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Mary Alice Baish
AALL

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**Statement of
Mary Alice Baish
Associate Washington Affairs Representative
American Association of Law Libraries**

**On Behalf of the
American Association of Law Libraries and the
Special Libraries Association**

**Legislative Branch Subcommittee Public Witness Hearing
House Committee on Appropriations
May 1, 2007**

Good afternoon. I am Mary Alice Baish, Associate Washington Affairs Representative for the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL). I am very pleased to appear before you today on behalf of AALL and the Special Libraries Association. AALL is a nonprofit educational organization with over 5000 members nationwide. AALL's mission is to promote and enhance the value of law libraries, to foster law librarianship and to provide leadership and advocacy in the field of legal information and information policy. SLA is a nonprofit global organization that serves more than 12,000 members in 83 countries in the information profession, including corporate, academic and government information specialists.

We are extremely pleased that Chairman Obey has reconstituted the Subcommittee this year. We also commend you, Madam Chair Wasserman Schultz and Ranking Member Wamp, for holding this important hearing to give public stakeholders the opportunity to comment on the FY 2008 appropriations requests of legislative branch entities. Our associations have a very strong interest in Federal information policy, as well as a fervent commitment to no-fee public access to government information and a robust Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP). I am here today to speak in support of the FY 2008 appropriations request of the U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO).

The Government Printing Office's mission is uniquely important. GPO provides the three branches of the Federal Government with expert publishing and printing services. In addition, GPO ensures perpetual, no-fee, ready public access to the printed and electronic information published by the Federal Government, in partnership with Federal Depository Libraries.

We urge the Subcommittee to fund fully GPO's FY 2008 appropriations request of \$181.97 million. We believe that full FY 2008 funding is crucial because the current continuing resolution, H.J. Res. 20, resulted in lower levels of FY 2007 funding for GPO's many important programs. We well understand the challenges the Subcommittee faces in funding the substantial increase that GPO has requested for next year. It's important to note that a significant portion of their request is essential funding for mandatory and workload requirements, including the publication of the 2006 *U.S. Code*, pay raises and shortfalls. However, from the perspective of the Federal Depository Libraries and the thousands of users, *including your constituents*, whom these libraries serve on a daily basis, we believe it is crucial to fund fully GPO's request of \$45.61 million for the Salaries and Expenses (S&E) account that funds the FDLP; \$109.54 million for Congressional Printing and Binding; and \$26.82 million for the revolving fund.

First, the Salaries and Expenses.

The majority of the S&E appropriation is for the FDLP, a partnership program through which congressional and other important government publications and information products are disseminated to the nearly 1,300 participating academic, public, Federal, law and other libraries nationwide. The S&E request includes necessary funds for the cataloging, indexing, and distribution of Federal publications in print and electronic formats to depository libraries and other recipients designated by law. It includes several important information technology projects that are designed to expand and improve public access to government information.

We fully support GPO's continuing effort to replace obsolete technology and to upgrade the retrieval system for *GPO Access*. An improved *GPO Access* is of crucial importance to the thousands of Americans that rely on it each day to locate the essential government information they need. The FDLP and *GPO Access* are vital to the dissemination and acquisition of Federal government information by the American public. We believe that the FY 2008 S&E budget request is essential to the continued transition to a more electronic program and the continued success of *GPO Access*. Since GPO is responsible for permanent public access to the content of its Electronic Collection, funding to strengthen digital archiving and migration capabilities is a critically important component.

GPO's FY 2007 funding request for the S&E, which was not provided under the continuing resolution, included \$2 million for the print distribution of the 2006 *U.S. Code*, a core document of democracy, to depository libraries. The law requires that the *U.S. Code* be reprinted and distributed every six years. It also included \$8 million for GPO's digital initiatives. These very important projects that were not funded last year are needed to modernize GPO's technologies and systems for the 21st Century. They include: digitizing pre-1976 cataloging records; cataloging documents harvested from agency Web sites; improving the *GPO Access* system; and the authentication of online publications. These projects will improve significantly the public's access to Federal government information. We urge you to agree to GPO's request of \$45.61 million for the S&E in FY 2008.

Second, Congressional Printing and Binding.

We urge you as well to support GPO's request of \$109.54 million for Congressional Printing and Binding (CP&B). Access to legislative information—bills, committee hearings (full published transcripts as opposed to hearing statements posted to committee

Web sites), reports, prints, documents and other materials—is crucial to the public’s ability to monitor and participate in the legislative process. Full funding is especially important for FY 2008 so that GPO is able to publish all the important congressional documents of the 110th Congress. In addition, \$5 million of the CP&B request is needed to ensure that the 2006 *U.S. Code*, compiled by the Law Revision Counsel, is published and distributed to members of Congress and depository libraries in a timely fashion.

While we support making these materials available electronically through *GPO Access*, Acting Public Printer William H. Turri’s statement before the Subcommittee in March acknowledged the continued need for the print distribution of congressional and other legal materials to depository libraries because print is both official and authentic and the electronic versions of these legal resources are not.

Third, the Revolving Fund.

We urge the Subcommittee to support GPO’s request of \$26.82 million for the revolving fund. This request includes \$10.5 million for the continuing development of the Future Digital System (FDsys) which is, we strongly believe, crucial to GPO’s future in the 21st Century. To date, Congress has approved two-thirds of the funding needed to build FDsys, GPO’s content-centric system that will ensure that electronic information from all three branches of the Federal Government will be permanently available in electronic format, authenticated and versioned, and accessible through the Internet for easy searching, viewing, downloading and printing. We applaud GPO’s efforts to develop FDsys—it is an essential part of GPO’s 2004 strategic vision and the project is on track and on time. With your funding support for FDsys in FY 2008, the first public release will be in December 2007.

GPO’s revolving fund request also includes \$9.37 million to fund a number of other essential information technology infrastructure projects needed to modernize the agency’s systems for the 21st Century; \$3.95 million for building maintenance and repairs; and \$3 million for workforce retraining and restructuring.

The Federal Depository Library Program in the 21st Century

Our Nation was founded on the core principle that citizens have a right and need to access information by and about their government in order to participate in our democracy and hold government accountable. The origins of the FDLP and its partnership with Congress date back to the Act of 1813, when Congress authorized legislation to provide one copy of the House and Senate Journals and other Congressional documents to certain universities, historical societies and state libraries. The FDLP has proven to be a tremendously successful partnership among Congress, Federal agencies, the courts, the GPO, depository libraries and the American public in ensuring the public’s right to know. The FDLP flourished during the 20th Century and today’s tangible collections of government documents at depository libraries are a treasure trove that documents the history of our government.

At the same time, we believe strongly that the FDLP and depository libraries will continue to be crucial access and service points for the American public in the 21st Century. The FDLP provides your constituents with equitable, ready, efficient and no-fee access to Federal government information in an increasingly electronic environment. In addition to

Congress, the White House, approximately 130 Federal departments and agencies and the Federal courts rely increasingly on GPO's state-of-the-art technologies to create and disseminate government information through the Internet. FDSys will make GPO's partnership with these other government entities stronger and more important than ever before.

Each participating Federal Depository Library makes significant investments to ensure that the public has effective access to government information. For example, FDLP libraries invest in technologies to assist in accessing electronic government information. These investments exemplify the substantial costs that participating depository libraries incur in order to provide your constituents with equitable, ready, efficient and no-fee access to government information in both print and electronic formats. These costs include providing highly trained staff, adequate space, necessary additional materials, and expensive equipment and Internet connections. The success of *GPO Access* cannot be measured without acknowledging the substantial costs covered by libraries.

Federal Depository Libraries serve as important channels of public access to government publications and contribute significantly to the success of the FDLP. The Government's responsibility to make government publications in both tangible and electronic formats available to depository libraries is successful because of the necessary partnerships developed between the Federal government, the GPO, and the Federal Depository Libraries. In order for GPO to continue to increase the amount of government information available for current and future public access through the Internet and in order for the Federal Government to fulfill its responsibilities for this partnership, it is critically important that Congress provide adequate funds to support the transition to a more electronic program.

Conclusion.

We respectfully urge the Subcommittee to support GPO by approving Acting Public Printer William H. Turri's FY 2008 appropriations request in its entirety. While this represents a considerable increase, full funding is vital so that GPO is able to fulfill its mission of disseminating the Federal government information of all three branches of Government. We ask that you please include this statement as part of the Subcommittee's record for today's "Legislative Branch Subcommittee Public Witness Hearing." I'll be more than happy to answer any questions you might have. Thank you very much.