

LEGISLATIVE BRANCH
APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2012

SPEECH OF

HON. SANFORD D. BISHOP, JR.

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 21, 2011

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 2551) making appropriations for the Legislative Branch for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2012, and for other purposes:

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Mr. Chair, I rise today to urge all of my colleagues to support the Bishop amendment to H.R. 2551, the Legislative Branch Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2012. This amendment would restore \$1 million in funding to the Capitol Police to provide support for security upgrades to Congressional District offices as recommended by the House Sergeant at Arms earlier this year.

Most members, particularly members from rural districts with more than one district office, will undertake a variety of "security" upgrades and improvements to their local offices as a result of the tragic shooting of Rep. GABRIELLE GIFFORDS and related security threats.

Coupled with the costs of these new upgrades are reductions in the Members' Representational Allowance MRA for the second year in a row. This includes the 5 percent reduction in MRA in place for Fiscal Year 2011 and the proposed 6.4 percent reduction in MRA proposed in the Fiscal Year 2012 Legislative Branch Appropriations bill, which will be considered on the floor this week. The Fiscal Year 2012 proposed reduction in MRA will result in an average hit of approximately \$95,000 per office, which will likely pose a severe strain on Member budgets. Additionally, you should know that security upgrades and improvements to Senate District offices will not be paid through MRA's.

My amendment would simply provide an additional \$1 million in funding via the Capitol Police for security improvements for those offices impacted by new House security policy. The proposed offset comes from the "Transition Activities" account, which essentially provides funding for furniture and related equipment for Freshman members, which of course, should be minimal in Fiscal Year 2012.

Mr. Chair, it would be our intent, that if this amendment is accepted by this House, that the Sergeant at Arms, Capitol Police, members of our Legislative Branch Appropriations Subcommittee and other pertinent House personnel, would work together to devise an effective plan and strategy for the use, approval and disbursement of these funds for district office security purposes.

The pressure and demands which we already have in managing our MRA's are great, and will be more difficult in the coming year. So it is vitally important that we provide Members of this body some financial relief for the costs of district office security improvements.

While the Legislative Branch Appropriations Subcommittee has the smallest budget of the thirteen Appropriations Subcommittees, and some would say that it is the least glamorous, its work is of vital importance to the entire nation.

As most of you know, the Subcommittee is responsible for the protection and preservation

of the treasures in the U.S. Capitol and the Library of Congress, the publishing and dissemination of government information by the Government Printing Office, the objective analysis of our budget and economic decisions by the Congressional Budget Office, and the resources with which we provide representation to our constituents.

However, our collective effectiveness in representing our constituents is potentially at risk given the proposed reductions in our MRA's.

And I would like to remind my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, that after the tragic shootings in Tucson, Members were "strongly encouraged" to provide additional security for themselves, their staff and their constituents in the district—to be paid out of Members' accounts, with possibly some help from the Sergeant at Arms.

With this bill's cut of 6.4 percent in Members' Representational Allowance, combined with the 10 percent in the Sergeant at Arms budget, these improvements in security will be difficult.

Finally, if the Capitol Police are going to assess more threats against Members and take a more active role in district security, then their budget should also reflect these increased demands instead of being frozen.

Mr. Chair, I would also like to enter into the RECORD, a copy of an article that ran in Roll Call, highlighting the need for enhanced safety advancements for Members of Congress, their staffs, and constituencies.

I would ask that you support this important amendment. Thank you for your consideration.

[From Roll Call, July 21, 2011]

CUTS TO SERGEANT-AT-ARMS RAISE CONCERNS
FOR SOME

(By Daniel Newhauser)

After the shooting of Rep. Gabrielle Giffords (D-Ariz.) in January, Members began looking into ways to secure their district offices. Now, some Democrats are questioning whether House leaders will give them enough money to do so.

Members' Representational Allowances and the House Sergeant-at-Arms office face budget cuts, while House appropriators have proposed flat funding for the Capitol Police.

At a Rules Committee hearing Wednesday to set parameters for this week's floor debate on the legislative branch spending bill, Rep. Jared Polis—who said he received threats as recently as last week—singled out those cuts as his main concern.

"Security is hardly a luxury," the Colorado Democrat said. "How can you justify cutting the Sergeant-at-Arms by 10 percent?"

Although the Sergeant-at-Arms' budget appears larger than it was last Congress, the increase actually comes because it was combined with the Office of Emergency Management, which was created after 9/11 to assist in emergency planning. That office was flat-funded, while the Sergeant-at-Arms received an \$890,000 cut.

Rep. Ander Crenshaw, chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch, assured Polis that the reduction would not affect security. In an interview before the hearing, the Florida Republican said administrative employees and equipment purchases would most likely take the hit.

"We made sure that none of the cuts to this office were going to affect any kind of safety issues," he said.

After the Giffords shooting, the Sergeant-at-Arms offered Members free ADT Security assessments in the district offices. The House Administration Committee also au-

thorized Members to use their MRAs to pay for suggested security enhancements.

But between the 5 percent MRA cut of last fiscal year and the 6.4 percent cut proposed for fiscal 2012—a reduction that would average about \$80,000 per office—Members might be put in a situation where they have to choose to fire one employee in order to afford to protect the rest, some Democrats argued.

"We are told that we need to secure our district offices more—for our safety, the safety of our staff and, most importantly, the safety of our constituents," said Rep. Mike Honda (D-Calif.), the subcommittee's ranking member, in a statement. "How are we supposed to pay for that?"

Rep. G.K. Butterfield said he had planned to install bulletproof glass and a digital combination keypad lock at his North Carolina district office, but now he's not so sure.

"That was the plan. Now that we've got this dramatic cut, I don't know what we're going to do," the Democrat said.

Rep. Sanford Bishop said he's skeptical Members will be left with enough money in their MRAs to pay for the upgrades. He was advised to improve lighting and create a barrier between his Georgia offices' public and work areas.

"The security assessments that the Sergeant-at-Arms paid for for all of our offices were very, very telling. But to implement the recommendations for the safety of our constituents and Members and staffs, it's going to cost some funds," the Democrat said. "The MRA is not sufficient."

Bishop has proposed an amendment to the legislative branch bill that would reassign \$1 million from a fund used to assist freshmen in procuring furniture to create a fund within the Capitol Police to assist in paying for district security upgrades.

Sergeant-at-Arms spokeswoman Kern Hanley said that no matter where the budget ends up, the agency would "be able to fully execute our security mission" and that they will help Members efficiently spend their money.

"We will coordinate the provision of professional security assistance to Members by conducting surveys and reviewing office selection options, security systems and policies to aid them in achieving the best value for their security dollars spent," Hanley said in an email.

Republicans said that is the real lesson of the budget cut: Do more with less.

Rep. Michael Grimm, a former FBI agent, said Members can mitigate the security impact of the cuts by raising their awareness when they are at home.

"We have to be a little more efficient but also a little more diligent so the Capitol Police has less work," the New York Republican said. "None of that costs money."

CELEBRATING THE LIFE AND
SERVICE OF EDWARD LEITNER
ON HIS 100TH BIRTHDAY**HON. JOE COURTNEY**

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 27, 2011

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, it is with great joy and honor that I rise to wish Edward Leitner a very happy birthday as he turns 100 years old today. Edward, a resident of Westbrook, Connecticut, is a veteran of World War II and a shining example of this country's Greatest Generation. I had the opportunity to meet Edward last month at a barbeque culminating Wounded Warriors week—an important,