

2009 Day on the Hill Participants Prove “All Politics Is Local”

WASHINGTON, D.C., August 6, 2009--With the AALL Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C., this year, the Government Relations Office and Government Relations Committee (GRC) took advantage of this special opportunity to host a full-day advocacy training for members of AALL and our chapters. On Friday, July 24, more than 75 energetic and dedicated law librarians from 27 states and Japan came together for the 2009 AALL Day on the Hill Legislative Advocacy Leadership Training. Thanks to their enthusiasm, the Day on the Hill was a great success.

It was exciting to see many new and familiar faces gather early on Friday morning for coffee and networking in the Renaissance Hotel. After spending a few minutes getting acquainted, incoming GRC Chair Camilla Tubbs welcomed the participants and explained the goals for the day: to learn about AALL’s current policy priorities, gain confidence in developing and delivering effective messages about them, and spend the afternoon meeting with members of Congress and their staffs on the Hill.

Advocacy Communications Assistant Emily Feldman then joined me in reviewing the nine “hot topics” on our policy and legislative agenda. Many of this year’s policy priorities are included in AALL’s Statement to The Obama-Biden Transition Team: Public Policy Positions of the American Association of Law Libraries, which outlines the Association’s information policy goals for the next several years. Our top priorities include no-fee public access to the Public Access to Court Electronic Records (PACER) system, public access to Congressional Research Service (CRS) reports, and support for increased funding for the Law Library of Congress.

We were pleased this year to have the opportunity to host “Advocacy Guru” Stephanie Vance as our guest speaker. Vance has more than 15 years of experience in D.C. as a lobbyist and a congressional aide, and she offered our participants an insider’s look at the legislative process in her fun and entertaining style. Her useful tips on the best ways to deliver a message helped our members feel more prepared for their afternoon meetings on Capitol Hill. Vance also spent time walking through message development on a few of our issues. Participants then used her tips to develop their own messages for their senators and representatives.

After lunch with their state delegation, Day on the Hill participants traveled to Capitol Hill to present their issues to their congressional representatives and their staffs. Participants had spent many weeks arranging these meetings, and their hard work certainly paid off. Despite hot button issues like health care, energy, and the economy competing for the attention of members of Congress, AALL members had tremendous success in delivering their messages on the Hill. Two issues in particular, no-fee public access to PACER and public access to CRS reports, resonated strongly with many members of Congress.

In addition, it was gratifying to learn of Hill action on three of our top priority issues. Shortly after the Day on the Hill, the House passed the *William Orton Law Library Improvement and Modernization Act* (H.R. 2728) to increase funding for the Law Library of Congress by a vote of 383-44; the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee approved the *Whistleblower Protection Enhancement*

Act of 2009 (S. 372) with some additional protections for whistleblowers; and Representatives Edward Markey (D-Mass.) and Anna Eshoo (D-Cal.) introduced a bill (H.R. 3458) in support of network neutrality. These successes would not have been possible without the efforts of our Day on the Hill participants.

One of the important lessons participants learned during the Day on the Hill is the power they have as constituents and law librarians to influence their lawmakers. If you weren't able to attend the Day on the Hill this year, we invite you to join our advocacy team so that you too can help us advance AALL's legislative agenda. The Government Relations Office makes it easy for you to learn about our issues and get involved. By reading this "Washington Brief" column and our monthly "Washington E-Bulletin" and by signing up for the advocacy online discussion list and the Washington Blawg through the Government Relations page on AALLNET, you'll stay on top of the latest updates and news from our office. We may also ask you to take action in support or opposition to a bill. When we issue an action alert, we'll provide you with the background information, talking points, and tips on how to contact your representatives. "All politics is local" and your voice really will make a difference.

All of the Day on the Hill resources, including the speakers' presentation slides and the issue briefs on our "hot topics," are available on AALLNET in our Advocacy Toolkit. We thank and congratulate all our participants for making this year's event such a wonderful success!

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Pull Quote

"I've seen petitions and e-mails and suggestions that we call our senators and representatives to let them know how we feel about items before Congress, and I've always thought it was a good idea. But I could count on my right index finger the number of times I actually followed through. The Day on the Hill gave me the push I needed...I'll definitely be keeping in touch with the contacts I found."

--*Kate Irwin-Smiler, reference librarian at Wake Forest University, Professional Center Library*

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IL delegation w Rep. Danny Davis.jpg

Caption: Left to right: Diana Koppang, Todd Ito, Congressman Danny K. Davis (D-Ill.), Beth Lodal, and Keith Ann Stiverson meet during the AALL Day on the Hill on July 24.

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