

The U.S. Capitol Police: Brief Background

January 12, 2021

U.S. Capitol Police (USCP)

The U.S. Capitol Police is a department within the legislative branch with security, protection, and administrative responsibilities. The USCP is responsible for law enforcement and security within the Capitol Complex, including the U.S. Capitol building, the Capitol Visitor Center, Capitol grounds, the House and Senate office buildings, the U.S. Botanic Garden, Capitol Police buildings, Library of Congress buildings, and adjacent grounds.

The USCP performs these roles in coordination with the House and Senate Sergeants at Arms. The House and Senate Sergeants at Arms are charged with maintaining order in their chambers, and they each perform a number of law enforcement, security-related, decorum, and protocol duties. The House and Senate have each had an elected Sergeant at Arms since 1789.

Capitol Police Board

The Capitol Police Board is comprised of the Senate and House Sergeants at Arms, the Architect of the Capitol, and the chief of the Capitol Police, who serves as an ex-officio member.

Pursuant to [2 U.S.C. §1901](#), “the purpose of the Capitol Police Board is to oversee and support the Capitol Police in its mission and to advance coordination between the Capitol Police and the Sergeant at Arms of the House of Representatives and the Sergeant at Arms and Doorkeeper of the Senate, in their law enforcement capacities, and the Congress.” The Board is responsible for the design, installation, and maintenance of security systems for the Capitol buildings and grounds, under the direction of the Committee on House Administration and Senate Committee on Rules and Administration ([2 U.S.C. §§1964-1965](#)).

Funding and Staffing

The USCP is funded in the annual legislative branch appropriations acts.

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The House of Representatives and Senate Explained

Congressional Procedure

A Practical Guide to the Legislative Process in the U.S. Congress

Richard A. Arenberg

Foreword by Alan S. Frumin

 **TheCapitolNet**

Table I. U.S. Capitol Police Funding
(in thousands of dollars)

FY12	FY13	FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21
\$340,137	\$321,348	\$338,459	\$347,959	\$375,000	\$393,300	\$426,500	\$456,308	\$464,341	\$515,541

Sources: P.L. 112-74, P.L. 113-6 (as reduced by sequestration and a rescission), [P.L. 113-76](#), [P.L. 113-235](#), [P.L. 114-113](#), [P.L. 115-31](#), [P.L. 115-141](#), [P.L. 115-244](#), and P.L. 116-260. The FY2020 total does not include the \$12.0 million provided for salaries in [P.L. 116-136](#). The Capitol Police were also provided authority to transfer funding to the “general expenses” account without the approval requirement provided in 2 U.S.C. §1907a.

Since FY2003, appropriations for the police have been contained in two accounts—a *salaries account*, which includes overtime and benefits, and a *general expenses account*, which funds “motor vehicles, communications and other equipment, security equipment and installation, uniforms, weapons, supplies, materials, training, medical services, forensic services,” and other services and programs. The USCP can transfer funding between the accounts with “the approval of the Committees on Appropriations of the House of Representatives and Senate” (2 U.S.C. §1907a). FY2021 funding for these accounts includes

1. Salaries—\$424.4 million (+12.0% from the \$379.1 million provided for FY2020, not including \$12.0 million in emergency supplemental appropriations provided in [P.L. 116-136](#)).
2. General expenses—\$91.1 million (+6.9% from the \$85.3 million provided for FY2020).

This funding is slightly less than 10% of the \$5.304 billion provided for legislative branch activities for FY2021 (P.L. 116-260, enacted December 27, 2020).

In addition, \$45.99 million was provided for FY2021 for the Architect of the Capitol account for Capitol Police buildings and grounds.

These totals do not include funding for other entities that provide security services for the House and Senate, including the House and Senate Sergeant at Arms and other House and Senate offices with security responsibilities, including cybersecurity, business continuity, and disaster recovery.

According to its [Human Capital Strategic Plan](#), USCP staffing included 1,879 sworn and 370 civilian employees as of September 19, 2020.

Appointment of Chief

2 U.S.C. §1901 states: “The Capitol Police shall be headed by a Chief who shall be appointed by the Capitol Police Board and shall serve at the pleasure of the Board.”

[Yogananda D. Pittman](#) was designated the Acting Chief of Police/Assistant Chief of Police for Protective and Intelligence Operations by Capitol Police Board Order 21.04 on January 8, 2021.

Previous chiefs appointed in the last 20 years include the following:

- Steven A. Sund, appointed effective June 13, 2019, resigned January 8, 2021.
- Matthew R. Verderosa, appointment effective March 20, 2016.
- Kim Dine, appointment effective December 17, 2012.
- Phillip D. Morse, Sr., appointment effective October 30, 2006.
- Terrance W. Gainer, appointment effective June 2002.

Capitol Police Powers and Duties

The duties and responsibilities of the Capitol Police have developed over time and are set forth in several sources, chief among them the *U.S. Code* (in particular, but not limited to, Chapter 29, subchapter II, of Title 2). Additional authorities may be found in policies, regulations, and guidelines issued by the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration and the Committee on House Administration; the Rules of the House of Representatives and Senate; policies adopted by the Capitol Police Board; and custom and precedent. Additional duties of the Capitol Police may be defined by the Committees on Appropriations in reports accompanying the annual appropriations bills.

In addition to responsibilities on the Capitol campus, the Capitol Police also provide protection for Members of the House and Senate leadership, protect additional Members based on a risk-based analysis, collaborate with the House and Senate Sergeants at Arms to assess Members' state and district office security, coordinate with local law enforcement regarding threats to state and district offices, and provide protection for off-campus events, including the presidential nominating conventions. On February 11, 2020, then-Chief Steven A. Sund [testified](#) that "Since Calendar Year 2017, the number of threats [the USCP has] investigated has increased by more than 75 percent."

Sources of Oversight

Oversight of the Capitol Police has been provided by a number of entities.

The Senate Committee on Rules and Administration and the Committee on House Administration have jurisdictional oversight over many congressional security-related activities. The Senate Committee on Rules and Administration has [announced joint oversight efforts](#) with the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs regarding the recent breach of the U.S. Capitol security. The [Committee on House Administration](#) has also announced plans to conduct oversight.

The House and Senate Appropriations Committees, through their legislative branch subcommittees, provide oversight of funding, administration, operations, and policies, through the annual appropriations hearings, reports, and bill language. They may also conduct additional investigations (see recent [House](#) and [Senate](#) statements).

Additional committees have historically also examined various aspects of Capitol security.

House and Senate leadership may also provide oversight and direction on matters pertaining to their respective chambers.

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) has performed evaluations of various aspects of [USCP administration and management operations](#) and the [Capitol Police Board](#).

The USCP also has a statutorily established [Inspector General](#).

Line of Duty Deaths

The USCP [announced](#) the death of USCP Officer Brian D. Sicknick on January 7, 2021, and the off-duty death of USCP Officer Howard Liebengood on January 10, 2021.

Prior to 2021, the USCP saw four officers die in the [line of duty](#), including two officers killed during an intrusion in 1998.

Following the 1998 shootings, the USCP established the [United States Capitol Police Memorial Fund](#). The provision of additional benefits, including death gratuities, is addressed in [2 U.S.C. §1907\(e\)\(2\)](#).

For information on additional benefits that might be available when an officer dies in the line of duty, see CRS Report R45327, *Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) and Public Safety Officers' Educational Assistance (PSOEA) Programs*; and CRS Report R42107, *The Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA): Workers' Compensation for Federal Employees*.

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