With the exciting transition in the White House, the Government Relations Office and GRC sent a “Statement to the Obama-Biden Transition Team” outlining AALL’s public policy positions. The statement outlined (1) AALL’s commitment to the public’s right to access permanent, authentic government information; (2) balancing the rights of users of information and the rights of copyright owners and licensors in the digital age; and (3) preserving the privacy rights and civil liberties of library users.

In addition to reaching out to the executive branch, GRC monitored many important legislative developments. Most recently, GRC members tracked legislation protecting “Whistleblowers” – those who take personal and professional risks to protect the public against government waste, fraud, and abuse. GRC also monitored issues surrounding network neutrality, the PACER pilot program, and the value of Federal Depository Library Program to selective law libraries.

AALL members and chapters continue to play an invaluable role in GRC’s advocacy efforts; they made the calls, sent the letters, and remembered to thank the government officials who responded well to AALL priorities. To aid in AALL member efforts, GRC also worked with the Government Relations Office to create an “Advocacy Toolkit.” The AALL Advocacy Toolkit is designed to help AALL members and chapters become effective advocates for law libraries. Divided into sections for individuals and chapters, the Toolkit familiarizes members with AALL's information policy priorities and teaches users the skills needed to make a difference for law libraries on the federal and state levels.

Each GRC member served as liaison to several chapters and special interest sections and was responsible for keeping those members informed and active in advocacy efforts. To facilitate in those efforts, GRC developed a new bill-tracking page on the GRC website, available at: http://www.aallnet.org/committee/govr/billtrack.htm. This new proactive site cultivates lasting ties with every chapter through its liaison assignments, connecting interested parties to important issues as they unfold, rather than after the fact.

The committee reviewed nominations for the 2009 Public Access to Government Information (PAGI) Award and recommended that Rick McKinney receive the award.

The committee also reviewed nominations for the 2009 Robert L. Oakley Member Advocacy Award and recommended that the Sunlight Foundation receive the award. After receiving many strong nominations, the committee proposed modification of the Robert L. Oakley Member Advocacy Award criteria to allow for the nomination of groups, in addition to individuals, to receive the award for outstanding advocacy work in support of AALL’s goals. The current language only allows for an individual AALL member to receive this Award. The GRC submitted this as an agenda item for the Executive Board’s July meeting.

The committee worked with the Government Relations Office staff to present the Advocacy Workshop held at the 2008 Annual Meeting: 35 AALL members attended the Workshop. The Government Relations Office is developing a “Day on the Hill” for the 2009 Annual Meeting, which will connect librarians to legislators and legislative advocates.
GRC program proposals that were accepted are: 1) “Legislative Advocacy Leadership Training 2009: AALL Day on the Hill”; 2) “E6: Discovering Advocacy Web Tools: Your Key to Influencing Congress”; 3) “H5: Annual Legislative and Regulatory Update”; and 4) “J3: Public Access to the Law in the YaOogle Age.” Other policy committees and SISs have sponsored several policy programs as well, upholding the tradition of a strong track of policy programs at the Washington, D.C. Meeting.

GRC Members for 2008-2009: Stephen Mirsky, Camilla Tubbs, Angela T. Baldree, Jennifer Behrens, Barbara H. Brandon, Marjorie Crawford, Marlene C. Gebauer, Stephanie Peace Hess, Madeline Kriescher, Ryan Saltz (webmaster), and Elizabeth Sutera. AALL President James E. Duggan served as GRC Board liaison and Mary Alice Baish, director of the Government Relations Office, was the staff liaison. Emily Feldman, who continues to serve as a great addition to the Government Relations Office, ably assisted Mary Alice in various projects.

Camilla Tubbs, 2008-2009 vice-chair