



June 17, 2014

Dear ARL and SPARC members,

We write today to share some good news about the future of SPARC. As you know, SPARC launched in 1998 as an ARL initiative and, over those years, both organizations have continued to vigorously pursue—and expand—policy advocacy programs that our community values deeply.

As our advocacy successes have accumulated, so have our opportunities for policy engagement, and we have found ourselves at a crossroads. SPARC currently operates as a “restricted budget” program area of ARL, with its finances reported on ARL’s Form 990 yearly tax filings. This means that SPARC’s lobbying activities are added to those of ARL’s for reporting purposes and, cumulatively, we are at the point where the volume of joint lobbying activities are coming close to the allowable limit for nonprofit organizations of our size.

As a result, SPARC and ARL have explored a number of options that could ensure the continuation of our robust policy agendas without jeopardizing ARL’s tax-exempt status. In February, the ARL Board of Directors commissioned a working group (WG)—comprised of current and former SPARC steering committee members, SPARC staff, and ARL Board and staff members—to review options for a new SPARC operating structure. Over the past three months, the WG explored a variety of possibilities and determined that the mutual goals of SPARC and ARL would be best supported by moving SPARC out from the ARL organizational structure and establishing an administrative agreement for SPARC with a fiscal sponsorship organization.

After reviewing the available options, the WG recommended that SPARC sign an administrative agreement with New Venture Fund (NVF), a fiscal sponsorship organization located in Washington, DC. At its meeting in May, the ARL Board of Directors unanimously approved a motion to adopt this new organizational and administrative structure for SPARC.

The new arrangement will provide ARL and SPARC with the structure and support that will enable both organizations to continue to pursue and expand our advocacy programs. We expect the transition to be completed by the end of the summer.

This change reflects the growth and success of both SPARC’s and ARL’s high-profile policy advocacy activities. We are excited about this new chapter and are committed to continuing our close collaboration and partnership.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to us with any questions.

All our best,

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