

## **Joint MLA/AAHSL Legislative Task Force**

### **2008 Annual Report**

The Joint Legislative Task Force supports advocacy efforts of AAHSL and MLA and consists of membership from both organizations including ex-officio members. The position of chair rotates between the two organizations every two years. Michael Homan served as chair from November 2006 to November 2008 with Marianne Comegys as vice chair. Homan will serve as vice-chair from 2008-2010 and Hope Barton representing MLA will serve as chair. Key Washington support for this joint program is provided by the Health and Medicine Council of Washington (HMCW) funded by both organizations and by MLA Legislative Staff Liaison, Mary Langman. The task force normally meets biannually in Washington, DC to conduct business and to meet with members of Congress according to schedules prepared by HMCW.

#### **Fall 2007 Task Force Meeting**

At the November 6-7, 2007 business meeting, the task force heard reports from Jerry Sheehan, Assistant Director for Policy Development, National Library of Medicine (NLM); David Moore, Senior Associate Vice President, Office of Governmental Relations, Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC); and Elaine Rubin, Vice President for Policy and Program, Association of Academic Health Centers (AAHC). A Round Robin discussion between the speakers and task force addressed issues of NIH and NLM funding, the NIH public access policy and S. 467, "Fair Access to Clinical Trials Act of 2007" that seeks to expand the clinical trials database. The group addressed ways our organizations could work collaboratively to educate Congress about relevant issues, and agreed to continue exploring and discussing the options. Other reports were given by Dale Dirks, President and Dane Christensen, Legislative Assistant, Health and Medicine Council of Washington; Pat Thibodeau, MLA Scholarly Publishing Task Force Chair; AAHSL Scholarly Communication Committee Chair Karen Butter; Hope Barton, MLA Governmental Relations Committee Chair; J. Michael Homan, Joint MLA/AAHSL Legislative Task Force Chair; and Mary Langman, MLA Headquarters program liaison. On November 7, three teams of task force members made approximately five Capitol Hill visits each, and addressed issues related to NLM and NIH Fiscal Year 2008 funding, the Policy on Enhancing Public Access to Archives Publications Resulting from NIH-Funded Research, closing of the Environmental Protection Agency Libraries, and S. 805, the African Health Capacity Investment Act of 2007.

#### **Spring 2008 Task Force Meeting**

A first-ever Congressional Briefing by the task force was held in the Capital in conjunction with the April 8-9, 2008 task force meeting. David Moore, AAMC Senior Associate Vice President for Governmental Relations introduced the session given by MLA President Mark E. Funk and AAHSL President Linda Watson on how the National Library of Medicine provides important publicly available databases to support the information needs of researchers, health professionals, and the public. The briefing was co-sponsored by MLA, AAHSL, and the Ad Hoc Group for Medical Research. The Briefing was not as well attended as expected because of the special appearance by General Petraeus on Capital Hill to update Congress on Iraq. A briefing is an activity to be considered for future task force Capitol Hill visits since it provides a highly visible opportunity to educate staff from House and Senate offices. Four teams of task force members made 3-4 Capitol Hill visits each, and addressed the issue of NLM's Fiscal Year 2009 funding and the NIH public access policy.

#### **Fall 2008 Task Force Meeting**

Due to the 2008 presidential election, there was no fall Task Force meeting.

#### **Other Activities & Advocacy Efforts**

Working together with HMCW and the Governmental Relations Committee (GRC), MLA headquarters staff distributed several action alerts to the GRC and Legislative Task Force listservs and through MLA-FOCUS in support of NIH and NLM funding and inclusion of language in the FY 2008 House and Senate Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bills making the NIH public access policy mandatory. The final omnibus appropriations bill signed into law on December 28, 2007, provided funding levels above the President's budget proposal and contained the provision that made the NIH public access policy mandatory. Under the revised policy, investigators funded by the NIH are required to submit or have submitted for them to PubMed Central an electronic version of their final, peer-reviewed manuscripts upon acceptance for publication, to be made publicly available no later than 12 months after the official date of publication.

In February 2008, MLA and AAHSL signed onto a Coalition for Health Funding letter urging members of Congress to make health funding a national priority. The associations also sent letters in February to Senator Harkin (D-IA) and Rep. Obey (D-WI) expressing appreciation for their support of the NIH public access policy and asking them to support the April 7, 2008 implementation date for the newly revised policy.

In March 2008 MLA and AAHSL submitted sets of comments to the NIH in support of the NIH Public Access Policy.

In July 2008, MLA and AAHSL Presidents sent joint letters to the House and Senate Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Subcommittees thanking them for their support of NIH funding and for making the NIH public access policy mandatory.

On September 8, 2008 MLA and AAHSL signed onto a letter from the Coalition for Health Funding that urged Congressional leadership to take into consideration the funding levels that were approved by House and Senate health subcommittees to provide the highest level funding level for each public health agency and program in the final funding package. Both the House and Senate bills provide the NIH and NLM with increases above FY08 (2.8% - 3.6% range for NLM) although it is uncertain when Congress will finalize FY09 appropriations bills.

On September 11, 2008 the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Courts, the Internet and Intellectual Property held a hearing on H.R.6845, the Fair Copyright in Research Works Act, which would amend title 17 United States Code in such a way as to overturn the NIH public access policy. MLA and AAHSL sent a joint letter to the subcommittee in support of the NIH policy and further action on this bill is not expected in 2008, but will need to be monitored closely in 2009.

In October 2008, MLA and AAHSL signed onto a letter from the Ad Hoc Group for Medical Research and the Campaign for Medical Research urging the U.S. Congress to support the higher Senate funding level for NIH in the FY 2008 Labor-HHS-Education bill.

During 2007 and 2008, the Task Force addressed the following legislative priorities:

## **I. National Health Information Policy**

- NLM Funding

  - Fiscal Year 2008 Labor, HHS Appropriation

- IMLS Funding

  - Fiscal Year 2008 Labor, HHS Appropriation

- Intellectual Property and Copyright Law

  - Library of Congress Section 108 Study Group

  - Orphan Works Legislation

FAIR USE Act of 2007 (H.R. 1201)

**II. Health Care and Public Health Information Resources**

Telemedicine and Telehealth

Fiscal Year 2008 Labor, HHS Appropriation

Patient Privacy

Public Access to Government Information

Federal Research Public Access Act (FRPPA)

Fiscal Year 2008 Interior, Environment, & Related Agencies Appropriations

Environmental Protection Agency Libraries

Consumer and Patient Health Information

Fiscal Year 2008 Labor, HHS Appropriation

Fair Access to Clinical Trials Act of 2007, S. 467 (FACT Act)—

International Health Professional Access to Health Information Resources

S. 805, the African Health Capacity Investment Act of 2007

**III. Health Research Information Resources**

**IV. Health Education Information Resources**

**V. Health Information Technologies and Bioinformatics**

NIH Roadmap Initiative, including: NIH Roadmap for Medical Research/Common Fund;

Multidisciplinary Collaborative Research

Clinical Research Translation; and Training New Clinical Researchers and

Bioinformatics Professionals

Fiscal Year 2008 Labor, HHS Appropriation

Interoperable Health information Technology Infrastructure

Fiscal Year 2008 Labor, HHS Appropriation

**Committee Personnel**

**MLA Members**

Marianne Comegys (6/04-5/08), Vice-Chair  
(11/06-5/08), and GRC Chair (6/05-5/07)

Carla J. Funk, MLA Executive Director

Mark Funk, AHIP, President (6/07-5/08)

Julie A. Schneider (6/07-5/11)

Patricia L. Thibodeau, AHIP (6/07-5/10)

Hope Barton (6/06-5/10)

Mary M. Langman, Staff Liaison

**AAHSL Members**

J. Michael Homan, FMLA (11/06-11/10),  
Chair (11/06-11/08)

Jane Blumenthal, AHIP (11/07-11/11)

Sandra Franklin, AHIP (11/05-11/09)

Clinton Marty Thompson, AHIP (11/04-11/08)

Karen Butter, ex officio (11/06-11/10)

Linda Watson, FMLA, President (11/07-11/08)

**Washington Representatives**

Health and Medicine Counsel of Washington, Washington, DC

Dale Dirks, President

Dane Christensen, Legislative Assistant