

**Written Testimony of Ms. Diane M. Rodriguez
President of the American Association of Law Libraries
For the Hearing Record**

**Fiscal Year 2023 Funding for the U.S. Government Publishing Office and
the Library of Congress**

**U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch**

May 20, 2022

Dear Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Braun, and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) in support of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 budget requests of the U.S. Government Publishing Office (GPO) and the Library of Congress.

AALL is a national organization representing more than 3,500 law librarians and legal information professionals. AALL members work in many library settings, including law schools and law firms; federal, state, and county governments; and federal and state courts. Law librarians and legal information professionals rely on resources and publications provided for free by the GPO, the Library of Congress, and the Law Library of Congress to support the legal research needs of students, attorneys, self-represented litigants, and members of the public.

AALL thanks the Subcommittee for its support of the prior year's funding requests of the GPO and the Library of Congress. Past funding has allowed the GPO and the Library of Congress to develop innovative partnerships with federal agencies and law libraries to digitize, preserve, and provide public access to primary legal materials, including the *United States Code* and the *Code of Federal Regulations*. Partnerships between law libraries, the GPO, and the Law Library of Congress promote access to justice by making legal materials easier for legal researchers and the public to find, understand, and use. Recent funding has also enabled the GPO and the Law Library of Congress to create new public resources including legal research guides and online trainings on a variety of government information topics that are helpful to legal researchers, such as how to find federal legislation on Congress.gov and how to track federal regulations.



AALL supports the FY 2023 funding requests of the GPO and the Library of Congress because this funding will allow these agencies to continue to build valuable partnerships with law libraries and other stakeholders, pursue digitization initiatives, and expand projects that provide greater access to current and historical legal information in print and online. We urge the Subcommittee to approve the FY 2023 funding requests of the GPO and the Library of Congress.

Funding for the U.S. Government Publishing Office

The GPO produces, organizes, authenticates, disseminates, and preserves official federal legal information and government documents for the public. Approximately 200 law libraries partner with the GPO through the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) to provide public access to legal materials in print and online. Law librarians and legal information professionals also frequently use the *govinfo* website to support the legal research needs of law library patrons.

With the Subcommittee's support of the GPO's past funding requests, the GPO has increased access to electronic federal information through the FDLP; partnered with libraries to digitize, preserve, and provide public access to core legal materials and government publications; and added new public collections of primary legal materials to *govinfo*, including digitized historical volumes of the *United States Congressional Serial Set* which are now available to the public at no cost for the first time.

AALL urges the Subcommittee to approve the GPO's FY 2023 funding request of \$130.9 million. The request will provide the funds the GPO needs to make federal government publications available to federal depository libraries in digital and print formats. AALL is supportive of the goals of the GPO's new task force to study the feasibility of an all-digital FDLP, which comes at a time when some law libraries are updating their collection development policies to select more electronic resources because of changing patron preferences due to the COVID-19 pandemic or for other reasons.

The GPO's funding will also be used to develop the *govinfo* website, which provides free public access to official publications such as bills and statutes, federal regulations, and federal court opinions. We are excited about the GPO's plans to collaborate with federal partners and libraries to add more information to the *govinfo* website. Adding information such as historical agency documents and Congressional reports and hearings to *govinfo* will promote the principles of open, equitable, and reliable public access to legal information that are described in the *AALL Guiding Principles for Public Access to Legal Information on Government Websites (AALL Guiding Principles)*.



AALL is proud that GPO endorsed the *AALL Guiding Principles* in May 2021, and we appreciate the GPO's plans to further develop *govinfo*.

Funding for the Library of Congress

The Law Library of Congress provides legal research services and public access to an extensive collection of foreign, comparative, international, and United States law. Law librarians and legal information professionals at academic law libraries and public law libraries often refer patrons to the Law Library of Congress for its unique collections of legal materials in print and online, including the digitized *United States Statutes at Large* dating back to 1781, official foreign legal gazettes, and Spanish legal documents from the 15th to 19th centuries.

The Subcommittee's approval of past funding for the Library of Congress and the Law Library of Congress has enabled the Law Library to digitize, preserve, and provide the public with access to many collections of legal materials from the United States and other countries. The Law Library of Congress' current project to digitize and ingest its legal reports on foreign, comparative, and international law topics including cryptocurrency, artificial intelligence, and data protection is especially helpful to law librarians and legal information professionals because these reports analyze laws in many countries and link to primary sources. The Law Library of Congress' extensive collections of print and online foreign official gazettes dating back to the mid-19th century are also very useful to law librarians and legal information professionals because many of these materials are not available at other law libraries.

AALL urges the Subcommittee to support the Library of Congress' FY 2023 funding request of \$871.8 million, including \$17.6 million for the Law Library of Congress. This request will lead to increased access to the Law Library of Congress' collections of legal materials.

The Law Library of Congress' FY 2023 funding request will accelerate progress on the digitization of additional volumes of the *United States Congressional Serial Set* in partnership with the GPO and the digitization of the *United States Supreme Court Records and Briefs*. These publications are important to legal researchers and will become even more useful once they are digitized and available for free. The funding request will also allow the Law Library to continue to reclassify legal materials in its collection to make these materials more accessible to the public and to protect important print materials contained in storage.



Conclusion

AALL appreciates the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of the FY 2023 funding requests of the U.S. Government Publishing Office and the Library of Congress. Please let us know if we can provide additional information as you develop the FY 2023 Legislative Branch funding bill.