

HART & SOUL

Five Questions With Congressional Record Index Office Chief Philip Hart

For 35 years, Philip Hart, Chief of the Congressional Record Index Office, has been putting his heart and soul into one of GPO's daily products that directly helps GPO fulfill its vision of *America Informed*—The Congressional Record Index. Though he's in charge of the office, he remains largely involved in the actual work of editing the index and ensuring it reads properly. We sat down with him to learn more.

1

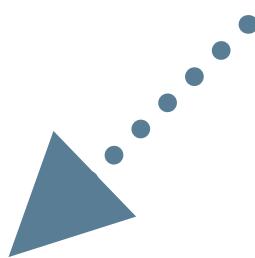
Can you describe the role of the Congressional Record Index (CRI) Office for those unfamiliar with what you do? The role of the index is just like it sounds. We're the index to the Congressional Record. The index serves as a reference tool to find more information on various subjects. As an example, a subject listed in the index may be "National Security". That subject will link to mentions of National Security in the Congressional Record. We also have the names of all the members of the House and Senate. Under their names, GovInfo users can find all the bills a member has introduced or co-sponsored, when they've spoken on the floor, when they entered an article into a debate, and really anything that happens as part of the debates on the floor. The index is a supplemental publication to both the printed and online versions of the Congressional Record. We put out a monthly printed Index, but the Index is updated online every day when either the House and/or Senate is in session.





2

How have things changed in your office since you started at GPO 35 years ago? I've worked at the Congressional Record Index since 1990, and a lot has changed since then. When I started, we were an in-house customer. We were all employees of the Joint Committee on Printing. Then in 2003, Congress passed a bill to roll us into GPO. Our offices were always in GPO, but we officially became GPO employees in 2003. We've made several improvements on the user side of the index. As an example, about five to ten years ago, our office started working with Agency Strategic Programs & GovInfo (ASPG) to hyperlink straight to the text of bills and/or pages in the Record for easy access.



4

How does the Index benefit those on the Hill and in the library community? The index is an amazing representation for the staff on the Hill of what their boss has done in one year. It's all in one place. Staffers can see the list of bills and see when a representative spoke about the bill. The library community is a big fan of ours as well. It's also great for regular people trying to keep track of what goes on on the Hill. The index serves as a direct way that we are fulfilling our vision of an *America Informed*.

Congressional



3

What's the most challenging part of your job? When a new Congress starts, we can get 200+ bills per day, which proves challenging to get through. Currently, we have only six people working together to get this done, so there's a lot of teamwork involved. It's not realistic to think we can do it all in one day, but we get to as many as we can. Another challenge is ensuring personal viewpoints don't go into the work. If there is a certain subject or member you don't agree with, it's our job to ignore that and explain what they are expressing fairly without being partisan. And we have to be detail-oriented. The biggest thing I tell our staff is to index things consistently. If a member talks about something one day, then three days later they talk about it again, we have to index those exactly the same, so they both show up in the same place in the index.



5

What would your colleagues be surprised to know about you? I've been a member of the Arlington Chorale for 28 years. I sing as a tenor, which is one of the smallest sections. We practice every Monday night and perform three or four concerts per year. We sing classical music from composers like Mozart, but also sing more contemporary pieces.