

**Society of American Archivists
Council Meeting
November 2–3, 2018
Chicago, Illinois**

**Report: 2018 Archives on the Hill Event
(Prepared by Archives on the Hill Planning Group)**

Archives on the Hill (AOH) Day, August 14, 2018, was the first event sponsored by the professional archives community to advocate with Congress on issues of concern to archivists. The Council of State Archivists, Society of American Archivists, National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators, and Regional Archival Associations Consortium collaborated in planning and conducting this event. In total, 65 archivists met with 47 Members of Congress or their staff members in Washington D.C. A brief summary of this event follows.

Goals for Archives on the Hill Day

The objectives of this initiative were to:

- **Broaden the advocacy experience and expertise of our members.** This involved training and direct experience in legislative advocacy for a cadre of archivists in archival advocacy with Congress. Our goal was to ensure that more archivists would feel confident and comfortable in making Congressional visits—not only in Washington offices, but also in the home districts. By expanding the number of archivists who are able and willing to do this, we hope to be able to advocate more effectively in the future as issues arise.
- **Begin developing relationships with Members of Congress.** This involved meeting with Members/staff from key Congressional committees that deal with archival funding and issues to raise their awareness and encourage their support for federal funding for archives and reauthorization of NHPRC, as well as addressing electronic records issues.
- **Advocate for a few specific issues, with materials that express a clear advocacy message.** Four current issues were identified as potential topics for discussion in meetings: 1) federal funding for archives, 2) electronic records, 3) NHPRC reauthorization, and 4) intellectual property (copyright and fair use).

Preparation for AOH

- Issue briefs were developed for each of the four identified topics. (These [briefs](#) are now available via the SAA website.)
- We identified Members of Congress who serve on the key committees that deal with the selected issues. We then identified members of SAA, CoSA, NAGARA, and RAAC who live in the states/districts of key Members of Congress and invited them to participate in AOH Day. And we created another list of individuals who had experience in Congressional advocacy so that they might serve as mentors during the office visits. Teams were assembled and the intern working in the SAA office scheduled visits for each team.
- Drawing from resources created by the National Humanities Alliance (with NHA's permission), a guide outlining the basics of advocating for archives with Congress was prepared and shared with participants. (An expanded guide – [Archives, Public Policy & You: Advocacy Guide](#) – that includes information about district visits and events is available via the SAA website.) In addition, background/biographical sketch sheets were prepared for each Member of Congress being visited. These included information on grants awarded by NHPRC, IMLS, and NEH to each state/district. Team members also received talking points on the issues.
- Two webcasts were held for participants to prepare them for AOH Day. The first (presented by Kathleen Roe and Jim Corridan) provided information on the basics of conducting visits; the second (presented by Sarah Koonts and Jim Corridan) reviewed the current issues that would be the topics of discussion for those meetings.

AOH Day

A briefing session was held for participants on the morning of August 14 to provide any needed updates, respond to questions, allow team members to meet each other, and energize the group for the visits to be held during the day.

Teams visited Member offices as scheduled. In the majority of cases, they met with the legislative director or another staff member. Meetings generally ranged from 10 to 30 minutes in length. Team members were provided with “leave behind” packets that contained the documents summarizing the issues identified for discussion.

Two- to three-person resource teams were stationed in the cafeterias of House and Senate office buildings and were available by phone or in person should questions arise.

Each team was also asked to provide a written summary of the visit and legislator's/staff member's response and submit it following their visit(s) for the day.

Outcomes

We believe that Archives on the Hill Day was successful in meeting its overall immediate goals.

- The 67 archivists involved expressed an almost universal sense that this was a very productive experience for them. Several teams were confident enough to make additional “drop by” visits to engage additional Members of Congress for whom meetings had not been scheduled.
- A survey has been distributed to participants to draw out additional information on their experience, the training and materials provided, and their ideas for further work in this area. Responses to date have been very positive, and attendees uniformly indicated a willingness to continue advocacy work with their Members of Congress.
- A number of individuals made arrangements to continue conversations or send follow-up materials as a result of their visits, to arrange for future visits, or to communicate further. Summary reports submitted indicate that most Members/staff were responsive, and many stated their support for NHPRC, IMLS, and NEH funding.
- A core set of resources for advocacy has been created that can be used for future efforts. The *Archives, Public Policy & You: Advocacy Guide* has been expanded and updated to address advocacy beyond the AOH Day needs. In particular it includes information on making district visits and inviting legislators to local events.

Next Steps

The AOH planning group met by conference call to debrief and determined that the effort has had positive results and response from participants. Further assessment of the contact sheet summaries will need to be undertaken to determine what follow up or further contact would be beneficial. A number of improvement opportunities were identified relating to background information on grants, identifying participants, and coordinating future efforts. These were conveyed to the Joint Working Group on Issues and Awareness for its consideration and discussion with leadership of each sponsoring group.

Based on the goals, results, and expectations, we recommend that regular joint advocacy efforts occur at least annually to promote archives and their mission.

Members of the Archives on the Hill Planning Group:

CoSA: Jim Corridan, Sarah Koonts, Barbara Teague (staff)

SAA: Dennis Riley, Kathleen Roe, Nancy Beaumont (staff), Joe Lee (intern)

NAGARA: Nancy Fortna, Kaye Lanning Minchew, Johnny Hadlock (staff)

RAAC: Rachel Chatalbash, Philip Skroska