Dear Chairman Graves, Ranking Member Wasserman Schultz, and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of two key federal institutions funded by the Legislative Branch Appropriations Subcommittee: the Government Publishing Office (GPO) and the Library of Congress (LC). While each has a unique role, both agencies support our democracy by providing access to and preservation of information, including legal information, in tangible and electronic formats.

With the constant evolution of the Internet and rapidly changing technologies, GPO and LC must work harder than ever before to meet their respective missions. Keeping up with the demands of information lifecycle management – including collection, processing, dissemination, use, storage, and disposition – requires adequate resources. We urge members of the Subcommittee to support the agencies’ Fiscal Year 2017 budget requests.

Government Publishing Office

As GPO continues its transition from a print-focused to a content-focused publishing operation, the agency has prioritized efforts to provide cost-effective access to government information in tangible and electronic formats. AALL supports GPO’s request of $117 million, the same level the agency received under P.L. 114-113. We urge the Subcommittee to fully fund each account within the request, including the Congressional Publishing Appropriation, the Public Information Programs of the Superintendent of Documents Appropriation, and the Business Operations Revolving Fund Appropriation.

The Congressional Publishing request will ensure support for the publication of Congressional materials, which are core documents of our democracy. Libraries in the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) must continue to have the option of receiving them in print.

The Public Information Programs account supports the centuries’ old FDLP. The 200 participating law libraries are key partners in this program. FDLP libraries provide geographically convenient access to government information from all three branches in print and online. The FDLP has undergone a transformation in recent years, allowing all libraries in the program to better meet the needs of their communities. For example,
GPO has recently welcomed the first ever all-digital depositories into the FDLP. While AALL commends GPO’s efforts to introduce greater flexibility into the program, we note that law libraries continue to rely on GPO for distribution of specific tangible materials, especially core legal titles in print. Print legal materials continue to be preferred by some library patrons, including members of the public, law students, and faculty. Access to the law is fundamental to a just society.

AALL supports GPO’s Revolving Fund request, which will support the development of govinfo.gov, the replacement for the Federal Digital System (FDsys). As print distribution to depository libraries declines and GPO relies more heavily on FDsys/govinfo to provide permanent public access to official government information, it is essential that the collections on FDsys/govinfo be complete. GPO also needs to add new collections as more information is digitized and born digital, and continue to pursue efforts to enhance access and increase discoverability of information. Adequate funding is required for these crucial efforts.

Library of Congress

For more than 215 years, the Library of Congress has been dedicated to its primary mission to support the Congress in fulfilling their constitutional duties and to provide access to an unprecedented collection of knowledge. The Library’s appropriations request of $667 million for FY 2017 is a reasonable and forward-looking request that will support the Library through its transition and modernization. Acting Librarian of Congress David Mao has set the Library on a path to success by investing time and resources on improving access to and preservation of collections and updating the Library’s technology infrastructure.

We thank the Subcommittee for its support of funding for collection storage, particularly the construction of Module 5 and design of subsequent storage modules at Ft. Meade. As we wrote in previous testimony, the construction of these storage facilities will allow the Library to preserve and ultimately make accessible more of its unique collections. We also support the Library’s request for a modernized Primary Computing Facility away from Capitol Hill.

We support the Library’s request for funding for a new digital content management unit. The acquisition, management, and preservation of digital collections is an enormous task and the Library must have adequate funds to manage and provide access to digitized and born-digital content.

Our association naturally has a special interest in the Law Library of Congress, which is the world’s largest law library. The Law Library is responsible for providing access to trustworthy legal materials in print and electronic formats. We strongly support the Library’s priority initiatives, including the classification of the remaining volumes to Class K, the Law classification. We also support the Law Library’s request for funding to complete the replacement of compact shelving. Access, collection storage, and the
safety of personnel demand the replacement of outdated, dysfunctional shelving; this is an urgent request.

A strong Copyright Office is also important to AALL; our active Copyright Committee monitors many legislative, political and judicial developments that affect copyright law. We support the Copyright Office’s budget request and commend the Library for working with the Copyright Office to develop modernized copyright systems and practices that meet the needs of the copyright community, including law libraries. AALL believes that the Copyright Office is well-served by its home in the Library of Congress.

Conclusion

AALL respectfully urges you to provide full funding to the Government Publishing Office and the Library of Congress. If we can provide additional information or assistance to the Subcommittee, please contact AALL’s Director of Government Relations Emily Feltren at efeltren@aall.org or (202) 942-4233.

Sincerely,

Keith Ann Stiverson
President
American Association of Law Libraries