



Submitted by John C. Wobensmith, Secretary of State

Good afternoon, I appreciate the opportunity to present the budget of the Office of the Secretary of State for Fiscal Year 2023.

Our mission is to provide the citizens of Maryland with information, services and assistance relating to the constitutional, statutory and regulatory functions assigned to the office.

I want to thank Ms. Miller for her comprehensive analysis and highlight some of the accomplishments of the OSOS. From the certification of documents for international use to the production of official publications containing Maryland regulations, to the registration of charitable organizations and the processing of applications for Notary Publics, the OSOS handled a broad scope of constitutional, statutory, and regulatory duties.

Division of State Documents (DSD):

- Modernize the ELF system to enhance the process of submitting, reviewing, approving, and publishing administrative regulations including the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR).
- DSD offers electronic subscriptions to COMAR in addition to the print subscriptions.
- Versions of the Maryland Register and COMAR are online for free.

Charities and Legal Services:

Notaries Public

- The Division processed 28,975 new and renewing applications for notary public during FY 2021. FY 2022 YTD = 11,728.
- Three (3) bills passed in FY21 impacting notaries: 1) SB 132 Notaries Public - Disclosure of Home Address and Phone Number; 2) SB 212 Official Stamp of a

Notary Public: 3) SB 360 Notary Public Fund: created a Special Fund to assist in the operations of the Notary Division.

- New Notary database was funded.

Charity Division

- Registers and regulates charities and professional fundraisers under the Maryland Solicitations Act.
- FY21 there were 16,257 registered charities. Charities that solicit in the State range from small, volunteer run organizations to large, multi-million dollar nonprofit institutions. We take seriously our charge to oversee charitable solicitations activity in the State. To that end, we work to ensure the public has access to accurate and up to date information, and that donations are used for their intended charitable purpose.

Together with the Attorney General's Office, in FY21, we participated in a multi-state and federal action that shut down a fraudulent fundraising operation involving millions of deceptive robocalls for sham charities.

- Enforcement actions for charities with delinquent registrations – 685
- New Charity database for online registration is under development.

We also appreciate that sometimes charities and notaries, especially new ones, may be getting their sea legs and falter every now and then. As a result, we adopted a "Soft Touch" approach as a first step to assist them to become compliant. Those who persist and ignore efforts to educate and assist them are notified that they may be in violation of the Maryland Solicitation Act or Notary law. If breaches continue, the approach shifts to more austere approach on behalf of the public to find a remedy. We have conducted hearings and negotiated settlements.

The Maryland Charity Campaign, the State's workplace giving program, raised more than \$2M during the 2021 campaign. My office vets every participating charity, assuring donors that their dollars are going to reputable causes that support causes from the most basic needs of food, shelter, and clothing to helping victims of domestic violence, and scores of other causes.

We are responsible to process Extraditions, Commutations and Pardons for the Governor. In Calendar Year 2021, this Division of our office processed an astounding 442 extraditions.

Despite the disruptive effects of COVID, staff achieved a 99.7% Customer Satisfaction rating.

Address Confidentiality Program (ACP):

- Active participants 1331
- Total number of participants served 3,450
- Shielded deeds 41
- Certified Application Assistants (professional victim service providers trained by ACP staff to prequalify and refer Program applicants) 594
- In October 2021, ACP eligibility expanded to include any threatened Maryland resident regardless of their relationship to the would-be perpetrator. Seven (7) applicants have been approved for Program participation under the new provision.
- SOS signed an MOU with the Consulates of Mexico and El Salvador to collaborate on ACP training for professionals and outreach efforts to survivors within underserved Latino communities
- SOS with ACP is hosting the Latin American Consular Group on February 3 to discuss domestic violence within the Latino community, existing consular victim services and obstacles to connecting survivors with safety and services

Operating Budget Recommended Actions:

1. Concur with Governor's allowance

*Office of the Secretary of State response:
The Office agrees with this recommendation*