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## **ACTION ALERTS**

### **New Short Survey on Federal Government's Raw-Data Portal**

Last month, the Administration released its [Open Government Directive](#) (OGD), as required by President Obama's [Memorandum on Transparency and Open Government](#). In order to ensure agency compliance with the OGD, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) set deadlines for agencies to take specific actions to implement the principles of transparency, participation and collaboration outlined in the Memorandum.

The first deadline required agencies to publish online in an open format at least three "high-value" datasets on [Data.gov](#), the Federal government's new raw-data portal, by January 22. **The AALL Government Relations Office is asking you to fill out our short [survey](#) on the usefulness of these new datasets to your work.**

Several agencies posted datasets that will be of interest to legal researchers. For example, the Government Printing Office and the National Archives' Office of the Federal Register posted on [Data.gov](#) and [FDsys](#) the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) from 2007-2009 and the Federal Register in XML. In addition, the Department of State published the [Bibliographical Metadata of the Foreign Relations of the United States Series](#).

Unfortunately, because "high-value" was not clearly defined by OMB, agency datasets vary greatly in substance. The [Sunlight Foundation](#) found that some agencies posted datasets where the information had already been available in the same or other formats on the agency's Web site. In addition, OpenTheGovernment.org found that some datasets disappeared from Data.gov shortly after they were first posted on January 22. It appears that OMB pulled some of these datasets due to privacy or other concerns.

**Please take a few minutes to fill out our [short survey](#) by February 12.** We want to hear your views on which datasets you find most valuable; which agency datasets you would like to see added to Data.gov; and how your library is using content from Data.gov. We will compile the survey results to inform the White House and OMB on which datasets are most valuable to legal researchers.

### **Help Save Connecticut's Courthouse Libraries**

Over the last few months, AALL and SNELLA have been working closely together to [oppose funding cuts](#) and the announced closure of six of the fifteen courthouse libraries in Connecticut.

**If you live in Connecticut, we need you to sign the petitions to save the libraries in [Bridgeport](#), [Hartford](#), [Litchfield](#), [Milford](#) and [Norwich](#).** If you're not a Connecticut resident, please pass this message along to your friends, family and colleagues who live in the state.

The closures of Connecticut's courthouse libraries will prevent attorneys, judges and members of the public from accessing up-to-date legal information. Pro se litigants will be especially disadvantaged if they cannot access the legal resources they need. We need *your* help to demonstrate that there is broad support for keeping these libraries open. Please sign the petitions to help save these libraries.

## **UPDATES FROM THE HILL AND THE GOVERNMENT RELATIONS OFFICE**

### **Agencies Work toward Next Open Government Milestones**

The next deadline in the Open Government Directive is February 6, when agencies must create new Open Government Web pages at [http://www.\[agency\].gov/open](http://www.[agency].gov/open). Several agencies, including the [Department of Homeland Security](#) and the [Small Business Administration](#), have already developed their pages. Agency Open Government Web pages will be the home to the agencies' Open Government Plans, which each agency will develop to explain how it will improve transparency and pursue more public participation and collaboration. Open Government Plans must be posted by the beginning of April for review and public comment.

Earlier this month, the [Nuclear Regulatory Commission](#) (NRC) took steps to comply with the Open Government Directive by issuing a [federal register notice](#) asking for public comment on the development of its new Open Government Plan. AALL commended the NRC, which as an independent agency is not required to comply with the OGD, for taking proactive steps to reach out to the public. NRC's call for comment is a significant shift in the agency's position on public access. Following the horrific terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the agency was criticized for shutting down its Web site to review all publicly accessible documents, and many unclassified materials were never reposted. The NRC is changing to a culture of more openness and, along with several other independent agencies, has posted datasets on [Data.gov](#).

Under the leadership of Archivist David Ferriero, the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) also [announced](#) this month a call for public comment on the development of its Open Government Plan. NARA is asking for suggestions on how it can conduct its work more openly and increase public engagement. We will be working with other open government and library organizations to draft comments, which are due by March 19, 2010.

We will be closely monitoring agencies' progress in implementing the OGD and will keep you updated with each milestone passed.

### **Save the Date for Sunshine Week 2010**

OpenTheGovernment.org's Sunshine Week fifth annual [Sunshine Week event](#) will be

held on Friday, March 19, from noon-2:00 EDT at the Center for American Progress. Special guest speakers will include Norm Eisen, Special Counsel to the President for Ethics and Government Reform, and Miriam Nisbet, Director of the new Office of Government Information Services. As in years past, we are looking for law library host sites and co-sponsors who can show the webcast and organize local programs in their communities. For more information or to volunteer to be a host site or co-sponsor, please contact [Emily Feldman](#).

## **AALL Issue Brief Analyzes New Classification Policies**

The Government Relations Office and Government Relations Committee released a new [Issue Brief](#) this month on classification policy. The Issue Brief includes an analysis of President Obama's new Executive Order ([E.O. 13526](#)) on Classified National Security Information and a review of the [recommendations](#) of the Presidential Task Force on Controlled Unclassified Information.

AALL strongly supports President Obama's Executive Order, which will fix many of the longstanding problems with the classification system. Importantly, the E.O. will establish a National Declassification Center within the National Archives and Records Administration that will be charged with reducing the backlog of declassified records.

## **OUTSIDE THE BELTWAY: CHAPTER NEWS**

### **Maryland Working Group Makes Progress to Ensure Access to Print Register**

*-Submitted by Joan Bellistri, Chair, LLAM Government/Vendor Relations Committee*

In early November, the Maryland State Working Group became AALL's first state working group, formed to oppose a plan proposed by the Division of State Documents (DSD) of the Office of the Secretary of State to discontinue the paper publication of the Maryland Register. As originally crafted, the DSD plan would create a new fee-based e-Subscription that would consist solely of a biweekly e-mail with a PDF attachment of each issue of the Register.

I'm pleased to report that, after a meeting with the Division of State Documents to discuss the importance of the print Maryland Register, state officials have responded to several of our concerns.

The print version will continue to be available, but at an increased fee to be determined soon. There will be a free PDF version online in addition to the html version, and current e-subscribers will have the option to receive an e-alert of the availability of the online PDF at no cost. While originally to take effect this month, the target date for changes to take place is now sometime in May.

DSD is still working on how many issues will be available on the Web site, but more than the current 6 will be available. The challenging issues of digital authentication and preservation will be addressed in future meetings.

## **NOCALL Honors Rep. Zoe Lofgren with First Legislator of the Year Award**

*-Submitted by Diane M. Rodriguez, NOCALL President*

On Thursday, January 28, the NOCALL Board and Membership presented our first Legislator of the Year award to Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren of the 16th Congressional District of California. NOCALL was honored to present this award in appreciation of Congresswoman Lofgren's work on H.R. 2728, the *William Orton Law Library Improvement and Modernization Act*, authorizing Law Library of Congress funding; her long-standing membership on the Joint Committee on the Library; and her continuing efforts to promote open access to legal materials.

NOCALL is also pleased to announce that 2010 marks the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our chapter! We look forward to celebrating with a gala event at our annual Spring Institute in San Francisco, March 25-26, 2010. Look at our website for more details on our upcoming spring event: [www.nocall.org](http://www.nocall.org).

## **FREE TIME WELL SPENT: Further Reading for the Information Policy Junkie**

### **Law Library of Congress Adds Online Research Tools and Resources**

Over the last few months, the Law Library of Congress has greatly expanded its resources available to legal researchers and members of the public, including [updates to THOMAS](#), a new [YouTube](#) and [iTunes](#) presence, and [Webcasts](#) of recent events. Of special interest to law librarians are the new features added to THOMAS, such as the ability to save the permanent URL for a bill and share it via bookmarks, email, or social networking sites, and easy access to the Government Printing Office's PDF version of bills located at the top of each "Text of Legislation" page.

### **Nixon Library Releases New Materials**

This month, the Nixon Library released thousands of new documents and images. Their Virtual Library Web page includes [scans of nearly one hundred documents](#) that represent the variety of new materials available. The new documents are from file segments for the White House Special Files, Staff Member & Office Files; White House Central Files, Staff Member & Office Files; and the National Security Council File series, including the Henry A. Kissinger Telephone Conversation Transcripts (Telcons).

## **New CRS Report Examines How Chambers Resolve Differences in Legislation**

A new CRS report, [Amendments Between the Houses: Procedural Options and Effects](#), analyzes the two formal options Congress has to resolve differences on House and Senate versions of legislation: conference committee and amendment exchange. According to the report, the use of conference committees, where selected members negotiate a compromise that is then reported back for consideration by each chamber, has decreased in recent years.

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