AALL Committee Activities and Action Plan

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Committee Name: Government Relations Committee

Committee Charge: The Committee shall monitor all federal and state legislative, regulatory, and judicial developments, with the exception of copyright issues, that may affect the Association, law librarianship, law libraries, or the dissemination of information, and shall advise the Executive Board and the Government Relations Office (GRO) about these issues. The Committee shall coordinate all efforts to testify, or otherwise communicate Association views, on information policy issues to any branch of government at any level. The Committee may, on its own initiative, prepare testimony or otherwise communicate Association views consistent with the AALL Government Relations Policy to appropriate governmental bodies and other interested groups and shall keep the Executive Board informed of all such efforts.

Where necessary or desirable, the Committee shall make recommendations for policy changes to the Executive Board or the membership. The Committee may draft proposed resolutions, position papers, or letters for adoption by the Executive Board or by the membership.

The Committee shall inform the membership of notable information policy issues, and other relevant matters. In addition, the Committee shall be responsible for the legislative update session at the annual meeting.

The Committee will select one (1) or more recipients every year for the AALL Public Access to Government Information (PAGI) Award and the Robert L. Oakley Member Advocacy Award, or no recipients if it deems none of the nominees sufficiently qualified, and will submit the winning recipients’ name(s) to the Awards Committee. The Awards Committee will oversee the grant of the PAGI Award and the Robert L. Oakley Member Advocacy Award to the recipients selected by the Government Relations Committee.

Major Activities for 2008-2009:
The Government Relations Committee (GRC) monitored many important legislative and administrative developments and worked with members in the Association's various chapters to contact legislators. GRC members serve as liaisons to all our chapters and SISs, and are responsible for keeping our membership informed and active in our advocacy efforts. Net neutrality, the Open Government Act, freedom of information issues, the value of the Federal Depository Library Program to law libraries, appropriations for the Government Printing Office, the National Archives and Records Administration and the Law Library of Congress, are only a few of the issues we worked on this year. Our members were extremely helpful; they made the calls, sent the letters, and remembered to thank the government officials who responded well to our requests. In addition to those advocacy efforts, GRC participated in various activities including:

- Participating in focus groups for the Government Printing Office (GPO) and evaluating its recently released Federal Digital System (FDsys), which provides permanent public access to government information submitted by Congress, Federal agencies and the courts.
- Participating in the submission of AALL's Statement on our Public Policy Positions to the Obama-Biden Transition Team. The statement articulates the importance of the public's right to access government information as a basic tenet of our democracy; the need to preserve the historic balance in copyright law between rights of holders and users; and the protection of the privacy of library users and all Americans. The statement, which reflects AALL’s Government Relations Policy, will serve as a guide for the work of our Government Relations Office and policy committees during the next few years.
- Announcing nominations for the AALL Public Access to Government Information (PAGI) Award and the Robert L. Oakley Member Advocacy Award, and selecting this year's recipients.
- Providing input to Emily Feldman, AALL's Advocacy Communications Assistant, regarding the new "advocacy toolkit." The toolkit will illustrate the various ways members can get involved in advocacy including how to make their voices heard effectively on both a state and national level.
- Working on strengthening the number of subscribers to the AALL Advocacy Listserv and making it a more active discussion list.
- Constructing various educational programs for the 2009 AALL Annual Meeting, four of which were accepted: (1) Evaluating Federal E-Life Cycle Management-A Town Meeting with OMB, NARA and GPO; (2) Public Access to the Law in the YaOogle Age; (3) Discovering Advocacy Web Tools: Your Key to Influencing Congress; and (4) the GRC's Annual Legislative and Regulatory Update.
One of the most important activities of the GRC is recruiting AALL members to help with advocacy efforts. Members of Congress and their staffs respond best when they are approached by an AALL member-constituent or AALL chapter about the issues that are important to us. To continue in those efforts, GRC has various activities planned, including:

- Participating in the AALL 2009 Day on the Hill: Legislative Advocacy Leadership Training which will be held on Friday, July 24. During this year’s full-day Advocacy Training, members will learn about AALL’s proactive legislative agenda and how to develop communication skills to become a successful advocate. Best of all, participants will be able to practice their skills by spending the afternoon in meetings with members of their Congressional delegation on Capitol Hill.
- Implementation, promotion and use of the Advocacy Toolkit.
- Strengthening the number of subscribers to AALL’s Advocacy Listserv and making the advocacy listserv a more effective means of educating members of GRC and GRO about issues/bills that are coming up at the state level.
- Developing a strategy to implement policy goals set forth in AALL’s Public Policy Positions to the Obama-Biden Transition Team. Most importantly, reinforcing the importance of the public’s right to access government information as a basic tenet of our democracy.
- Work on promoting the value of the Federal Depository Library Program among our members and the benefits of being a federal depository library.
- Collaborate with the GRO staff on steps to move our policy agenda forward.