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AALL Calls on Congress to Improve Access to Electronic Records of the Federal Court System

CHICAGO – Feb. 13, 2019 — The [American Association of Law Libraries](http://www.aallnet.org) (AALL) is advocating for the passage of the Electronic Court Records Reform Act, introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives today by House Judiciary Committee Ranking Member Doug Collins (R-Ga.) and Congressman Mike Quigley (D-Ill.), chair of the Congressional Transparency Caucus. This legislation would, for the first time, allow free access to electronic federal court records through the Public Access to Court Electronic Records (PACER) system and improve the efficiency and transparency of the courts.

AALL coordinated a [letter](#) signed by 15 other organizations—including the American Civil Liberties Union, the Data Coalition, and the Project on Government Oversight—urging passage of the bill.

“Access to the law, and information about the law, is the cornerstone of any democracy. The American Association of Law Libraries has long advocated for no-fee access to federal court records through PACER, and the Electronic Court Records Reform Act would finally make that vision a reality,” said Femi Cadmus, president of AALL. “Eliminating PACER fees will improve transparency of the courts and allow law libraries to preserve and provide access to court records. We urge Congress to enact this legislation.”

The Electronic Court Records Reform Act would:

- Consolidate the case management/electronic case files system and require all documents in the system be searchable, machine-readable and available to the public and to parties before the court free of charge
- Protect private information, requiring the courts to redact any information prohibited from public disclosure

AALL has a long history of advocating for no-fee access to PACER, dating back to the early 2000s when the association worked closely with Senator Joseph I. Lieberman on language that was added to the *E-Government Act of 2002* to direct the Judicial Conference to charge PACER fees “only to the extent necessary.” Most recently, AALL joined the American Civil Liberties Union and several other organizations on an [amicus brief](#) in response to *National Veterans Legal Services Program et al v. United States of America* supporting the idea that the First Amendment guarantees the public a right of

access to judicial records through PACER. The case is currently before the United States Courts of Appeals for the Federal Circuit.

About AALL

The American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) is the only national association dedicated to the legal information profession and its professionals. Founded in 1906 on the belief that people—lawyers, judges, students, and the public—need timely access to relevant legal information to make sound legal arguments and wise legal decisions, its more than 4,100 members are problem solvers of the highest order. AALL fosters the profession by offering its members knowledge, leadership, and community that make the whole legal system stronger. For more information, visit www.aallnet.org.