

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT MEMBER ADVOCACY

The success of AALL's advocacy program depends on the willingness of our members to speak up in support of the information policy issues that impact the profession. As law librarians, you have expertise that can inform elected officials' decisions about many important issues, including access to official and authentic government information, copyright, open government and privacy. As constituents, you have the ear of your elected officials and the power to influence policy decisions at the federal and state levels. These FAQs answer some common questions about advocacy to help you gain the confidence you need to have a substantial and long-lasting impact on the policy issues affecting the profession.

1. WHO CAN SPEAK ON BEHALF OF AALL?

Only the President, Executive Director and the Director of Government Relations can speak on behalf of AALL. When you contact your elected officials or their staff about a policy issue, you are speaking in your capacity as a law librarian and constituent, rather than on behalf of the Association. For more information, see [Speaking for AALL](#) and [Frequently Asked Questions about the Government Relations Office](#).

2. I WORK FOR THE FEDERAL/STATE/COUNTY GOVERNMENT. CAN I ADVOCATE?

The First Amendment protects your right to speak out on issues that matter to you, and anyone can advocate on issues when representing him or herself. Still, you should investigate your workplace rules to learn about any limits on advocacy. This goes for all advocates: become familiar with the policies that your institution has in place governing advocacy. For example, your employer might have rules restricting advocacy activities during work hours. When making contact with policymakers and their staff, you may also wish to make it clear that you are speaking on behalf of yourself, as a constituent, and not your employer.

3. DO I NEED TO REGISTER AS A LOBBYIST TO ADVOCATE?

As an individual representing yourself, you do not need to register as a lobbyist to call or email your members of Congress, meet with your members or their staff, attend town hall meetings, or otherwise speak in support or opposition of an issue. 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organizations – including AALL– have specific rules governing lobbying at the federal and state levels. AALL files quarterly reports to the House and Senate on federal lobbying activities and expenditures.

4. WHAT SHOULD I SAY ABOUT MYSELF WHEN I CONTACT MY ELECTED OFFICIALS?

AALL recommends that you state that you are a law librarian and constituent. You may also mention that you are a member of AALL, though you are not speaking on behalf of the organization. Our action alerts provide sample messages that you may personalize for your use.

5. IS IT MORE EFFECTIVE TO CONTACT THE ELECTED OFFICIAL WHO REPRESENTS THE AREA



WHERE I LIVE OR WORK?

Elected officials want most to hear from those who elect them, so it is best to contact the person who represents the district or state where you live.