

House passes WIPO implementing legislation

In early August, the House of Representatives passed legislation implementing the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) copyright treaty bill with a controversial database protection measure attached. Fair use protection was a key provision to the compromise bill.

The House approved by voice vote a substantially altered version of H.R. 2281, which paves the way for negotiations with the Senate during conference committee. House action followed internal negotiations between the House Judiciary Committee and the House Commerce Committee regarding differing versions of the bill.

House Commerce Committee Chairman Thomas Bliley (R-Virginia) highlighted the importance of the committee's insistence on including "a strong fair use" provision to ensure that consumers—as well as libraries and institutions of higher learning—will be able to continue to exercise their historical fair use [and other] rights."

Regarding the database provision, Bliley added, "Let me say that it is my hope that the House and Senate Judiciary Committees will work to address the serious concerns of many in public and private sector bodies. Congress needs to address those concerns before enacting this portion of the bill."

Reps. John Dingell (D-Michigan), Scott Klug (R-Wisconsin), and Rick Boucher (D-Virginia) were also instrumental in crafting and retaining protection for fair use in H.R. 2281. Stay tuned for further action; additional grassroots activity will likely be needed.

Congress urged to pass S. 2288

ACRL members are encouraged to contact their members of Congress and ask them to enact S. 2288, the Wendell H. Ford Government Publications Reform Act of 1998. S.

2288 should be a priority for Congress in the short time remaining in this legislative session, which ends in early October. It would revise Title 44 of the United States Code to improve public access to government information, including strengthening the Federal Depository Library Program. It is especially important that depository libraries, many of which are located in academic libraries, play a special role in demonstrating the importance of providing the public access to government information.

The message to Senators and Representatives:

- Urge your Senators to cosponsor and Representatives to support S. 2288;
- Stress the importance to the American public of passage of S. 2288 to assure access to government information and publications already paid for by the public; please emphasize the need to complete the legislation in this congressional session.

To support passage of S. 2288, ALA and others representing seven national library associations, testified before the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration on July 29.

Those testifying for the library community were: Barbara Ford, Virginia Commonwealth University and past-president of ALA and ACRL; Daniel O'Mahony, Brown University Library and chair of the Inter-Association Working Group; and Robert Oakley, Georgetown University Law Center and Washington affairs representative for the American Association of Law Libraries.

Their testimony was presented on behalf of ALA, AALL, the Association of Research Libraries, the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies, the Medical Library Association, the Special Libraries Association, and the Urban Libraries Council.

Their testimony is available from the Inter-Association Working Group on the Government Information Policy Web site at <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/IAWG>. The bill is scheduled for mark-up when the Senate returns in early September. ■

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