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Member Comments Sought on Draft Advocacy Agenda

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Among SAA's highest priorities is to advocate for issues on behalf of archives and archivists. In August 2008 the Council approved formation of a Government Affairs Working Group and charged that group to begin its work by developing an Advocacy Agenda for Council approval. Development and ongoing review and refinement of an Advocacy Agenda provides the Society with a means to organize its advocacy efforts, make conscious decisions about its priorities, frame its messages, work proactively on key issues, and respond quickly and effectively to policymaker and media inquiries.

At its May 31–June 2 meeting the Council adopted the following motion:

THAT the “Advocacy Agenda 2009-2010 (version 053109),” as drafted by the Government Affairs Working Group and revised by the Council, be adopted as a working document that will be distributed to the SAA membership from June to August 2009 for comment and refinement; and

THAT a revision incorporating member comment be reviewed by the SAA Council at its August 10, 2009, meeting; and

THAT the Government Affairs Working Group develop a series of issue briefs, beginning with those Advocacy Agenda issues that are of the highest priority for member, policymaker, and public awareness, and submit those briefs for Council or Executive Committee review and comment as they are completed, with a goal of completing an issue brief for each issue identified in the Advocacy Agenda by the time of the May 2010 Council meeting.

The intent of the agenda itself will be to provide a simple statement on a given issue, which will serve as the basis for a much broader discussion of the issue via a discussion paper, white paper, or such other document as provides the details that may be needed by various interested audiences (such as members, policymakers, and the media) to have a full understanding of the issue and SAA's stance on it. (For an example, see the National Humanities Alliance's "Issues at a Glance" on its website at www.nhalliance.org.) The SAA staff will develop a more robust "Advocacy" Web page that highlights the Agenda, with appropriate links to discussion papers, calls for action, other organizations' agendas, and additional information.

The agenda is intended to be an evolving and changeable document that is updated as needed, and at least annually. To ensure that the Advocacy Agenda represents broad interests, the Council stressed the importance of soliciting member comment.

Members are invited to submit comments about the draft Advocacy Agenda [\[link\]](#) to any member of the Council or via saahq@archivists.org by July 31, 2009. Some questions to consider:

- Most importantly, are the correct types of issues addressed? What's missing?
- Are the issues in appropriate priority order?
- Do you agree with the approach to framing of the broad issues?
- Do you agree with the approach to framing of the specific issues? (In each case the Government Affairs Working Group would draft an "SAA supports" statement along with an issue brief. As appropriate, a "Call to Action" statement would also be developed—and updated as needed—to stimulate action by SAA members and other networks.)

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DRAFT FOR MEMBER COMMENT BY JULY 31, 2009

**Society of American Archivists
Advocacy Agenda 2009–2010
(Version 053109)**

The Society of American Archivists has developed this Advocacy Agenda to ensure that attention is given to those issues that affect or support the critical role that archives and archivists fulfill in ensuring the preservation of an authentic American historical record and making it broadly accessible to the public.

The Public's Right to Equal and Equitable Access to Information

America's citizens have a right to know the actions of their government and the thoughts of their government leaders. Government at all levels should assume that the public has the right to any document prepared by government officials. Although in some instances national security, privacy legislation, or another intervening factor may make it necessary to withhold information from the public temporarily, it should be the obligation of all officials to declassify or otherwise release embargoed documents as quickly as possible.

[Link to specific legislative items or current issues, such as declassification of federal records.]

The Public's Right to Timely and Reasonable Use of Information

In 1790, America's first copyright act made published works freely available for public use after a maximum of 28 years. Today works do not enter the public domain until 75

years after the death of the author. A more appropriate balance must be struck between the right of authors to benefit personally from the fruits of their labor for a limited time and the right of the public to make use of material freely for the greater benefit of society.

[Link to specific legislative items or current issues, such as orphan works and Section 108 copyright revisions. For example:

Copyright: Updating copyright and intellectual property laws to meet the challenges of the networked environment has been a key focus for Congress, the courts, and state legislatures for several years.

- *Orphan Works:* Many archival repositories hold literary and other manuscripts that may fall under the category of “orphan works,” defined as those whose owners are difficult or even impossible to locate. SAA supports current efforts by the U.S. Copyright Office to address this issue.
- *Section 108 Revisions:* The Section 108 Study Group has provided recommendations on how to revise the copyright law to ensure an appropriate balance among the interests of creators and other copyright holders, archives, and libraries in a manner that best serves the national interest. SAA supports the recommendations of the Section 108 Study Group.]

The Public’s Right to Personal Privacy

A person’s right to privacy has historically been balanced against the public’s right to information. Personal privacy should be protected throughout an individual’s lifetime in appropriate ways. Documents recording information about living Americans should be involuntarily disclosed only when disclosure accomplishes a greater public purpose.

[Link to specific legislative items or current issues.]

The Public’s Need for a Comprehensive, Comprehensible American Historical Record

The actions of the government and people of this country cannot be documented accurately unless an authentic record is preserved of the critical individuals, events, and actions taken over time. To hold government accountable and to provide evidence of the diverse and complicated elements of the human experience, it is essential that concerted efforts are undertaken to preserve and make accessible a credible and reasonably complete historical account of government and other aspects of society.

[Link to specific legislative items or current issues.]

The Public’s Need for Strong Institutional Stewardship of the American Historical Record

The records found in our nation’s archives ensure administrative continuity, help hold government officials accountable for their actions, and create documentary sources

through which we come to understand our society. Because of the importance of these functions, archival institutions at all levels of government and throughout society must be adequately funded. Funding should include both sufficient support for ongoing operations and opportunities (such as grants) for extraordinary funding to enable archives to preserve for the public unusual documentary opportunities.

[Link to specific legislative items or current issues regarding federal legislative authorization and funding, such as NHPRC, PAHR, NDIIP, NARA's Electronic Records Archive, Save America's Treasures. For example:

Federal Legislative Authorization and Funding: The National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS), other federal agencies, and the proposed Preserving America's Historical Record Act (PAHR) are sources of special funding for archives that support innovative, and often collaborative, projects that help to establish best practices that can be fostered throughout the archives community.

- *NHPRC:* SAA supports reauthorization of NHPRC by the 111th Congress with a funding level of \$20 million. This funding level will ensure that the agency can adequately and appropriately support projects not only to preserve and make accessible nationally significant records, but also to serve as models of best practices for archives of all types.
- *PAHR:* The Preserving America's Historical Record Act (H.R. 2256) would create a federally funded formula grant program to provide essential resources to support and enhance the ability of state and local records sources to provide access to the "other half" of America's story – that, is, those significant records that are kept by sources other than the federal government. SAA supports authorization and funding of PAHR at \$50 million.]