

**Society of American Archivists
Council Meeting
November 10, 12, 2021
Virtual Meeting**

**Annual Report: Committee on Public Policy
(Prepared by Sam Winn, Chair)**

BACKGROUND

During the 2020-2021 term, the Committee on Public Policy worked on the following issues:

- September 2020: Updated work plan and communications plan to reflect pandemic contingencies and continued to advance priority items. The incoming committee reviewed progress on a judicial records brief and a Congressional records brief. COPP leadership worked with Nancy Beaumont to resend Presidential Candidate surveys to four major campaigns. COPP and COPA coordinated on “evergreen” press releases. In advance of electoral transitions, COPP collaborated with members of the Joint Working Group to update recommendations for presidential and Congressional staff.
- October 2020: Reviewed action items regarding the *Ahmad v. Michigan* case, including member op-eds in *Archival Outlook* and potential discussion sessions with the SAA Council. Members proposed a conference panel. With input from COPP, SAA signed on to a letter from the National Coalition for History opposing a records destruction request by U.S. Customs and Border Protection. COPP continued to move forward with judicial records brief, presidential transition recommendations, and an updated communications plan. Members met with SAA constituent groups to discuss mutual interests around local government records, electronic records, and web archiving. COPP and COPA formed a joint working group to develop an advocacy toolkit for broad SAA membership.
- November 2020: COPP collected feedback from IPWG on *Ahmad v. Michigan*. COPP began working with the Privacy and Confidentiality Section on education initiatives around the brief. The National Coalition for History Policy Board approved a letter campaign asking for NHPRC funding. COPP and the Joint Working Group collected final comments for presidential and congressional transition teams. The advocacy toolkit team met to review use cases around NEH CARES funding. Members met with the Local Government Records (LGRS) and Business Archives (BAS) Sections. COPP partnered with SAA Education to announce a virtual advocacy workshop in January 2021. Council liaison Stephen Curley raised concerns about archival closures during COVID and suggested COPP might work with RAAC. Committee reviewed a House Democrats letter

about records preservation shared with the *Washington Post*.

- December 2020: COPP completed its final review of the Judicial Records brief for Council consideration and finalized plans for POV pieces in *Archival Outlook*. COPP leadership worked with LGRS to collect data around archival closures. COPP consulted with the Military Archives Section and Meg Phillips at NARA regarding public discussions of military record requests. Members reviewed Federal Executive Order 13950 and met with members of the Biden Transition Team to discuss archival and records management concerns.
- January 2021: COPP members hosted a full day workshop on state and local records advocacy through SAA Education on Wednesday, January 27 for eight attendees. Early-career member Emily Fendya resigned due to scheduling conflict. COPP members attended oral arguments for *Ahmad v. Michigan*.
- February 2021: Identified potential appointees to fill leadership vacancy in 2021-2022. Members shared updates from NCH policy board meeting, including education and funding initiatives. Members reviewed surveys and outcomes from the January workshop on Advocacy with State and Local Policymakers, featuring Kathleen Roe as a guest speaker. Federal Executive Order 13950 was ruled unenforceable and formally revoked. Members met with the Web Archiving Section, the Electronic Records Section, and the Committee on Research, Data, and Assessment.
- March 2021 – April 2021: COPP representatives attended National Humanities Alliance’s (NHA) Humanities Advocacy Day. The 2021 Program Sommittee accepted *Ahmad v. Michigan* panel and publishing approved *Archival Outlook* articles. Members introduced short-term and long-term advocacy initiatives around judicial records. Members reported out from NHA/Humanities Advocacy Day, met to refine the advocacy toolkit, reviewed options for collecting and storing archival closure data, advanced funding requests in alignment with NHA/NCH partners, and reported on collaborative initiatives with the Business Archives and Local Government Records Sections. Members began reviewing public policy agenda and legislative agenda for 2021 revisions.
- May 2021 – June 2021: Members reviewed NHPRC report on infrastructure concerns of small archives, continued drafting and compiling resources for COPP/COPA Advocacy Toolkit. Subgroups for public policy agenda and legislative agenda revisions began to meet and collect feedback from SAA membership for the next cycle. COPP continued to support NHA campaign to put members in touch with congressional representatives for community project funding requests. COPP reviewed Open the Government letter regarding NARA DHS records schedules. COPA/COPP members collaborated to plan a pre-conference workshop. COPP supported Gabrielle Dudley’s nomination to the Civil Rights Cold Case Records Review Board and prepared for Executive Director transition. Members continued to monitor NARA/NHPRC/NEH funding and to collaborate with the Joint Working Group around budget concerns and electoral records management.

- July 2021-August 2021: Held a virtual business meeting on 22 July with incoming and outgoing members, as well as several guests. Agenda included onboarding of new members, a review of ongoing work plan initiatives, and a joint (virtual) gathering with COPA. COPP reviewed draft revisions of the Public Policy Agenda, Legislative Agenda, and work plan task assignments for fall 2021. COPP members joined in the joint COPA/COPP/RAAC/PLASC/I&A preconference workshop on advocacy and the COPP/IPWG session on *Ahmad v. Michigan* aired as a simulcast during the conference.

Following the August 2021 meeting, we reviewed remaining goals from the 2019-2021 workplan approve by Council at its May 2019 meeting. While the committee's work was significantly disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, we made progress on the following goals due by the August 2021 meeting:

Communication and Outreach:

- Make periodic contributions to internal SAA communications vehicles, including Off the Record, *In the Loop*, and *Archival Outlook*. [ongoing]
- Develop internal and external communications plans. [in progress]
- Renew and revitalize partnerships with allied groups. [ongoing]
- Continue to respond to and advise Council on legislative and policy issues as they arise. [ongoing]
- Develop an in-reach strategy to encourage relationship building/new partnerships with SAA constituent groups. [in progress]
- Collaborate closely with COPA to map areas of overlap and synergy. [ongoing]

Federal Legislative Advocacy:

- Build on Archives on the Hill and subsequent trainings to increase capacity for future advocacy events such as NHA Advocacy Day or additional Archives on the Hill initiatives. [ongoing]
- Revise Public Policy Agenda for Council approval in May 2021. [in progress]
- Revise Legislative Agenda for Council approval in May 2021. [in progress]

This year, Chair Sam Winn and Vice-Chair Bryan Whitledge served as COPP's representatives to the SAA/CoSA/NAGARA/RAAC Joint Working Group on Issues and Awareness. Winn and Whitledge also sat in as *ex officio* members of COPA on their monthly conference calls. Whitledge also served as COPP's representative to the National Council for History's Policy Board.

In the next year, COPP plans to work on the following issues:

Committee Governance

- Develop/revise orientation materials for onboarding new members.

Communication and Outreach

- Finalize and submit Public Policy Agenda to Council for review.
- Finalize and submit Legislative Agenda to Council for review.
- Review communication plans and make actionable recommendations.
- Collaborate with COPA to identify, write, and schedule "evergreen" press releases/statements about recurring archival issues.

Federal Legislative Advocacy

We will continue to monitor issues on the public policy and legislative agendas and prepare statements on policy issues as they arise. We will also continue to identify opportunities for collaboration with COPA and other SAA constituent groups, and to expand awareness of and resources for legislative advocacy throughout SAA.

2020-2021 COPP Members:

- Sam Winn, Chair
- Bryan Whitledge, Vice Chair
- Emily Fendya, Early-career member
- Krista Ferrante
- Brad Houston
- Virginia Millington
- Jess Ferrell
- Eira Tansey
- Matthew Ellis
- Stephen Curley, Council Liaison