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Research Library Alliance Supports Senate Bill On Broader Public Access to Federally Funded Research

Kansas City MO – The Greater Western Library Alliance (GWLA) today endorsed the “Federal Research Public Access Act of 2006,” a bill introduced by Sen. John Cornyn (R-TX) and Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-CT). The bill requires federal agencies that fund over \$100 million in annual external research to make the electronic manuscripts of peer-reviewed journal articles stemming from their research publicly available via the Internet. Agencies affected by this legislation would include the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

“The Greater Western Library Alliance has long advocated broader public access to scientific research funded by federal tax dollars,” said Adrian W. Alexander, Executive Director of the Alliance. “The legislation proposed by Senators Cornyn and Lieberman would facilitate access to this critical information greatly for scholars, students, and the general public alike.” The Greater Western Library Alliance (www.gwla.org) is a non-profit consortium of research libraries in the Midwest and Western U.S. that has been active in a variety of collaborative library and scholarly electronic publishing projects since 1998.

Under this legislation, researchers funded by one of the federal agencies earmarked in the bill would be required to submit to the agency an electronic copy of the final manuscript that has been accepted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal. Manuscripts would be preserved in a stable digital repository maintained by that agency or in another suitable repository that permits free public access, interoperability, and long-term preservation. Free, online access to each taxpayer-funded manuscript would be available as soon as possible, and no later than six months after the article has been published in a peer-reviewed journal.

The purpose of this new public policy is to provide better access to federally-funded scientific literature that is now available only via costly journal subscriptions, institutional licenses, and per-article purchases. Other types of information, such as classified research, research that results in works that generate revenue or royalties for the author (such as books), or patentable discoveries (to the extent necessary to protect copyright or a patent) would not be covered by the legislation. Similarly, information used to produce the final manuscript, including lab notes, preliminary data analyses, author notes, etc., would not be covered.

The following agencies have extramural budgets in excess of \$100 million and would therefore be required to make their non-classified research publicly accessible: Department of Agriculture, Department of Commerce, Department of Defense, Department of Education, Department of Energy, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Homeland Security, Department of Transportation, Environmental Protection Agency, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, and National Science Foundation.

*The Greater Western Library Alliance (GWLA) represents 31 research libraries in 16 states in the Midwest and Western United States. Its program initiatives include an array of resource sharing, scholarly communication and continuing education projects. GWLA is a co-founder of **BioOne**[™] (<http://www.bioone.org>), a non-profit, electronic publishing enterprise in the biological and environmental sciences. For more information on GWLA, go to <http://www.gwla.org>.*