

**Written Testimony of Michelle Cosby
President of the American Association of Law Libraries
On Funding for the Government Publishing Office and Library of Congress
Before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch
Public Witness Hearing
March 4, 2020**

Chairman Ryan, Ranking Member Herrera Beutler, and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for holding a public witness hearing on the Legislative Branch Appropriations for Fiscal Year (FY) 2021. I appreciate you giving me the opportunity to testify today. My testimony will focus on the need for adequate funding for the Government Publishing Office (GPO) and the Library of Congress.

The American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) is the only national association with nearly 4,000 members dedicated to the legal information profession and its professionals. AALL was founded in 1906 on the premise that lawyers, judges, students, and the public need timely access to relevant legal information to make sound legal arguments and wise legal decisions.

AALL members rely on GPO, the Library of Congress, and the Law Library of Congress to provide permanent public access to and preservation of essential government information from across the federal government. Greater access to information supports access to justice and preserves the rule of law.

Funding for the Government Publishing Office

Under Title 44 of the *U.S. Code*, GPO is responsible for producing, procuring, cataloging, indexing, authenticating, disseminating, and preserving the official information products of the federal government. Under the new leadership of Director Hugh Halpern, AALL believes GPO will strengthen its relationships with its customers and stakeholders to modernize its operations to improve transparency and efficiency.

Since 1813, GPO has partnered with federal depository libraries to provide permanent public access to official, authentic government information. Today, more than 1,100 libraries—including approximately 200 law libraries—participate in the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP), assisting your constituents with finding the information they need on topics such as government benefits, physical and mental health, and starting and financing a small business. My own institution, Temple University Beasley School of Law Library, celebrated its fortieth year as a selective depository library in 2019.



Through historic digitization efforts and partnerships with libraries, GPO is enhancing the scope of its collections and ensuring the preservation of and permanent public access to essential materials. AALL commends GPO for digitizing the complete collection of the *Federal Register* through joint efforts with the Office of the Federal Register, as well as more than 1,300 historic congressional hearings that are now available on GPO's govinfo website. Law libraries have shown a special interest in partnering with GPO to preserve legal materials and other government information. Nearly one third of GPO's more than 60 preservation stewards are academic law libraries.

AALL commends GPO for working with Congress to modernize production and increase efficiencies which has enabled GPO to request either flat or declining annual appropriations in recent years. We urge the Subcommittee to support GPO's request, including the \$32.3 million request for the Public Information Programs of the Superintendent of Documents, a \$1 million increase from the amount Congress appropriated in FY 2020. This account supports the cost of providing federal government publications in digital and tangible formats to the FDLP, cataloging and indexing, the distribution of documents to recipients designated by law, and international exchange distribution.

AALL also supports continued investment in GPO's govinfo website, which provides public access to official, trustworthy, and preserved government information.

Funding for the Library of Congress

The Library of Congress holds a vast collection of books, legal materials, recordings, photographs, newspapers, maps, and manuscripts. Housed within the Library of Congress, the Law Library of Congress offers access to an unparalleled collection of domestic, foreign, and international legal materials. The Law Library not only provides the United States Congress with timely, comprehensive research; the Law Library's lawyers and law librarians serve the federal judiciary and executive branch agencies, the practicing bar, state and local government, businesses, scholars, journalists, and anyone with legal research and reference needs.

AALL thanks the Subcommittee for supporting the Law Library's recent efforts to improve access to the law collection by bringing the collection up to modern classification standards (K Class). AALL strongly supports the Law Library's K Class project, as well as other initiatives to make public domain legal information more accessible to the public. This includes the development of new legal research guides and the digitization of Spanish laws and statutes from the 15th through 19th Centuries. We also commend the Law Library for digitizing the *U.S. Serial Set* in collaboration with GPO.



AALL supports the Library's \$23 million request for the Law Library, an increase of \$5 million over FY 2020. This request includes funding for mandatory pay-related and price-level increases and the necessary funding for the replacement of Quad B, the third of four compact shelving units in the Library's sub-basement due for replacement. We appreciate the Subcommittee's past support for the replacement of these outdated and hazardous units so that the Library may protect a safer workplace and ensure more timely access to the Law Library's collection.

AALL also urges the ongoing development of Congress.gov, the official website for federal legislative information and an essential tool for legal research. The Law Library provides the public with assistance in using Congress.gov and other public-facing, law-related sites including the new website for *The Constitution Annotated*, which provides a comprehensive overview of how the U.S. Constitution has been interpreted over time.

Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Subcommittee on the FY 2021 requests of GPO and the Library of Congress. AALL urges you to approve full funding for these legislative branch agencies.