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Message for the Senate: Congressional Research Service Reports

Legislation in the 111th Congress: Senate Resolution 118 ([S. Res. 118](#)) would provide the public with free access to Congressional Research Service (CRS) reports through the Internet.

Committee: Senate Committee on Rules and Administration

Current Status: Sen. Joseph I. Lieberman (ID-CT), Chair of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, introduced S. Res. 118 on April 29, 2009. The legislation was referred to the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration, but unfortunately, despite pressure from AALL and many other open government groups, Rules Committee Chairman Charles E. Schumer (D-NY) has not yet brought it to the committee for consideration.

Original Sponsor:

[Sen. Joseph I. Lieberman](#) (ID-CT)

Co-Sponsors:

[Sen. John McCain](#) (R-AZ)

[Sen. Susan M. Collins](#) (R-ME)

[Sen. Russell D. Feingold](#) (D-WI)

[Sen. Tom Harkin](#) (D-IA)

[Sen. Patrick J. Leahy](#) (D-VT)

[Sen. Richard G. Lugar](#) (R-IN)

Message for co-sponsors of S. Res. 118:

- Thank them for their support of this important resolution, which would provide the public with free online access to CRS reports.
- Ask them to contact Rules and Administration Chairman Charles Schumer to request that he explain his plan for providing the public with no-fee access to CRS reports. Ask them to urge Chairman Schumer to bring S. Res. 118 before the Rules Committee as soon as possible.

Message for all members of the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration:

[Sen. Charles Schumer](#) (D-NY), **Chair**

[Sen. Robert Byrd](#) (D-WV)

[Sen. Christopher Dodd](#) (D-CT)

[Sen. Richard Durbin](#) (D-IL)

[Sen. Dianne Feinstein](#) (D-CA)

[Sen. Daniel Inouye](#) (D-HI)

[Sen. Patty Murray](#) (D-WA)

[Sen. E. Benjamin Nelson](#) (D-NE)

[Sen. Mark Pryor](#) (D-AR)

[Sen. Tom Udall](#) (D-NM)

[Sen. Mark Warner](#) (D-VA)

[Sen. Robert Bennett](#) (R-UT), **Ranking Member**

[Sen. Lamar Alexander](#) (R-TN)

[Sen. C. Saxby Chambliss](#) (R-GA)

[Sen. Thad Cochran](#) (R-MS)

[Sen. John Ensign](#) (R-NV)

[Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison](#) (R-TX)

[Sen. Mitch McConnell](#) (R-KY)

[Sen. Pat Roberts](#) (R-KS)

- Ask them to urge Chairman Schumer to take up S. Res. 118 in the Rules Committee.
- Ask them to co-sponsor S. Res. 118.

Message for other every other senator:

- Ask them to contact Rules and Administration Chairman Charles Schumer to request that he explain his plan for providing the public with no-fee access to CRS reports. Ask them to urge Chairman Schumer to bring S. Res. 118 before the Rules Committee as soon as possible.
- Ask them to co-sponsor S. Res. 118.

[Sample Message to Senators](#)

Message for the House: Congressional Research Service Reports

Legislation in the 111th Congress: The *Congressional Research Service Electronic Accessibility Act of 2009* ([H.R. 3762](#)) would provide the public with free access to CRS reports in the House and Senate through the Internet.

Committee: House Committee on House Administration

Current Status: Rep. Frank Kratovil, Jr. (D-MD-1) and Rep. Leonard Lance (R-NJ-7) introduced H.R.3762 on October 8, 2009. The bill was referred to the House Committee on House Administration.

Message for co-sponsors H.R.3762:

- Thank them for introducing the bill.

Message for members of the House Committee on House Administration:

[Rep. Robert Brady](#) (D-PA-1), **Chair**
[Rep. Zoe Lofgren](#) (D-CA-16), **Vice-Chair**
[Rep. Michael Capuano](#) (D-MA-8)
[Rep. Artur Davis](#) (D-AL-7)
[Rep. Susan Davis](#) (D-CA-53)
[Rep. Charles Gonzalez](#) (D-TX-20)

[Rep. Daniel Lungren](#) (R-CA-3), **Ranking Member**
[Rep. Gregg Harper](#) (R-MS-3)
[Rep. Kevin McCarthy](#) (R-CA-22)

- Ask them to support H.R. 3762, the *Congressional Research Service Electronic Accessibility Act of 2009*, and to vote it favorably out of committee.

Message for every other House Representative:

- Ask them to co-sponsor H.R. 3762.

[Sample Message to House Representatives](#)

Background on CRS Reports

CRS is the non-partisan public policy research arm of Congress that produces reports for members of Congress on any legislative issue. Although reports are funded with taxpayer dollars, only members of Congress and their staffs can access them online through CRS. However, constituents may request particular reports from their members of Congress if they know a report is available. AALL supports [S. Res. 118](#) and [H.R. 3762](#), which would create a centralized electronic system that would allow members of the public to search for CRS reports and issue briefs. Very importantly, it would also require that an index of reports and issue briefs be made publicly available.

AALL has supported legislative efforts to provide the public with free online access to CRS reports for more than ten years. We believe the public has a right to access these reports, and we commend Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee Chairman Joseph I. Lieberman (ID-CT), Sen. John McCain (R-AZ), and the other five original co-sponsors for introducing S. Res. 118 in the 111th Congress.

On March 4, 2009, Chairman Lieberman sent a [letter](#) to Senate Rules and Administration Committee Chairman Charles Schumer to urge him to take steps to provide the public with access to CRS reports. In an [editorial](#) on May 11, 2009, the *New York Times* reported that Chairman Schumer is “working on a plan that would make the research reports publicly available.” Chairman Schumer has not yet publicly announced his plan and the Rules and Administration Committee has not yet taken any action on S. Res. 118. We strongly urge Chairman Schumer to bring this legislation before the committee as soon as possible.

Public access to CRS reports was the first of ten most requested documents in the “[Show Us the Data: Most Wanted Federal Documents](#)” report by OpenTheGovernment.org, of which AALL is a founding partner, and the Center for Democracy & Technology.

Sample Message to Senators:

Please personalize your message by explaining why public access to CRS reports is important to you. Take a look at our [list of senators](#) to determine if your senator has a JD. If so, you can personalize your message by mentioning the law school he/she attended or any other connection you might have to him/her.

Dear Senator [last name]:

As a law librarian at [name of law library], I frequently use Congressional Research Service (CRS) reports to help my [students/faculty/patrons] conduct legal research. These well-written, tax-payer funded reports are invaluable to legal researchers. I believe that the public has a right to access these reports, which are currently only available for free to the public if a constituent requests a specific report. I urge you to co-sponsor Sen. Res. 118, which would provide the public with free access to CRS reports through the Internet.

A May 11, 2009 editorial in the *New York Times* stated that Rules and Administration Committee Chairman Charles Schumer was working on a plan to provide the public with no-fee access to CRS reports. Please contact Chairman Schumer to request that he explain his plan, and urge him to take immediate action on S. Res. 118 in the Rules Committee.

Sincerely,

[your name]

Sample Message to House Representatives:

Please personalize your message by explaining why public access to CRS reports is important to you. Take a look at our [list of House representatives](#) to determine if your representative has a JD. If so, you can personalize your message by mentioning the law school he/she attended or any other connection you might have to him/her.

Dear Representative [last name]:

As a law librarian at [name of law library], I frequently use Congressional Research Service (CRS) reports to help my [students/faculty/patrons] conduct legal research. These well-written, tax-payer funded reports are invaluable to legal researchers. I believe that the public has a right to access these reports, which are currently only available for free to the public if a constituent requests a specific report.

I urge you to co-sponsor H.R. 3762, the *Congressional Research Service Electronic Accessibility Act of 2009*, which would provide the public with free access to CRS reports through the Internet. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

[your name]