In February 2008, President Ann Fessenden created a special committee to assess the evolution of the AALL Washington Affairs Office (WAO) and its role as the center of the Association’s government relations activities. The WAORSC was also charged to make recommendations on some specific issues regarding the future direction and continuity of the WAO and its activities. Members of the committee were Sarah Holterhoff (chair), Timothy Coggins, Mary Lou Hess, Keith Ann Stiverson, Maryruth Storer, Kay Todd, and Gail Warren. Ann Fessenden served as Board liaison and Kate Hagan as staff liaison.

Information-gathering was the first stage of the committee’s work. Committee members researched the history of the WAO, back to its creation in the late 1980s. They solicited opinions from AALL members by several methods: conducting an online survey of stakeholders, creating a short-term “Beyond the Beltway” blog to collect comments from the general AALL membership, and holding focus groups with a cross-section of AALL members at the Annual Meeting. The WAORSC requested and received an assessment of current operations of the WAO from Acting Washington Affairs Representative Mary Alice Baish. For comparative purposes, information about the government affairs activities of 24 other professional organizations was compiled by a committee member.

In spring and summer 2008, the WAORSC met several times by conference call and held two in-person meetings—at the Annual Meeting in Portland, OR, and in August 2008 in Chicago. The committee submitted a Preliminary Report for the July 2008 meeting of the Executive Board, an Interim Report for the fall 2008 meeting, and a Final Report for the spring 2009 meeting.

Based on recommendations made by the WAORSC in its Interim Report, the Board approved three motions in October 2008. The first established the staff position of director of the WAO, with the person in that position reporting to the AALL executive director. The former Washington affairs representative position was to be officially discontinued when the director position was filled. The second motion changed the name of the WAO to the AALL Government Relations Office (GRO), thereby changing the new director position to “director of the AALL Government Relations Office.” The third motion extended the term of the WAORSC (scheduled to end in Dec. 2008) to April 30, 2009, so that committee members would have time to complete their work. Shortly after the Board’s actions described above, AALL Executive Director Kate Hagan offered the new position of GRO director to Mary Alice Baish, who accepted the offer.

The committee’s final six months were spent considering additional aspects of its charge as well as several other issues that had arisen in the course of its work. These matters included the tax implications of expenses related to lobbying, a possible relocation for the GRO, future staffing and succession planning for the GRO, and ways to enhance communication with AALL members about government relations activities and to increase their participation in them. Those matters are addressed in the committee’s Final Report. At its spring 2009 meeting, the Executive Board followed recommendations of the WAORSC by authorizing clarification of the charges and membership requirements for AALL’s Copyright and Government Relations Committees. Also approved were the posting on AALLNET and provision for future updating of three documents created by the WAORSC in the course of its work. It is anticipated that these
documents will have long-term value for the Association. They are: *Highlights of the History of the AALL Government Relations Office (formerly the Washington Affairs Office)*; *Frequently Asked Questions about the AALL Government Relations Office (GRO) in Washington, D.C.*; and the *Frequently Used Acronyms and Abbreviations* list.

Sarah Holterhoff, chair
2008-09