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May 1, 2020

The Honorable Cindy Hyde-Smith
Chairman
Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chris Murphy
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Support for the FY 2021 Funding Requests of the Government Publishing Office and Library of Congress

Dear Chairman Hyde-Smith, Ranking Member Murphy, and Members of the Subcommittee:

On behalf of the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL), I write in support of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 budget requests of the Government Publishing Office (GPO) and the Library of Congress.

AALL is the only national association with 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 recognizes the many challenges the Subcommittee faces as a result of the widespread economic impact of coronavirus (COVID-19). We respect the difficult appropriations decisions that lie ahead as the Subcommittee considers all of the legislative branch agency priorities and requests under the Subcommittee's jurisdiction.

AALL believes that approving the immediate fiscal needs of GPO and the Library of Congress will be a valuable use of limited resources as the workload for these agencies has increased during the current pandemic. Funding will enable GPO and the Library of Congress to meet their important missions to provide permanent public access to and preservation of essential government information. Greater access to information supports access to justice and preserves the rule of law.

Funding for the Government Publishing Office

The 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, GPO is strengthening



its relationships with its customers and stakeholders to modernize its operations and improve efficiencies.

As physical libraries have closed and shifted to providing remote services as a result of COVID-19, GPO's partnerships with libraries across the country are playing a critical role in connecting members of the public with government information and resources. More than 1,100 libraries—including approximately 200 law libraries—participate in GPO's Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP), assisting your constituents with finding the information they need on topics such as public health, government benefits, and small business loan programs.

Given the increasingly important need for GPO to deliver robust access to electronic materials, AALL particularly urges support for GPO's Public Information Programs account to fund the FDLP, and the cataloging and indexing programs to improve the findability of information. We also support continued investment in GPO's *govinfo* website, which provides public access to official, trustworthy, and preserved government information. For example, the new Coronavirus (COVID-19) webpage¹ on *govinfo* includes links to legislative, executive, and regulatory documents related to the federal government's response to the pandemic.

Funding for the Library of Congress

The rich and diverse electronic collections and the dedicated staff of the Library of Congress have been on full display during the COVID-19 situation. New virtual events and unique resources are available to educate, entertain, and enlighten users from the very youngest children to adult learners.

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 of Congress also boasts a highly talented staff of lawyers and law librarians who 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.

Despite the temporary physical closure of the Law Library of Congress, the Law Library has continued to provide users with timely, comprehensive research. Recent activities include a newly published report, *Continuity of Legislative Activities during Emergency Situations in Selected Countries*, and a topical webinar, "Fighting Pandemics: Foreign and International Legislative Frameworks."

¹ <https://www.govinfo.gov/features/coronavirus>



AALL supports the Library of Congress' \$23 million request for the Law Library of Congress. This request includes funding for mandatory pay-related and price-level increases and the necessary funding for the replacement of outdated and obsolete shelving for the Law Library in the Library's sub-basement. We also support the Library's need for increased flexibility in the use of appropriated funds as it meets expected and changing timelines as a result of government and business closures due to COVID-19.

Conclusion

As the Subcommittee considers agency priorities and funding levels for FY 2021, AALL urges consideration of the current and future fiscal needs of GPO and the Library of Congress. Providing GPO and the Library of Congress with sufficient funding will enable these agencies to meet their vital missions to provide public access to and preserve government information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michelle Cosby". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michelle Cosby
President