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The AALL Washington E-Bulletin

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SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Nominations Open for Two AALL Government Relations Committee Awards

AALL's Government Relations Committee is seeking nominations for the 2009 [Public Access to Government Information \(PAGI\) Award](#) and [Robert L. Oakley Member Advocacy Award](#).

The Association presents the PAGI Award annually to recognize special efforts in promoting or preserving public access to government information. Recipients of this award may be any individual or organization, though members of the Government Relations Office of AALL are not eligible. Last year, AALL acknowledged OMB Watch with the PAGI Award. OMB Watch's Executive Director Gary Bass accepted the award on behalf of OMB Watch and gave the keynote speech during the Legislative and Regulatory Update at the AALL Annual Meeting in Portland. During his address, he noted with pride that OMB Watch's [FedSpending.org](#), a Web site that provides information on government grants and contracts, served as the model for [USASpending.gov](#), the government Web site required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 ([P.L. 109-282](#)).

The [Robert L. Oakley Member Advocacy Award](#) recognizes an AALL member who has been an outstanding advocate and has contributed significantly to the AALL policy agenda at the federal, state, local, or international level. The award, established in 2008, honors the memory of Robert L. Oakley, AALL's Washington Affairs Representative from 1989 until 2007. The 2008 award was given posthumously to Bob Oakley, and this year will be given for the first time to an AALL member.

Please submit your nominations to Government Relations Committee Chair Steve Mirsky at SMirsky@cslib.org by February 28, 2009.

AALL Travel Grants Available for the 2009 Annual Meeting

Are you interested in attending our full-day [Advocacy Training](#) this year but aren't sure you can afford to come to Washington, D.C. a day early? The Government Relations Office and Government Relations Committee have put together a [list of AALL travel grants](#) offered by chapters and SISs to help you find ways to cover your costs. Many grants are available, and we will continue to add to this list as we collect more information. If you know of a grant that's not on our list, please [let us know](#)!

UPDATES FROM THE HILL AND THE GOVERNMENT RELATIONS OFFICE

President Obama Demonstrates Commitment to Open Government

Demonstrating his commitment to bringing “[a new era of open Government](#),” President Obama used his first full day in office to issue an important Executive Order to ensure the timely released of Presidential records and two Memoranda to encourage more transparency and accountability.

On January 21, 2009, President Obama issued an Executive Order on Presidential Records ([E.O. 13489](#)). This Executive Order revokes President Bush's [Executive Order 13233](#), which gave current and former presidents and vice presidents greatly expanded authority to withhold presidential records. In November 2008, AALL signed on to a [proposal](#) organized by the National Security Archive to the Obama-Biden Transition Team recommending that Obama reverse E.O. 13233, and we commend President Obama for taking this important step for transparency and accountability so quickly.

In addition to his Executive Order, Obama issued a [Memorandum on the Freedom of Information Act](#) (FOIA) and a [Memorandum on Transparency and Open Government](#). The memo on FOIA directs the Attorney General to draft new FOIA guidelines for agency heads that encourages agencies to use a presumption of disclosure when making decisions to release information. The memo also directs agencies to take pro-active steps to make information public in a timely manner. In November 2008, AALL signed on to another [proposal](#) organized by the National Security Archive to the Transition Team asking Obama to issue a memorandum on FOIA to encourage public access. We are pleased that Obama's memo addresses many of the recommendations in our proposal.

In his [Memorandum on Transparency and Open Government](#), Obama directs the Chief Technology Officer (who has yet to be named), in coordination with the Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the Administrator of General Services, to coordinate the development of recommendations for an Open Government Directive within 120 days. This memo reflects one of the top recommendations of the 21st Century Right to Know Project's report, [Moving Toward a 21st Century Right-to-Know Agenda: Recommendations to President-elect Obama and Congress](#), to issue an early policy vision on government transparency. AALL endorsed this report along with nine AALL chapters, seventy-five individual law librarians, and AALL's Government Relations Committee and AALL's Technical Services Special Interest Section.

AALL is pleased with Obama's early signs of his commitment to government transparency and accountability. We will continue to monitor Obama's policies on open government and keep you informed of the latest developments.

House Passes Legislation to Restore Transparency and Accountability

Just two weeks before President Obama issued his Executive Order on Presidential Records, the House of Representatives passed the *Presidential Records Act Amendments of 2009* ([H.R. 35](#)) by a [vote of 359 - 58](#) on January 7, 2009. In addition to permanently reversing Bush's Executive Order 13233, this bill would establish a deadline for the review of records, require the president to make privilege claims personally, and eliminate the ability for vice presidents to assert executive privilege claims over their own records. H.R. 35 was introduced by [Rep. Edolphus Towns](#) (D-NY-10), the new chair of the [House Oversight and Government Reform Committee](#).

In other good news, on January 28, the House unanimously passed an amendment to add permanent federal whistleblower protections to [H.R. 1](#), the stimulus bill. The amendment, sponsored by Representatives [Todd Platts](#) (R-PA-19) and [Chris Van Hollen](#) (D-MD-8), is identical to [H.R. 985](#), which passed the House in the 110th Congress by a vote of 331-94. AALL has long supported efforts to restore the Presidential Records Act and provide real protections for federal whistleblowers, and we are pleased with the House's swift action in support of these measures.

New Administration Brings Changes to WhiteHouse.gov

One of the first signs of the new Administration was the change at the White House Web site. On January 20 at 12:01 a.m., the Obama Administration launched the new [WhiteHouse.gov](#), with an announcement that, "WhiteHouse.gov will be a central part of President Obama's pledge to make his the most transparent and accountable administration in American history." In addition to a significant change in appearance, the new Web site offers email updates, RSS feeds, a blog, and a feedback form for users to submit comments about the site or White House policy. To read about all of the changes, see the White House [blog entry](#) by Macon Phillips, the Director of New Media for the White House.

If you read this blog entry carefully, you'll see that Phillips writes that "we will publish all non-emergency legislation to the website for five days, and allow the public to review and comment before the President signs it." Unfortunately, the [first piece of legislation](#) signed by President Obama, *The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009* (P.L. 111-2), didn't make it onto WhiteHouse.gov for comments until [after it was signed](#) by the President. While it is reasonable to expect that not every piece of legislation will make it onto WhiteHouse.gov for comments due to political expediency or other facts, we will keep an eye on this issue to ensure that Obama sticks to his transparency pledge.

A snapshot of former President Bush's Whitehouse.gov Web site as it was before the transition on January 20, 2009 is [available](#) from the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) Web site.

Government Printing Office Launches FDsys Beta Site

On January 15, the Government Printing Office (GPO) released FDsys as a public beta. The system may be accessed through <http://fdsys.gpo.gov>. This first launch includes Congressional documents and publications of the Office of the Federal Register.

We urge you to take a few minutes to test out the new system and send your feedback to pmo@gpo.gov.

NARA Seeks Director of Office of Government Information Services

Indicating that, despite its initial reluctance, the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) plans to house a newly created office to review agency compliance with the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and offer mediation services to requestors, NARA recently posted a [job announcement](#) in search of a Director of the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS). As we reported in [previous editions](#) of the E-Bulletin, the *OPEN Government Act of 2007* (P.L. 110-175) required that OGIS be housed at NARA, but the Bush Administration slipped in a proposal in the FY 2009 budget to move OGIS to the Department of Justice, the agency responsible for representing the government in FOIA lawsuits. In September 2008, former Archivist of the United States Allen Weinstein [testified](#) before the [House Oversight and Government Reform's Subcommittee on Information Policy, Census, and National Archives](#) that NARA was resistant to housing the office, but if given the responsibility would, "do everything we can to follow the letter of the law." We are extremely pleased that this issue appears to be resolved and that OGIS will be located at NARA, as mandated by Congress.

OUTSIDE THE BELTWAY: CHAPTER NEWS

If you have news on policy or legislative issues in your AALL Chapter, please [let us know](#). News might address legislation you are tracking, policy-related events your chapter is hosting, or anything you think might be of interest to our community. We'd love to hear from you!

LLAM Hosts Government Relations Office for Advocacy Discussion

On Friday, January 16, 2009, Mary Alice Baish and Emily Feldman visited the Anne Arundel County Circuit Court in Maryland to talk with members of the Law Library Association of Maryland (LLAM) about AALL's advocacy efforts on the state and federal level and how LLAM members can become effective advocates. During the program, Mary Alice discussed AALL's key issues, such as establishing a public domain citation system for federal legal information and ensuring adequate annual funding to the Administrative Office of the United States Courts for no-fee public access to PACER. Mary Alice encouraged LLAM members to read AALL's [statement](#) to the Obama-Biden Transition Team for more information about our priorities. Emily Feldman discussed how the AALL office keeps members and chapters informed about the latest information policy news (including through the [E-Bulletin](#), the [Blawg](#), the [Advocacy Listserv](#), and the monthly [Washington Brief](#) column in *Spectrum*). She also emphasized the importance of building relationships with members of Congress. She encouraged LLAM members in newly-elected Representative Frank M. Kratovil Jr.'s district to contact him using our [action alert](#) so that they can begin to build a relationship

with him. We had a great time in Annapolis and we thank LLAM for hosting us!

FREE TIME WELL SPENT: Further Reading for the Information Policy Junkie

New Issue of Digital Preservation Newsletter Now Available

The [January 2009](#) issue of the Library of Congress Digital Preservation Newsletter is now available. This issue includes the second of three articles about the Federal Agencies Digitization Guidelines Initiative. To subscribe to the Library of Congress Digital Preservation Newsletter, click on [this link](#), type in your e-mail address, scroll down and click on "Digital Preservation." Past newsletters are archived [here](#).

Congressional Research Service Report Profiles the 111th Congress

A new Congressional Research Service Report, "[Membership of the 111th Congress: A Profile](#)," provides statistical information of the membership of the 111th Congress. Included is data on party affiliation, average age and length of service, occupation, religious affiliation, gender, ethnicity, foreign births, and military service. For example, the average age of Members of both Houses of Congress at the convening of the 111th Congress is 58.2 years; the dominant professions of members are public service/politics, business, and *law*; and Protestants collectively constitute the majority religious affiliation of Members.

New RSS Feeds from USA.gov and PACER

[USA.gov](#), "the U.S. government's official web portal," now offers a central repository of [RSS feeds](#) with the latest breaking news from federal agencies, as well as the White House Blog. You can view the feeds by "[Breaking Government News](#)" (a compilation of all the news) or by topic, such as [General Government and Reference](#), [Public Safety and Law](#), and [Science and Technology](#).

In other RSS news, the Public Access to Court Electronic Records (PACER) Service Center now offers an [RSS feed](#) which provides information such as upgrades to local courts Case Management/Electronic Case Files (CM/ECF) software and PACER announcements. You can sign up for the PACER RSS feed by clicking on the icon on the PACER Service Center home page or by clicking on [this link](#).

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