared material on federal procurement law and reported on President Obama's Fair Pay and Safe Workplaces executive order and the legal mechanisms whereby the government can hold contractors accountable for failure to perform or other misconduct, both topics of recent congressional oversight.

**Housing Finance.** While housing markets in general continued to recover during FY2015, the government still plays a significant role in the mortgage market. Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, two government-sponsored enterprises, remain in conservatorship, guaranteeing mortgage-backed securities and paying their profits to the Treasury as compensation for the assistance they have received. The Federal Housing Administration (FHA), a part of the Department of Housing and Urban Development that insures certain mortgages, has previously had to draw on Treasury Funds. Jointly, Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, and FHA have continued to dominate the mortgage market, with less lending being done by the private market than in the recent past. Congress examined this situation with new legislation introduced in both chambers of Congress. CRS economists and legislative attorneys supported Congress as it deliberated reform of the mortgage finance system, and analyzed options regarding the future disposition of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac and the possible reform of the FHA.

**Inspectors General.** Congress consulted with CRS on numerous occasions seeking a variety of information related to inspectors general (IGs), including the appropriation and staffing levels provided to IG offices, the law enforcement authorities provided to IG investigative employees, and the ability of IGs to access the information they need to perform their oversight duties.

**Judicial Selection and Confirmation.** Throughout the year CRS supported the Senate with analysis of the judicial appointment process in the form of in-person briefings, reports, and memoranda. A CRS team of analysts and information professionals continued to track judicial nominations using the CRS internal judicial nominations database. The database ensures that CRS can quickly respond to congressional inquiries about the status of current and past judicial nominations as well as provide statistics and accompanying analysis related to the judicial appointment process. CRS also analyzed issues related to administration and appropriations levels for the judiciary.

**Legislative Branch Appropriations.** CRS continued to assist Congress on consideration of the annual legislative branch appropriations acts. This included estimating the cost of individual congressional activities and comparing legislative branch and total discretionary budget authority, as well as researching the timing of the consideration of the appropriations bills; staffing levels and policies; and subjects related to legislative branch appropriations, including structure, cost of various programs, history, and funding. CRS also provided consultations to Congress regarding the impact of any lapse in appropriations and components of a continuing resolution.

**Postal Service.** Members of Congress traditionally have taken interest in the operations of the U.S. Postal Service (USPS), including the number of days of mail delivery, services provided, and facilities. The Postal Service's recent, serious financial difficulties and concurrent cost-cutting and proposed service reductions have greatly heightened congressional interest in postal policy and the role the USPS may play in the 21st century. CRS provided briefings on postal issues to Congress, assisted with hearings preparation, and reported on disparate postal issues, including post office closures, postal finances, USPS employee pensions and health care, and pending postal reform legislation.

**Puerto Rico.** CRS analysts reported on the fiscal and economic crisis in Puerto Rico to support congressional hearings and requests, including an analysis of the economic factors that led to the fiscal situation and the numerous options presented to Congress for possible assistance.

**Security Clearances and Background Investigations.** Following the data breaches involving background investigation information from Office of Personnel Management's databases, Congress sought assistance and analysis from CRS on a range of topics related to the protection of government information and the impact of the data breaches on federal employees. Congress also



continues to seek assistance from CRS related to ongoing developments in security clearance procedures and insider threat programs that are being implemented, in part, in response to the unauthorized disclosure of classified information by vetted federal employees and contractors. Through in-person consultations and confidential memoranda, CRS analyzed the history of investigative responsibilities for background investigations and security clearances, administrative recommendations and legislative proposals for security clearance reform, and implications of the data breaches, including possible legal remedies available to victims of data breaches.

***Terrorism Risk Insurance.*** Following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, Congress enacted the Terrorism Risk Insurance Act (TRIA, P.L. 107-297) to ensure the availability of insurance covering such attacks. Although envisioned as a temporary program, Congress renewed the program when it was set to expire in 2005 and 2007 and did so again in the 114th Congress (P.L. 114-1) but only after TRIA had expired at the end of 2014. CRS analyzed legislative proposals as Congress considered structural changes as well as whether TRIA needed to exist at all.

## RESOURCES, INDUSTRY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT

***Domestic Oil and Gas Supply and Exports.*** Increased U.S. supply of oil and natural gas from shale and other tight deposits has led to major shifts in fossil fuel markets. Growth in natural gas supply has resulted in a range of liquefied natural gas (LNG) export permit applications. Moreover, interest has grown in the possibility of exporting more U.S.-produced crude oil. Current statutes generally prohibit such exports except in a few specific cases; various bills have been introduced to amend or eliminate that prohibition. CRS analysts responded to requests for assistance on the issues of LNG and crude oil exports and other aspects of the “shale boom.” In March 2015 CRS held a major seminar on crude oil export policy. Floor action on bills to expand crude oil and LNG exports is possible early in FY2016.

***Drought.*** Recurrent drought and periodic flooding challenge water resource managers and affect the management of federal infrastructure and related resources. Drought has affected much of the West, particularly California and the westernmost states in 2015. Dry conditions have also resulted in extreme wildfires. CRS work for Congress on drought touches on the intersection of the federal Endangered Species Act (P.L. 93-205) with ongoing management of federal water resources infrastructure such as dams and diversion facilities and resulting conflicts between different water users. CRS experts testified before Congress and reported on drought conditions and legislative efforts to address the drought. CRS also held numerous briefings and workshops focused on drought response.

***Electric Utilities.*** CRS analyzed major issues facing the electric utility sector, with a focus on implications of environmental regulations, particularly EPA’s Clean Power Plan and ozone rules; industry infrastructure concerns; fuel prices; reliability; physical security; and cybersecurity. Confirmation hearings for new Federal Energy Regulatory Commissioners (FERC)

also created a forum for congressional debate about electricity policy. CRS specialists provided support and analysis both in anticipation of and in response to congressional requests.

***EPA’s “Clean Power Plan.”*** The Obama Administration undertook a number of initiatives to control greenhouse gases (GHGs) known to contribute to climate change, including emissions standards for automobiles and GHG limits on new power plants. The most controversial initiative, finalized in August 2015, was EPA’s “Clean Power Plan” to control carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions from existing power plants. The rule sets state emissions rate goals to be met by 2030. Each state is given flexibility to devise a strategy to meet these goals. Given the significant opposition to this rule and potential uncertainty about EPA’s application of a particular section of the Clean Air Act, litigation is expected. CRS addressed a variety of questions on EPA’s proposal as wide-ranging as the proposal itself, which involves analysis of the impacts on different industries and different regions; the carbon intensity of different fuels; power dispatch options, policy choices for EPA, states, and Congress; and legal analyses of the statutory foundation of the proposal.

***Genetically Engineered Food Labeling.*** Some consumer groups have sought mandatory labeling of all genetically engineered (GE) foods, arguing that U.S. consumers should have an opportunity to see all relevant information on a label so that they can make food choices based on their own views about its perceived quality or safety. The biotechnology industry and many food processors oppose compulsory labeling, contending that consumers might interpret GE labels as “warning labels” implying that the foods are less safe or nutritious than conventional foods. During the congressional debate on this measure, CRS provided analysis and briefings on the potential implications of the bill, including its cost effects, and assisted Members in developing floor amendments. Attorneys analyzed the legal framework for food safety and labeling of GE food.

***Homeland Security.*** Congress called on CRS to assist with the reorganization of the science directorate within the Department of Homeland Security. Analysts gave briefings and provided lists of potential witnesses and questions for hearings. CRS analysts also provided support by reviewing executive branch and industry programs and activities regarding homeland security.

***International Food Aid and Development.*** The United States has played a leading role for years in global efforts to alleviate hunger and malnutrition and to enhance world food security through international food aid assistance — primarily through the donation or sale of U.S. agricultural commodities under the auspices of several congressionally authorized programs. One aspect of global food security policy is the Obama Administration’s Feed the Future (FTF) Initiative. Because FTF is a presidential initiative its institutional longevity beyond the current Administration is uncertain. CRS provided assistance to Congress during this fiscal year as lawmakers evaluated the merits of FTF and debated whether to permanently authorize it in statute. Congress also continues to debate whether the delivery mechanism of international food aid should be shifted to cash-based food assistance rather than the current in-kind transfers of domestically purchased commodities. CRS provided in-depth, objective analysis of this controversial issue.

***Increasing Domestic Oil and Gas Supplies.*** Advances in hydraulic fracturing and horizontal drilling have expanded domestic oil and gas production in many parts of the country. CRS analyzed various implications of this rapidly increasing U.S. oil and gas production, including the consequences for domestic supply and prices, energy exports, and environmental concerns such as air and water quality and greenhouse gas emissions. CRS analysts collaborated to ensure all views were analyzed in response to congressional requests.

***Legislation to Reform the 1976 Toxic Substances Control Act.*** Decades of experience implementing and enforcing the 1976 Toxic Substances Control Act

(TSCA, P.L. 94-469) have demonstrated both strengths and weaknesses, and have led to reform proposals in Congress. CRS supported Members in both chambers as they addressed core provisions of the law and developed legislative proposals. The issues debated by Congress, with assistance from CRS analysts and attorneys, have involved science, chemical testing, economics and international trade, regulatory policy, hydraulic fracturing, and state versus federal roles.

***Music Streaming Services.*** The music industry became the subject of considerable interest in Congress during FY2015. CRS analysts and attorneys offered numerous briefings and supported congressional hearings on music industry concerns as songwriters, performers, recording industry executives, radio broadcasters, and officials of music streaming services all made their way to Capitol Hill to argue that the copyright regime is badly out of date. The basic right to reproduce and distribute a musical work dates back to a 1909 law. Since then, the main avenue for distributing music has evolved from sheet music to vinyl records to compact disks to Internet downloads and now to streaming services. In consequence, recording artists and songwriters may receive different payments for songs played on radio stations than on digital music services, while some digital services that compete with one another face different requirements for royalty payments.

***Patent Policy and Innovation.*** Congressional interest also extended to the protection of new technological innovation and intellectual property rights. CRS policy specialists analyzed patent reform legislation that may potentially change the current patent protection regime. The Service also conducted ongoing research and analysis in the areas of intellectual property and pharmaceuticals in response to congressional concern over the availability of lower-cost versions of biopharmaceuticals. CRS analysts and attorneys briefed lawmakers, produced analyses of proposed and introduced legislation, and identified three dozen stakeholders in the nationwide debate on the cost of off-patent drugs during the last year.

***Science and Technology.*** In a complex global environment, science and technology have an impact on many policy issues of interest to Congress. In light of developments during the past year that highlighted the need to assess the future path of U.S. science and technology efforts, CRS analysts reported on U.S. space policy and the future of U.S. participation in flights to the International Space Station, prepared in-depth analysis of existing and planned federal laboratory construction, conducted cross-cutting analysis on a complex set of cybersecurity bills, and analyzed funding mechanisms that enhance the ability of U.S. industry and national laboratories to provide innovative science and technology breakthroughs.

***Technology Policy and Competitiveness.*** The ability of U.S. industry, national laboratories, and other stakeholders to provide innovative science and technology breakthroughs in a global economy continued to be of great interest to Congress. The America COMPETES Act of 2010 (P.L. 111-358) provided a broad framework for funding national R&D priorities to assist these efforts. As policymakers sought to reauthorize this act, CRS experts worked with Congress to assess and analyze the funding mechanisms for these priorities and examined the role of the federal government in supporting science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education.

***Telecommunications and Internet Policy.*** Analyzing and assessing telecommunications and Internet technology policy were also of concern to Congress, and CRS experts provided support to Congress on a wide range of issues, including providing explanations and hearings assistance as policymakers addressed the complex issue of moving the sole authority of control for Internet domain names from national to international purview. Congress called on CRS to address legal issues associated with the regulatory activities of federal agencies including the Federal Communications Commission and its newly promulgated Open Internet Order, municipal deployment of broadband facilities, net neutrality, and implications of the FCC's reclassification of broadband Internet access service.

## LAW AND JUSTICE

***Abortion and Health Care.*** CRS attorneys reported on state laws that require admitting privileges for doctors at abortion facilities and on state fetal pain laws and examined proposed legislation that would likely affect the availability of abortions. CRS legal experts addressed other timely issues of congressional interest including Medicare Part D provisions in the context of Puerto Rico’s financial crisis, the interaction of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (P.L. 104-191, 110 Stat. 1936) privacy rule with state mandatory reporting requirements, the constitutionality of measures to defund Planned Parenthood, state authority under the Social Security Act to exclude Planned Parenthood from their Medicaid programs, and state and federal roles with respect to mandatory vaccination.

***Administrative Law.*** Legal experts addressed transportation security issues, including the government’s establishment of a No-Fly List, proposals to privatize the air traffic control system, and the regulation of unmanned aerial vehicles (drones) in civilian airspace. Other assistance to Congress included analysis of the discretion of the National Institutes of Health to issue federally funded grants, treatment of amounts received from FCC spectrum auctions, congressional authority to enact restrictions on use of fees collected by federal agencies, and various rulemakings and constitutional challenges for the Securities and Exchange Commission.

***Civil Rights.*** Amid numerous reports of alleged police brutality and congressional interest in legislative responses, CRS analyzed the various sources of constitutional authority that would enable Congress to enact and implement law enforcement reform on the state and local level. CRS attorneys also provided guidance regarding gender identity discrimination and discrimination on the basis of sex. When several bills were introduced to address sexual violence at institutions of higher education, CRS legal experts provided guidance and support as these bills were considered. Other civil

rights issues for which Congress sought support from CRS included legislative efforts to strengthen pay discrimination and pregnancy discrimination laws; the applicability of the Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. Sec. 12101 et seq.) to businesses that are part of the sharing economy, such as Uber and Airbnb; and issues regarding affirmative action, housing discrimination, and employment discrimination.

***Criminal Law.*** CRS attorneys assisted Congress during consideration of the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act (P.L. 114-22), as well as sentencing and asset forfeiture reform. They analyzed issues relevant to the reform of the Electronic Communications Privacy Act (ECPA, 18 U.S.C. Sec. 2510 et seq.), federal provisions defining “hate crimes,” federal criminal civil rights statutes, reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP, P.L. 93-415, 42 U.S.C. sec. 5601 et seq.), and criminal justice reform. CRS legal experts also kept Congress informed of federal and state judicial decisions related to the Second Amendment and firearms laws and legislative activity occurring at the state level; assisted in understanding federal proposals that would mandate background checks for private firearms transactions or would affect changes to the terms that prohibit persons with severe mental health issues from possessing a firearm; and interpreted federal laws related to law enforcement officials and carrying a concealed firearm.

***Education Law.*** CRS legal experts reviewed draft bills, prepared reports, and briefed Congress on the Common Core State Standards Initiative and responded to multiple congressional concerns about whether the privacy of student data is sufficiently protected under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (20 U.S.C. Sec. 1232g).

***Elections Law.*** Leading up to the November midterm 2014 election, CRS assisted Congress with legal issues such as challenges to state voter ID laws, voter ID requirements, same-day voter registration, early voting, the counting of out-of-precinct ballots, the

constitutionality of campaign finance regulation, and the Supreme Court's 2014 term as well as its recent focus on congressional redistricting.

***Federal Tort Claims Act and Judgment Fund.*** With natural disasters such as the Gold King Mine spill, CRS legal experts informed Congress about ways affected persons could attempt to recover monetary damages from the federal government, in particular the Federal Tort Claims Act (28 U.S.C. Sec. 1346). CRS attorneys supported congressional offices in understanding the statutory limits of recovering under the Act as well as the Judgment Fund, the general source from which such monies are paid, and the statutory limits on using such a fund to make payments on behalf of the government.

***Indian Law.*** Congress turned to CRS for advice on a broad range of Indian law issues, but two issues dominated the landscape of federal Indian law: the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA, P.L. 95-608) and application of the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA, 29 U.S.C. Secs. 151-169) to Indian enterprises. CRS attorneys updated a report on ICWA to reflect new regulations and guidelines issued by the Department of the Interior, which are aimed at standardizing cases where Indian children are being removed from their homes. CRS also explained and provided consultation on the NLRA and its application to Indian tribes.

***Intellectual Property.*** Patent law has been a major issue during the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress due to concerns raised by technology companies about frivolous or abusive lawsuits brought by patent assertion entities. CRS attorneys analyzed the potential impact on the patent system of litigation reform legislation and provided briefings and consultations to Congress on related issues.

***Labor and Employment Law.*** CRS legal experts assisted when Congress considered issues pertaining to the NLRA, including the joint employment standard and the treatment of college athletes who receive scholarships as well as the application of federal labor and employment

laws to Indian tribes and tribal enterprises. CRS attorneys consulted with lawmakers on what is required by the NLRA and on amending penalties under the Act. Attorneys also supported Congress in its consideration of legislation to enhance the authority to take disciplinary action against senior executives and other officials at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

***Tax Law.*** Congress called on CRS as it considered constitutional and other legal issues surrounding implementation of the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (P.L. 111-147); corporate inversions, including the current statutory framework regulating them and controversial IRS regulations that were finalized in 2015; and pending international, bilateral tax treaties. CRS attorneys identified and analyzed the legal implications of potential outcomes of the Supreme Court's decision in *King v. Burwell* upholding the availability of premium tax credits under the Affordable Care Act. CRS attorneys also supported Congress regarding tax-exempt organizations, including their ability to engage in campaign activity; and the potential implications of *Obergefell v. Hodges* for tax-exempt status of religious entities.

***Trade Restrictions.*** International trade attracted significant congressional attention. Of particular interest was the extent to which international agreements operate to check the United States' domestic activities. Among other requests, congressional clients sought information on the extent to which the jurisdiction of international investment tribunals, which are established under the terms of various international investment agreements, may effectively preempt national courts. In a similar vein, congressional clients requested advice on the extent to which World Trade Organization (WTO) requirements may circumscribe the United States' regulation of products to protect human health or the environment. To address these needs, CRS attorneys analyzed the legal issues surrounding investor-state dispute settlement provisions in international investment agreements as well as the WTO obligations that WTO members must meet when regulating products.





### III. MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES

Management developed initiatives in FY2015 to optimize workflow, streamline operations and services, and enhance efficiency. Specifically these efforts included a New Member Seminar, a dialogue with staff throughout the Service to develop a CRS strategic plan, enhancements to the CRS Web site, work toward replacing an authoring and publishing tool, a review of CRS policies, and a pilot to develop interactive maps as CRS work products.

## NEW MEMBER SEMINAR

CRS co-sponsored with the U.S. House of Representatives “Legislative Issues and Procedures, the CRS Seminar for New Members” on January 9-12, 2015, in Williamsburg, Virginia. The seminar provided incoming Members with an opportunity to meet with nationally recognized experts from outside and within CRS to discuss domestic and foreign policy issues of immediate interest to Congress. Nearly forty new Members attended the seminar. The seminar promoted discussion of policy issues within the legislative framework in a balanced and bipartisan setting. The program included a mix of general sessions addressing broad-based issues and breakout discussions focused on current legislative issues, as well as a unique session explaining House legislative rules and procedures.

## STRATEGIC PLANNING

The CRS Director hosted all-hands meetings and brown-bag lunch sessions with small groups of employees to begin a dialogue on the future of CRS. Feedback included comments from staff throughout the Service on the congressional environment — what has changed and what has remained the same. The discussion also focused on how to organize for greater efficiency, improve the CRS work product, sustain a professional workforce, and prudently deploy technology. Work on creating the strategic plan continued throughout the fiscal year. One of the first tasks identified is a review of operations, beginning with technology. The CRS plan is compatible with the Library’s overall strategic plan. CRS has kept its congressional oversight committees informed of the goals as well as progress on the plan. This five-year strategic plan will be implemented from 2016 to 2020.

## CONGRESS.GOV ACCOMPLISHMENTS

As part of the Library’s multi-departmental team, CRS contributed to continuing development and daily operations of the next-generation legislative information system platform and services, Congress.gov. A multi-year



Library-wide strategy, Congress.gov will replace two legacy legislative information systems (LIS and THOMAS) with a single, modern one. CRS provided data analysis, subject matter expertise, consultation, system testing, user testing, coordination of data partner relationships, and support for congressional users and data partners. CRS also continues to support the use of the Congress-only LIS until equivalent capability is fully developed for the new Congress.gov. Accomplishments in FY2015 included addition of treaties, executive reports, and Senate executive communications to the Congress.gov collections; and enhancements to the Congress.gov user experience, advanced search, browse, portal, and display pages.

## NEW AUTHORING AND PUBLISHING TOOL

CRS made significant progress in FY2015 on a multi-phase effort to identify and assess options for updating its existing system for authoring and publishing written products distributed directly to Congress. The activities in each phase are intended to forge a working coalition of relevant stakeholders and develop shared understandings of business needs and technical options. Phase 1, which began in FY2014, although much of the work was completed in FY2015, expanded the project view beyond the existing infrastructure, developed an understanding of the relevant trends and lessons learned by other organizations, and created a shared vocabulary to be used in development of successive requirements.

Phase 2, which began in March 2015 and is ongoing, is to engage a larger cross-section of stakeholders and develop a more detailed requirements and options analysis. The working group was expanded to include analysts, editors, reviewers, content managers, and developers. The efforts in Phases 1 and 2 involved a number of workshops and reports as well as a small survey of congressional offices to determine use of CRS research products and services.

## POLICY REVIEW

A policy working group was formed in FY2015 with the goal of reviewing all existing CRS policies and guidelines to ensure consistency with Library of Congress regulations and relevancy to CRS staff, both in terms of the work CRS does for Congress and the professional responsibilities of all staff members in the Service. The policy working group initiated the process of drafting policy statements on CRS core values and amending and updating existing policies and guidelines. One of the goals of the review is to increase communication about CRS policies with staff at all levels to ensure that all employees are informed and understand the CRS core values and workplace expectations. The working group is headed by the Counselor to the Director and includes first-line supervisors from all CRS research divisions and infrastructure offices. Feedback and discussion with staff will be sought using a variety of means, including small group meetings and policy review in divisions and offices.

## CAPSTONE PROJECT

For more than fifteen years CRS has partnered with academic institutions that build external research projects into their curriculum. These projects, often referred to as “capstones,” generate high quality research, supervised by a faculty member, that directly benefits Congress. At the same time, these projects provide students a chance to work with a public or private organization on a targeted research initiative through a formal contractual arrangement. CRS initiates projects with academic institutions to perform research tasks that CRS would

not be able to complete otherwise, usually involving high-volume data collection. The deliverables provided during the capstone are used by CRS analysts and attorneys in CRS products. In FY2015 CRS completed several capstone projects with academic partners in the areas of global illegal wildlife trade, lobbying disclosure, and the effect of housing on retirement savings.

## INTERACTIVE MAPS

Geospatial analysis and mapping products illustrate complex public policy data, which can lead to improved understanding of multidimensional public policy issues. During the past fiscal year CRS developed more than 120 maps for Congress on issues of interest to lawmakers, including energy production, the location of oil pipelines, health care exchange enrollment, ports of entry, and conflict zones in the Middle East. To improve the usability and value of these maps, CRS actively engaged in the Library-wide project to develop a geospatial hosting environment (GHE). The GHE is enabling the transformation of static maps so that congressional clients will have the ability to zoom into a national map to see details at the local or district level, or to view the data behind a map of interest. Planning for the GHE project began in FY2014, with creation of the infrastructure in FY2015. At the end of FY2015 CRS successfully demonstrated the ability to produce interactive maps on the GHE.

## SUMMARIES, A NEW WORK PRODUCT

CRS continues to explore approaches to capture key information and analysis from CRS reports and other products and present it in alternative formats to meet congressional client needs for authoritativeness, accuracy, and brevity. As part of this effort the Service established a working group to analyze the structure and content of CRS report summaries. Work began in FY2015 and will continue into FY2016 to identify options for developing one-page synopses of CRS reports and publishing them as stand-alone products.



## DATA METRICS WORKING GROUP

The data metrics working group was organized to design and create data collections that will increase the decision-making efficiency of CRS managers. The impetus for this work is the need for CRS to better understand and evaluate the potential reach and effectiveness of its services, products, product types, formats, and the Web site for congressional clients. This need is particularly pronounced as CRS has developed a number of new product types, promoted the use of new report formats, and continues to advance the sophistication and diverse presentation of information and analysis on the Web site. The team examined what data exist as well as how data and information can be used, organized, and presented.

## CRS WEB SITE IMPROVEMENTS

New “In Focus” and “CRS Testimony” products were developed for release on the Web site in FY2015. In Focus products are two-sided, one-page summaries of key issues on a given topic. They are available in printable PDF format as well as standard HTML pages. CRS produced approximately 250 In Focus products during the fiscal year. Late in the year the testimony template was developed to provide congressional staff with access to the formal written statements when CRS testifies before Congress. Both In Focus and CRS Testimony can be located on the CRS Web site by key word or author search, as can any other CRS product.

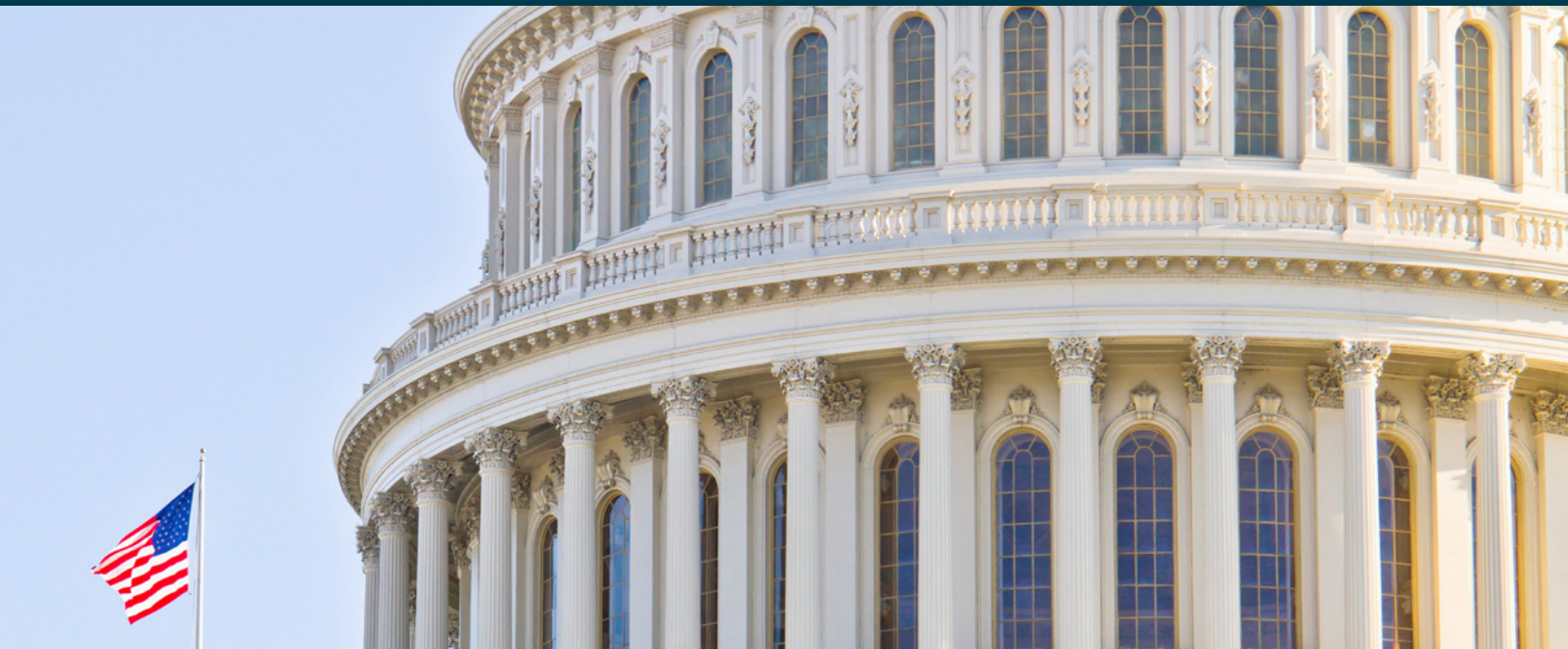
## NEW SUPPORT FOR CRS STAFF

**Writing Presentations Series.** A pilot was begun this fiscal year to enhance writing skills throughout the Service. Experienced CRS colleagues provided staff with guidance, tools, and best practices for writing reports and other CRS products. These sessions offered a practical orientation to CRS writing and engaged participants in thoughtful discussions about producing quality products for Congress. Writing sessions included an overview of CRS products and services, the writing process, as well as editorial and policy reviews. Originally conceived as a writing presentations series for new hires, these sessions have become a permanent offering open to all staff and are scheduled biannually.

**Research Assistants.** Planning to bring on board research assistants (RAs) began in FY2014, with the first hires in place at the beginning of FY2015. The RA position was developed to assist analysts in responding to congressional requests, producing graphics, tables, and other components of products; collecting and analyzing data; and conducting other research duties as needed. The position was designed as a not-to-exceed three-year appointment to facilitate an influx of new and fresh talent and provide budgetary flexibility. Eleven RAs were hired to staff three research divisions. As a result, CRS has increased its nimbleness in responding to congressional requests and enhanced the quality of its written products.

**Laptop Upgrades.** CRS conducted an upgrade of its laptop infrastructure to improve the ability of analysts and attorneys to work offsite to serve Congress. Older models were replaced if they could not be economically refurbished. The upgrade included an increase in random access memory (RAM) to 8 gigabytes and a new battery to extend power capability to four hours. Other improvements significantly decreased log-on time. All machines underwent a profile migration to save staff settings and a total disk encryption upgrade for security.





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