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## UELMA in Colorado

UELMA first got underway in Colorado just after the *Uniform Electronic Legal Material Act* (UELMA) was approved by the Uniform Law Commission in July 2011, when the AALL Government Relations Office (GRO) contacted me to ask if I would lead the efforts for enactment in Colorado. I had just arrived in Colorado, so this was both an honor and a challenge. I did not know any of the legislators in the state. Actually, I did not know anything about the state government at all! This state of ignorance – not personally knowing your legislators – is fairly common for most of us. So just let me say at the outset that it was not a problem.

### Preliminary Steps – Making the First Connections

The [Government Relations Office](#) sent an email introduction to the Colorado legislator who was the Colorado delegate to the Uniform Law Commission, and he agreed to meet with me. The delegate, Brandon Schaffer, president of the Colorado Senate, was familiar with the uniform law. Armed with packages of information from the GRO, I met with him in January 2012. Even though the Senator was familiar with the concept of UELMA, having the GRO materials was really helpful, particularly the brief summary and the California Office of Legislative Council's white paper, [Authentication of Primary Legal Materials and Pricing Options](#). Colorado had already made the online version of the Colorado Code of Regulations the official version, so in Colorado, the question of the cost of authentication was not an academic one. Funds would need to be appropriated immediately. The Senator agreed to find a sponsor for a bill implementing UELMA in Colorado, and sent an email to put Senator Morgan Carroll, chair of the Majority Caucus chair and Senate Judiciary Committee, in contact with me.

### Introduction of the Bill

Senator Carroll was enthusiastic about UELMA and sensitive to the fragile nature of electronic materials. As a practicing attorney with a focus on social justice issues, Senator Carroll understood the need for the broadest possible access to authentic legal materials. She suggested that the most helpful thing I could do would be to educate the other members on the Senate Judiciary Committee about why Colorado needed the bill, which would help the bill pass more smoothly in committee hearing.

Since the bill was actually introduced in the House first, and became [HB12-1209](#), I sent individual emails to each and every member of the Senate and House Judiciary Committees, giving them the short analysis of why UELMA was important for Colorado, including links to each of the relevant documents provided to me by the GRO, and asking each of them to get in touch with me if they had further questions. Once the bill was introduced, Senator Carroll kept me informed of the process, and asked for help with some comments on the law from the disability community.

One concern was that, since Colorado already had an online official version of the Colorado Code of Regulations, if UELMA was enacted, there would have to be an immediate appropriation to meet the requirements of the law. But the bill went easily through the House Judiciary Committee and the House Finance Committee, which made an appropriation of \$198,912 cash funds from the Department of State Cash Fund for FY 2012-13 to the Department of State for implementation of the bill.

### **Not Quite Testifying – More Help From the GRO**

On March 27, while I was out of the state on business, I received an email from Senator Carroll asking if I could appear the next day at the Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on UELMA and testify. I emailed Emily Feltren, who sent a short position paper for the committee. I made it specific to Colorado and forwarded it to the Senator to read at the hearing. The Senator thought the materials I provided by AALL were key to convincing senators to support the bill and helping UELMA pass unanimously through the Senate Judiciary Committee. The bill then headed for the Senate Finance Committee, which approved the cash appropriation. After passage of the bill, I continued to stay in touch with the office responsible for implementing UELMA, putting them in email contact with people who are working on solutions for authentication, and providing current information and white papers on these issues.

The bill was signed into law July 25, 2012.

### **The Takeaway**

The Government Relations Office will give you guidance and support that is invaluable, and you don't need to be an insider to help get an important law enacted. All you really need is the willingness to get involved and work with people.