FISCAL YEAR 2023
CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET JUSTIFICATION

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Executive Summary

The Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board (the Board or PCLOB) requests $10.7 million for its Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 Budget Request. The FY 2023 Budget Request, which includes a slight increase of $1.1 million (or 11%) over the FY 2022 request of $9.6 million, would allow the Board to continue building upon its significant mission-related and operational accomplishments of the previous two fiscal years as the agency seeks to fulfill its mission: to ensure that efforts by the executive branch to protect the nation from terrorism appropriately safeguard privacy and civil liberties.

The Board is an independent executive branch agency, whose bipartisan Members are selected based on expertise in counterterrorism, intelligence, privacy, civil liberties, and technology. In FY 2021, the Board lost its quorum when one Member’s term expired and two Board Members resigned. Despite its sub-quorum status, the PCLOB continues to fulfill its mission through a vigorous agenda, continuing several projects and issuing required legal and compliance reports (except for the Semi-Annual Report, which requires a quorum). Additionally, the remaining Board Members can perform the same duties in the sub-quorum period, such as providing advice to agencies in their individual official capacities.

The Board has continued to work on several active items and issues including:

- FBI’s querying of U.S. person information under Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA);
- An examination of the use of facial recognition in aviation security;
- A working group on domestic terrorism;
- FBI use of open-source information;
- An artificial intelligence and machine learning working group;
- An emerging technologies workstream; and
- The Vulnerabilities Equities Process.

Moreover, Board Members continue to provide advice to other executive branch agencies in their individual capacities.

The Board also continues to enhance its workforce, with plans to increase its fill rate from the current rate of 81 percent\(^1\) to 90 percent of its full staffing level of 37 prior to FY 2023. Meanwhile, as the agency works to return to full staffing levels, the Board Members have

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\(^1\) This fill rate does not include one detailee.
appointed an interim Executive Director and welcomed a detailee for the position of Acting General Counsel.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, it is the Board’s priority to continue to fulfill its oversight and advice functions while ensuring the health and safety of Board Members and staff, as well as the many stakeholders and government officials that have ongoing interactions with the Board. The Board continuously monitors CDC guidance and OMB directives regarding occupancy, masks, social distancing, and other relevant guidance. In response, it has implemented rigorous health and safety protocols so that Board Members and staff may continue to access the agency’s Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility (SCIF) for work on classified matters.

CURRENT MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

Board Member Edward W. Felten, confirmed to a term ending January 29, 2025.

Board Member Travis LeBlanc, confirmed to a term which ended January 29, 2022. However, pursuant to statute, Member LeBlanc shall continue to serve for no more than 60 days when Congress is in session unless a nomination to fill the vacancy is submitted to the Senate and confirmed before the adjournment sine die of this session of the Senate.

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2 The term of former Board Member Aditya Bamzai ended on January 3, 2021; former Board Chairman Adam Klein resigned on June 18, 2021; and former Board Member Jane Nitze resigned on July 29, 2021. The Senate confirmed incoming Chair Sharon Bradford Franklin and Member Beth Williams on February 7, 2021. They are currently awaiting their commissions and swearing-in.

3 PCLOB’s enabling statute provides that "upon the expiration of the term of office of a member, the member shall continue to serve until the member's successor has been appointed and qualified, except that no member may serve under this subparagraph (i) for more than 60 days when Congress is in session unless a nomination to fill the vacancy shall have been submitted to the Senate; or (ii) after the adjournment sine die of the session of the Senate in which such nomination is submitted" 42 U.S.C. § 2000ee(h)(4)(B).
Vision, Mission, and Values

VISION

A nation that counters terrorism while safeguarding privacy and civil liberties.

MISSION

The Board provides advice and conducts oversight to ensure that efforts by the executive branch to protect the nation from terrorism are appropriately balanced with the need to protect privacy and civil liberties.

VALUES

Three key values guide the Board’s work:

Integrity – As an agency whose power lies in its persuasiveness, the Board regards the preservation of its integrity and credibility as paramount. The Board approaches its activities with objectivity and good faith. The Board strives to treat executive branch agencies and other outside parties with evenhandedness and respect and to evaluate a wide range of data, viewpoints, and considerations.

Transparency – The Board aims to increase transparency on efforts to protect the nation from terrorism and the impact those efforts have on privacy and civil liberties. In addition, the Board strives to conduct its own activities responsibly and transparently, to foster confidence in its management of authorities, resources, and information. The Board promotes transparency by holding public hearings and issuing public reports, to the greatest extent that is consistent with the protection of classified information and applicable law, and by soliciting input from the public and outside experts.

Rigor – The Board strives for the highest standard of quality in its analysis and recommendations. When examining government programs, the Board takes care to understand those efforts in all their complexity. In assessing whether such efforts are consistent with the law and appropriately protect privacy and civil liberties, the Board strives to be thorough and accurate and to account for the impact of new and emerging technologies and institutional reforms. When recommending changes to those efforts, the Board seeks to consider fully the foreseeable impact of its recommendations.
Board History and Authorities

The Board was created on the recommendation of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, colloquially known as the 9/11 Commission, in its 2004 report. The Commission acknowledged that many of its recommendations “call[ed] for the government to increase its presence in our lives—for example, by creating standards for the issuance of forms of identification, by better securing our borders, by sharing information gathered by many different agencies,” and by consolidating authority over intelligence agencies under a new Director of National Intelligence. Recognizing that “this shift of power and authority to the government” would require “an enhanced system of checks and balances to protect the precious liberties that are vital to our way of life,” the Commission recommended that “there should be a board within the executive branch to oversee adherence to the guidelines we recommend and the commitment the government makes to defend our civil liberties.”

Many of the Commission’s recommendations have been implemented by Congress and the executive branch. In response to the Commission’s recommendation to create an oversight board, President George W. Bush created the President’s Board on Safeguarding Americans’ Civil Liberties in 2004. The President’s Board ceased to meet following the enactment later that year of the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004, which created a Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board within the Executive Office of the President. Finally, in 2007, the Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act established the Board as an independent agency within the executive branch.

The Board is comprised of a full-time Chairman and four part-time Members, each appointed by the President, with the advice and consent of the Senate, to staggered six-year terms. The Board’s statute requires that Members come from different political parties and be selected “on the basis of their professional qualifications, achievements, public stature, expertise in civil liberties and privacy, and relevant experience.” At present, the Board has two Members and is in sub-quorum status.

The Board’s mission is to ensure that the executive branch’s efforts to protect the nation from terrorism are balanced with the need to protect privacy and civil liberties. Specifically, the Board’s enabling statute, 42 U.S.C. § 2000ee, authorizes it to “analyze and review actions the executive branch takes to protect the Nation from terrorism, ensuring that the need for such actions is balanced with the need to protect privacy and civil liberties,” and to “ensure that liberty concerns are appropriately considered in the

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5 Id. at 394.
6 Id. at 395.
8 See page 3.
development and implementation of laws, regulations, and policies related to efforts to protect the Nation from terrorism."

These purposes encompass two core functions: providing advice and conducting oversight.

Under the Board’s advice function, executive branch agencies can consult with the Board at an early stage in the development of legislation, policies, programs, guidelines, or regulations to ensure that privacy and civil liberties protections are appropriately considered in their design.\(^9\)

In its oversight role, the Board is charged with continually reviewing (1) regulations, policies, procedures, and practices within the Board’s jurisdiction to ensure that privacy and civil liberties are protected; and (2) other actions within the Board’s jurisdiction to ensure that those actions appropriately protect privacy and civil liberties and are consistent with governing laws, regulations, and policies regarding privacy and civil liberties.\(^10\)

The Board’s statute makes transparency an inherent part of its mission. Specifically, the Board is required to inform the public about its work by holding public hearings, issuing public reports to the extent consistent with the protection of classified information and applicable law, providing semi-annual reports to the Congress, and appearing and testifying before Congress upon request.\(^11\)

The Board has additional functions, such as making recommendations, when appropriate, to other agency’s privacy and civil liberties officers regarding their activities and to coordinate their activities on relevant interagency matters.\(^12\) Congress has also identified the Board as a source of recommendations for individuals to serve as amici curiae to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court.\(^13\)

The Board also has designated roles under the following authorities:

- **Executive Order 13636**, Improving Critical Infrastructure Cybersecurity, issued in February 2013, calls upon multiple agencies to develop and implement a cybersecurity framework to minimize the risk of a cyberattack on critical infrastructure.\(^14\)

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9. *Id.* § 2000ee(d)(1).
10. *Id.* § 2000ee(d)(2). The Board is also charged with continually reviewing information-sharing practices within its jurisdiction.
11. *Id.* § 2000ee(d)(4), (f).
12. *Id.* § 2000ee(d)(3). In addition, the Board may designate new departments, agencies, or elements of the executive branch for coverage by the requirements of Section 803. See *id.* § 2000ee-1(a).
Section 5 of the Executive Order requires the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to consult with the Board in preparing a report recommending ways to mitigate the privacy and civil liberties risks created by cybersecurity measures adopted under the order. The report must be reviewed on an annual basis and revised, as necessary.

- **Section 803 of the Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007 (Section 803)** requires certain executive branch departments, agencies, and elements to designate at least one senior official as a privacy and civil liberties officer (P/CL officer). Each agency’s P/CL officer must issue semi-annual reports on the discharge of each of his or her functions under the statute. These Section 803 Reports are to be submitted to the head of the P/CL officer’s agency, designated congressional committees, and the Board. To the greatest extent possible, the reports must be in unclassified form and made available to the public.

As noted previously, the Board is in sub-quorum status as of July 2021. Some of the Board’s authorities are limited while in sub-quorum, and the Board will not initiate new oversight projects, nor formally finalize existing projects until a quorum of three members has been reestablished. Nonetheless, the Board continues to function as an independent executive branch agency, as staff continue their work on existing projects and Board Members Felten and LeBlanc continue their oversight and advice roles in their individual capacities. The Board will also continue to recruit and hire staff to fill vacancies.

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17 Id. § 2000ee-1(f)(1)(A).

18 Id. § 2000ee-1(f)(1)(B), (g)(1).
Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Justification Summary

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**Funding Highlights**

The Board’s FY 2023 Budget Request is $10.7 million. This request, combined with an anticipated carryover of $1 million, would allow the Board to sufficiently fund the agency’s anticipated operational expenses of $11.7 million.

The Board emerged from a 20-month sub quorum period upon the October 2018 Senate confirmation of the Board’s Chairman and two additional Board Members. The confirmation and appointment of two additional Board Members in July 2019 returned the Board to the first full complement of Members since 2016. In FY 2019 and 2020, the agency operated at a lower funding level for several reasons, including a sub-quorum Board, staff attrition associated with the sub-quorum period and resulting carry-over funding, and a 10-year lease agreement that provided the first year of the lease rent-free. The Board’s Budget Requests for those years reflected the lower operating costs.

In addition, the Board has significantly reduced its carry-over from previous fiscal years, largely due to the agency’s efforts to strengthen its institutional capacity, to include human resources, financial management, and cybersecurity. Further, the Board anticipates increasing its fill rate to over 90 percent of its full staffing level by FY 2023. A budget request of $10.7 million in FY 2023 aligns with the Board’s projected expenses.19

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19 Because of the PCLOB’s small size, it must use shared services for many key functions of its operations. As a result, the Board must always anticipate for carry over funding to meet the obligations of shared services.
Fiscal Year 2023 Justification for Resources and Anticipated Performance

The Board’s FY 2023 Budget focuses on key capabilities and anticipated performance in the following areas:

- Providing effective, timely, and relevant advice regarding the protection of privacy and civil liberties in the development and implementation of legislation, regulations, and policies related to efforts to protect the nation against terrorism.

- Conducting effective oversight of executive branch authorities, policies, and activities related to efforts to protect the nation against terrorism to ensure appropriate protection of privacy and civil liberties.

- Offering insight on the effects of new and emerging technologies on the balance between government counterterrorism activities and privacy and civil liberties.

- Promoting transparency regarding the Board’s activities and issues within its jurisdiction, to the extent consistent with the protection of classified information and applicable law.

- Continuing to build and strengthen relationships with agency Privacy and Civil Liberties Officers and to coordinate the activities of those officers on relevant interagency matters.

- Continuing to strengthen the Board’s institutional capacity. This includes a continued focus on hiring and retaining highly qualified staff; maintaining robust cybersecurity; exercising effective fiscal management to ensure that taxpayers dollars are spent wisely; and pursuing the most efficient shared services provided by other federal agencies to achieve a better use of taxpayer dollars.

- Implementing the Board’s FY 2019-2023 Strategic Plan.
Accomplishments and Ongoing Activities

Advice, Oversight, and Other Mission Activities

The Board has continued to undertake a vigorous agenda to carry out its full panoply of statutory responsibilities.

Advice – The Board is actively engaged in providing advice to other executive branch agencies. In FY 2021, the Board continued to provide advice in response to requests from executive branch agencies for advice on matters within the Board’s jurisdiction.

Feedback from executive branch agencies suggests that the Board’s advice continues to be trusted and valued by the Intelligence Community and other agencies. For example, the Board has provided advice on every significant revision or issuance by an Intelligence Community element of its Attorney General-approved guidelines governing the handling of U.S. person information collected under Executive Order 12333.

Oversight – The Board is pursuing oversight projects related to efforts to protect the nation against terrorism. The Board has already concluded several oversight projects in FY 2021 and will continue its robust oversight agenda in FY 2023.

In FY 2021, the Board completed its examination of counterterrorism activities under Executive Order 12333. The Board publicly issued its Executive Order 12333 Capstone Report and completed two classified deep dives into specific counterterrorism-related activities by the CIA and NSA (an additional CIA deep dive was completed in 2018). The Capstone Document summarizes Executive Order 12333 and provides descriptions of the Board’s work. It can be found on the Board’s website: www.pclob.gov.

The Board also completed its examination of the Department of the Treasury’s Terrorist Finance Tracking Program (TFTP). The examination resulted in classified briefings to Treasury and to Congress, the issuance of recommendations to Treasury, and a public statement.20

Additionally, the Board concluded its examination of the DHS Data Framework. Operational changes effectively transformed the Data Framework from a classified counterterrorism vetting system to an unclassified platform designed to provide reporting and analytic services to certain DHS customers.

20 The Board’s TFTP public statement can be found on the Board’s website: https://bit.ly/3dHxrmU.
Public Events – Because of its commitment and desire to keep the public informed about its work, the Board anticipates that it will hold public events, including virtual events as necessary, in FY 2023.

The Board appreciates Congress's continuing support of the agency and its mission.
Operational Support

Building upon the significant operational accomplishments the Board achieved during previous fiscal years, the Board will continue to strengthen its institutional capacity while ensuring that tax dollars are spent as wisely as possible.

Key accomplishments include implementing robust internal procedures and policies; further strengthening internal controls over financial reporting and operations; maintaining robust and secure information technology (IT) systems; and achieving full compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements instituted by Congress and the executive branch.

Financial Management – Sound fiscal management is integral to the execution of the Board’s mission and remains a top priority for the Board.

Following the agency’s first financial statement audit in FY 2018 which resulted in the auditor’s inability to render an audit opinion, the Board’s Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) worked to establish, document, and implement new procedures and internal controls in various financial processes. With a solid foundation of control activities, policies, and procedures in place, PCLOB was able to remediate most of the previously identified audit weaknesses, obtaining an unmodified (clean) audit opinion over the Board’s FY 2019 financial statements with no new audit findings and no required audit adjustments.

The Board continued to seek areas for operational improvement and growth in FY 2020, further refining and strengthening its accounting practices and internal controls by completing its first full internal controls assessment; successfully procuring and transitioning to two new shared service providers for financial and payroll services; and fortifying the OCFO by appointing a Chief Financial Officer and hiring a full-time accountant.

As evidence of the Boards’ commitment towards strong financial management, the agency received an unmodified audit opinion over the FY 2020 financial statements, with no new findings or required audit adjustments, for a second consecutive year. This audit report was included in the PCLOB’s first-ever Agency Financial Report (AFR), issued in accordance with guidelines and requirements established by the Office of Management and Budget and other governing entities. The issuance of an AFR by the Board represents a significant achievement for the agency, indicating significant growth in its capacity to not only achieve sound financial management but to faithfully report to the public in full compliance as well.
Financial Management Anticipated Performance - In line with the agency's strategic plan, the Board’s OCFO will continue to further strengthen the agency's institutional capacity by monitoring the implementation of established accounting procedures and internal controls, and performing the following activities:

- Conducting regular external and internal audits, using any findings or recommendations to further refine internal controls and improve accounting best practices;
- Continuing to use shared service providers to execute operational activities and periodically reviewing those arrangements to ensure optimal performance, responsiveness, and value for taxpayer dollars over the long term;
- Streamlining the procurement process to identify potential cost savings in new and existing contracts; and
- Continuing to conduct agency-wide planning that is linked and responsive to the budget process.

Information Technology Systems and Cybersecurity - In FY 2021, the Board’s IT staff remained focused on strengthening the agency’s cybersecurity posture while implementing additional tools and strategies to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic work environment. To that end, the Board’s IT staff undertook the following activities to enhance the agency’s cybersecurity posture and remote work environment:

- Implemented DHS Emergency Directive 21-01 Mitigate SolarWinds Orion Code Compromise to remediate impacts of SolarWinds products on agency infrastructure;
- Completed an independent penetration test that detected no critical or high vulnerabilities across the network infrastructure;
- Implemented DHS Binding Operational Directive (BOD) 20-01 Vulnerability Disclosure Policy, to receive reports of network vulnerabilities from the public;
- Implemented Security Operation Center (SOC) services and tools to monitor and mitigate network incidents 24/7 across agency platforms;
- Completed transition of telecommunication contract vehicle from Networx to Enterprise Infrastructure Solutions (EIS), which provided a significant reduction in expenses.
In addition, the Board continued to leverage shared-service providers and contractor support to enhance its boundary protection. The Board’s IT staff implemented, maintained, and documented technical controls to comply with federal standards and DHS’s Cross-Agency Priority Goals for cybersecurity. These goals include managing asset security, protecting networks and data, and limiting personnel access. For FY 2022 and leading into FY 2023, the Board will continue to focus its efforts on the cybersecurity Cross-Agency Priorities.

**Protecting Classified and Sensitive Information** – The Board’s mission requires the agency to be in a SCIF, and Board Members and staff must hold a TS/SCI clearance. The Board takes all required precautions to ensure the security of the information entrusted to it during mission-related activities. The Board’s Chief Security Officer regularly coordinates with Intelligence Community agencies to ensure that it has access to the most up-to-date information and follows best practices associated with protecting classified and sensitive information.

Executive Order 13587 requires federal agencies that operate or access classified computer networks to establish insider threat programs. The Board’s Trusted Access Program governs the Board’s counter-insider threat implementation plan, policy, and employee training. Despite not having a counterintelligence mission, the Board’s Trusted Access Program has been recognized by the National Insider Threat Task Force as an example of how an agency can meet the standards established by Executive Order 13587.

In 2019, the Board received recognition as a National Industrial Security Program Agency. Subsequently, the Department of Defense invited the Board to participate as an early adopter, or early user, in the reconstituted National Background Investigations Bureau, which has transitioned from the Office of Personnel Management to the Department of Defense.

**Workforce** – The Board has continued to pursue a workforce equipped with the skills required to achieve its mission. Since the confirmation of a full-time Chairman by the Senate in October 2018 and confirmation of a full board in July 2019, the Board moved rapidly to add highly qualified staff members to enable it to execute its statutory mission. As noted previously, while in sub-quorum status, the Board Members may continue to recruit and hire staff as needed.

The Board has a total of 37 full-time equivalent positions. At the beginning of the fourth quarter of FY21, the Board had a total of 33 employees (3 part-time Board Members, 1 part-time consultant, and 29 staff members). The agency then experienced some transition. Currently, the PCLOB has a total of 30 employees (2 part-time Board Members, 1 part-time consultant, and 27 staff members). Additionally, the PCLOB has one candidate in the security clearance process and is actively recruiting for the positions that the Board
Members can fill. The Board Members expect to make hiring selections in or around the beginning of FY22.

The Board seeks to ensure that its staff encompasses a broad range of professional backgrounds, including experience in intelligence, counterterrorism, privacy and civil liberties, oversight and investigations, and technology.

**Workforce FY 2023 Anticipated Performance** -

- Institute an integrated leadership culture by focusing on employee engagement and retention;
- Further enhance human capital capabilities through technological innovation;
- Continue to strengthen institutional capacity through talent management and succession planning;
- Continue to encourage and facilitate staff participation in high-quality external training programs to ensure the ongoing professional development of the Board’s workforce;
- Sustain a positive and professional workplace environment.

**Nominations** – The term of Board Member Aditya Bamzai ended in January 2021, Chairman Adam Klein resigned in June 2021, and Board Member Jane Nitze resigned in July 2021. The Board is currently in a sub-quorum status with two Members, Ed Felten and Travis LeBlanc.

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21 The Board Members cannot fill the three open Board Member positions.
Board Interactions with Congress, the Public, and Other Executive Branch Agencies

The Board is committed to ensuring that its work is available and useful to the public. The Board’s enabling statute requires the Board, where consistent with the protection of classified information, to “make its reports, including its reports to Congress, available to the public,” and to “hold public hearings and otherwise inform the public of its activities.” The Board intends to continue to hold public events, including virtual events, as deemed necessary during the COVID-19 pandemic. The purpose of these public events is for Board Members to hear from outside experts on issues relevant to the Board’s mission and oversight projects. These channels and other forms of public engagement will enable the Board to provide as much information as possible about its performance of its statutory oversight and advice functions.

In its oversight reports and advice projects, the Board will also encourage other executive branch agencies to take appropriate and responsible measures to increase transparency and better inform the public about relevant authorities and activities.

Additionally, the Board looks forward to continuing its tradition of constructive interaction with Congress and will work to ensure that its work and expertise are useful to the legislative branch as it exercises its lawmaking and oversight functions. The Board will employ both formal and informal mechanisms to keep Congress informed about its work.

Board Members have testified before Congress in the past on matters within the Board’s expertise and stand ready to do so in the future. Board Members and staff also continue to meet periodically with Members of Congress and congressional staff to update them on the Board’s work, offer technical assistance on legislation when requested, and receive input on the Board’s activities and agenda.

Finally, Board Members continue to seek opportunities to engage directly with the American public and outside stakeholders to receive input from a diversity of viewpoints. To foster a better understanding of the Board’s mission and work, Board Members and staff plan to continue the past practice of speaking at events hosted by other government agencies, as well as by a variety of groups and organizations, including bar associations, business organizations, educational institutions, and non-governmental organizations. Board Members also look forward to meeting with representatives of non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and other entities with an interest in issues within the Board’s jurisdiction.

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## FY 2023 Budget Request by Object Class

*(Dollars in Millions)*

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