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 about these issues.

The Committee shall coordinate with the Government Relations Office to communicate Association views on information policy issues to all levels of government. The Committee may, in accordance with Committee and Association policy, work with the AALL Government Relations Office to prepare and communicate Association positions to appropriate governmental bodies and to other interested groups, while keeping the President and the Executive Board informed of all such efforts. On critical issues, the manner of communication shall be determined by the Chair, the Government Relations Director and the President.

The Committee shall inform the membership of notable information policy issues and other relevant matters and provide educational opportunities and tools for the membership in information policy and advocacy. Committee members will serve as liaisons to chapter government relations committees and support the local advocacy efforts of chapters and individual members.

The Committee will select one or more recipients every year for the AALL Public Access to Government Information (PAGI) Award and the Robert L. Oakley 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 Advocacy Award to the recipients selected by the Government Relations Committee.

Major Activities for 2009-2010:

This year, our focus was on maintaining our monitoring of national issues, while helping our local chapters with state-level advocacy. On the national level, we redesigned features on our website: <http://www.aallnet.org/committee/govr/>, including adding a chart that links members to their Congressional representatives <http://www.aallnet.org/aallwash/ChapterChart_111thSens.pdf> and updated our bill tracking site <http://www.aallnet.org/committee/govr/billtrack.htm>.

We continued to monitor federal information policy issues and worked with the Government Relations Office and the Association to communicate Association views. We've consulted the Administrative Office of the Courts on re-opening PACER and thanks in part to the hard work of GRC members, there is now a House and a Senate Bill to open CRS reports up further to the public. We continue to solicit information from Association members through the Advocacy Listserv, including asking members what types of information they would like to see agency web sites to help push forth the Obama administration's initiative for an open and transparent government.

On the local level, we first worked with the GRC chapters of regional library associations to include links to our GRC and GRO on their website. For example, see: <http://www.aallnet.org/chapter/snella/governmentrelations.html>. We also worked with local chapters who did not have their own GRC to become more effective advocates, including promoting our "Advocacy Toolkit" <http://www.aallnet.org/aallwash/toolkit/contents.asp>. Second, we worked directly with local chapters to support them on local advocacy efforts. For instance, a GRC member from California worked with the Government Relations Chairs of three AALL local CA chapters to brainstorm about how to move forward on various state issues impacting libraries and access to information. GRC members helped local chapter SNELLA to petition the closures of five law libraries in Connecticut.

At this year's Annual Meeting, we will present two programs, including the AALL Public Policy Update - where we will award the recipients of our PAGI and our Oakley Award.

Proposed Activities for 2010-2011:

It is AALL policy that legal resources on government Web sites must be freely available to the public. In response to current budget cuts, some states are beginning to charge fees to access electronic legal information. It is also AALL policy that government information, including the text of all primary legal
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materials, must be in the public domain and available to the public without restriction. Many state
governments copyright their legal information. In the next year, GRC will work with the Government
Relations Office to form State Working Groups that will respond to challenges that threaten the
authentication and preservation of legal resources.

This mobilization will build on the already strong connections that we are creating with our local library
chapters. However, we will continue to work with local GRCs, and to help create new local GRCs. And we
will continue to support local information policy advocacy efforts.

In addition to this local mobilization, we will continue to monitor federal issues, including open access to
CRS reports, opening PACER to the public and increased transparency of government websites.