

URISA Data Policy & Amicus Brief Decision Statement

February 27, 2012 – 6:38pm — [Wendy Nelson](#)

At its February 24, 2012 meeting, the URISA Board of Directors again considered the draft Sierra Club vs. Orange County, California amicus brief. A Board motion to sign an earlier version of the brief on February 2 failed to pass a vote.

The Board's deliberation followed a joint URISA Board and Policy Committee conference call to discuss the Board's February 2 decision in light of the Policy's Committee's recommendation to sign the brief. Glenn O'Grady, Policy Committee Chair, was invited to again discuss the matter with the Board during the February 24 meeting.

Before considering the question of signing the SC v. OC amicus brief, the Board drafted and approved the following data sharing policy that reflects URISA's role as an international organization and the need for the organization to be aware of data policies and situations in many countries:

It is URISA's policy that all units of government should freely provide the means for their citizens to fully participate in their own governance by publishing and otherwise supplying geospatial data to all interested parties. URISA believes that governmental geospatial programs must be appropriately funded and that there are multiple acceptable mechanisms for such funding. Credible studies have shown that the value of geospatial data to the governmental agencies and the people they serve increases with the breadth of data sharing.

The Board then discussed reconsideration of signing the draft amicus brief. However no motion to sign the brief reached the floor for a vote by the Board.

The Board did agree to continue advocating for the principles outlined in the data sharing policy. Specific actions will include continued pursuit of URISA's 2011-2012 Advocacy Agenda item 2 (Nationwide Development of High Quality, Publicly Accessible Geospatial Data), participation in COGO's URISA/NSGIC - Data Sharing Legal & Policy Framework initiative, and advocating for the newly approved URISA data sharing policy with state governors and legislatures.

Individual URISA members are free to make their own choice to sign or not to sign the SC v. OC amicus brief. The value of a professional organization is not to tell its members what to think in a case like this. It is to create an environment where each individual can be exposed to the range of arguments about the issue so that they can make their own decision. This would be the case no matter how the Board voted.

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