

Federal Legislative History: An Introduction to Sources in the Campbell University Law Library

A legislative history is the chronological record of the stages that a bill goes through in Congress and a compilation of the official documents generated at each step of the legislative process. It is the process or product of the formulation, consideration and passage or rejection of a law by Congress. Compiling a legislative history includes the determination of Congress's intent in passing the law or elucidating the meaning of specific provisions. Usually one investigates evidence of intent as found in legislative documents after the law's passage or rejection, but one may trace the current status of a proposed law during its pre-enactment consideration by Congress. Attorneys, federal agencies, and the courts use a legislative history to interpret a law or provision.

Legislative history begins with the legislative process. The importance of each document for legislative history depends upon the parliamentary practices that produced it. Usually the joint explanatory statement in a bill's conference report has the greatest significance. This is followed by the explanations and summaries in committee reports. Congressional debates or remarks, especially by the bill's sponsors, are accorded recognition followed closely by the text of the bill, as it has developed from earlier versions. Congressional hearings and statements of witnesses are examined. Committee prints, committee markup amendments, and other committee documents may provide background information with respect to the law. Secondary source material such as law journal articles or news articles may shed some light as to the reason why Congress chose to enact a particular provision into law.

Finding Aids to Published or Previously Compiled Legislative Histories

Before beginning the process of compiling a legislative history yourself, it is essential to determine whether a legislative history has already been done previously. To verify that a legislative history has been prepared for your law, it is essential to have the public law number, e.g. Pub. L. No. 110-188. This citation refers to the 188th law passed during the 110th Congress. Bibliographies of legislative histories or guides usually list legislative histories by public law number or include the public law number as a reference in the title.

For recently passed legislation, check the status tables in the *Congressional Index* (REFERENCE KF49 .C6) for the public law number and the *Statutes at Large* (KF50) citation. *Shepard's Acts and Cases by Popular Names* <http://web.lexisnexis.com/lawschool> gives the public law number, *Statutes at Large* citation and the *United States Code* reference. (REFERENCE KF90 .S53 1999).

You may find the public law number in the "History" sections of the *United States Code* (KF62 2000 .A2), *United States Code Service* (KF62 1972 .L38), *United States Code Annotated* (KF62.5 .W45), or *Statutes at Large* (KF50). The *United States Code* is available on Westlaw and Lexis. The *United States Code Service* including legislative history notes can be found on [Lexis](#). While [Westlaw](#) includes the *United States Code Annotated*, it does not make available the Research Aids found in the U.S.C.A. print edition. *United States Statutes at Large 1789-1972* can be found in *Westlaw* (US-STATLRG). If your law has not been enacted, then you must use the bill number to determine the status of the legislation and gather the applicable documents.

Union List of Legislative Histories : 47th Congress, 1881-101st Congress, 1990. Comp. by Law Librarians' Society of the District of Columbia. Littleton, Colo. : Rothman, 1991. 1 v. (loose-leaf). This provides information on compiled legislative histories produced or purchased by law libraries in the Washington, D.C. area. The updated coverage is from the 1st Cong., 1789 to the

105th Cong., 1997. Whether materials may be borrowed on inter-library loan is indicated. (KF4 .U55 1991).

Legislative Histories of Selected U.S. Laws on the Internet. [Law Librarians' Society of Washington, D.C.](#) provides links to legislative histories for major legislation. A separate file lists "Commercial Legislative Histories on the Internet" available for a fee from Westlaw, Lexis, and HeinOnline.

HeinOnline's Legislative History Library includes compiled legislative histories for major legislation. [HeinOnline](#) also includes the *Sources of Compiled Legislative Histories Database* which is derived from a looseleaf service.

Westlaw has legislative histories of selected major public laws in its Arnold & Porter Collection in its U.S. Federal Materials database. [Westlaw](#) also offers legislative histories compiled by the GAO. In addition, for each federal statute retrieved, a text box, "Legislative History", is displayed. In this box, you may choose "Text Amendments", "Editor's Notes", and "Reports and Related Materials". The latter provides links for your statute to the House and Senate reports, the conference report, debates and messages in the *Congressional Record*, to hearings available from the Federal Document Clearing House, and to Presidential messages in USCCAN.

LexisNexis. You can search document files by type of legislative history component in order to compile a legislative history for your statute or bill on [LexisNexis](#) in the folder, Legislative Histories, under the U.S. Congress section of the Legislation and Politics – U.S. & U.K. library. The file, "Legislative Histories", furnishes access to U.S.-CIS Legislative Histories plus 30 other compiled legislative histories on various topics. Selected legislative histories are key word searchable under the file, Legislative Histories, Bills & Laws in [LexisNexis Congressional](#). You must develop the search and evaluate each retrieved document's relevance for your statute or bill.

Monthly Catalog of United States Government Publications. This cites legislative histories compiled by agencies of the federal government. The *Monthly Catalog* from July 1976 to present appears on Westlaw. Also, this is available electronically at <http://catalog.gpo.gov/>. (GP 3.8/8:2004/12). (University Library Z1223 .A18).

Looseleaf Services, Treatises, and Other Compiled Legislative Histories. Many looseleaf services and treatises dealing with specific areas of law, e.g. environmental law, tax, securities, and labor law, may contain compiled legislative histories. Check the law library on-line catalog for separately published legislative histories. A reference librarian can check OCLC's WorldCat to determine if there is an applicable compiled legislative history that may be borrowed from another library.

Citations to Relevant Legislative History Documents

In compiling a legislative history, the first step in the process is to obtain a list of documents relating to the history of a public law, legislation that was not enacted, or a pending bill. In doing so, one must trace each of the actions taken by Congress which resulted in a public law or final piece of legislation and identify the pertinent documents that were integral to the process. Usually a legislative history is compiled by tracing a bill by number through each step of the enactment proceedings.

Congressional Index. 2 v. loose-leaf updated weekly. Published since 1937 by Commerce Clearing House, this service indexes bills by subject and sponsor, digests each bill, provides a status table of actions taken, includes an index of enactments and vetoes, and gives a

table of companion bills. Also included are tables of voting records by bill number. Hearings are noted by committee, subject, and date. (REFERENCE KF49 .C6).

CIS Index/Abstracts. Since 1970, this publication indexes and abstracts bills, hearings, reports, committee prints and documents. The "Legislative Histories" section arranges abstracts of Congressional and Presidential documents by Public Law Number. Included are references to bills, hearings, committee reports, debates, committee prints, House and Senate documents, Presidential documents as well as all legislative actions. Histories also include hearings and documents on related bills from prior Congresses. The "Legislative Histories" section provides the most complete compilation of citations to the legislative history of a federal law. CIS abstracts hearings and the testimony of individual witnesses. The law library contains the *CIS Index/Abstracts* from 1970-2005 in print format. (REFERENCE KF49 .C62).

For materials pertaining to bills introduced before 1970, look up your bill in the *CIS Congressional Masterfile I* available on LexisNexis in the LEGIS database CISINX library. This indexes documents in the U.S. Congressional Serial Set from 1789-1969, committee hearings from 1833-1969, unpublished Senate hearings from 1823-1972, unpublished House hearings from 1833-1958, and committee prints from 1830-1969.

LexisNexis Congressional. [LexisNexis Congressional](#) provides a web-based version of *CIS Index/Abstracts*. It furnishes on-line access to some documents in the CIS microfiche collection including bills, hearings, committee reports, and committee prints beginning with the 91st Cong., 1970. Since the 99th Cong., 1985, the *Congressional Record* providing transcripts of debates is available.

Congressional Record. The fortnightly index as well as cumulative bound indexes contain a "History of Bills and Resolutions". This includes a brief digest for each bill, the name of the sponsor, the committee to which it was referred, citations to debates, a listing of legislative actions, committee reports, amendments, and passage information. Page numbers to the *Congressional Record* are provided. Hearings are not cited.

Another history table is printed in the *Daily Digest* volume of the bound *Congressional Record*. This table, "History of Bills Enacted into Public Law" does not provide citations to debates or hearings.

The *Congressional Record* is available in print from 1956-1976 in the University Library (J11 .R52). It is available on microfilm from 1977 to present in Government Documents. It also is available on [HeinOnline](#). Since the 99th Cong., 1985, it can be found on <http://web.lexis-nexis.com/congcomp/>.

United States Statutes at Large. Since 1975, following the text for each law there is a legislative history summary. It includes citations to reports from House, Senate, and Conference Committees, lists the dates of consideration and passage in each house, and refers to presidential statements. From 1963 to 1974, a "Guide to Legislative History" appeared in a table at the end of each volume. Since the 58th Cong., 1903 the corresponding bill number is provided for each public law. (KF50). Also available on [HeinOnline](#). *United States Statutes at Large 1789-1972* can be found in the [Westlaw US-STATLRG](#) database.

U.S. Code Congressional and Administrative News (USCCAN). Since 1941, this set has published the texts of federal acts. It reprints only the most relevant committee report for each act. At the beginning of the legislative history section for each act, USCCAN provides references to all reports, including the ones it does not include, and to the dates of consideration and passage in each house. A table summarizing the legislative history of enacted laws is included in the monthly pamphlets and annual bound volumes. The monthly pamphlets include a table on "Major Bills Pending," which is an alphabetical subject list of legislation providing the dates each

bill was reported out of committee or passed by either house. Presidential signing statements have been reprinted in USCCAN since 99th Cong., 1986. (KF48 1981). Available on [Westlaw](#).

Congressional Calendars. The House of Representatives, Senate, and most committees publish calendars that provide current information on the status of pending bills. The table "History of Bills and Resolutions: Numerical Order of Bills and Resolutions, Which Have Been Reported to or Considered by Either or Both Houses," appears in *Calendars of the United States House of Representatives, and History of Legislation*. The "Numerical Order" table in the final issue of the House *Calendars* cumulates both sessions at the end of each Congress. This includes only bills on which action was taken and does not fully list debates and hearings. (Y 1.2/2:2007/50). Also available from the 104th Cong., 1995 at <http://www.access.gpo.gov>. The current 2008 Calendar is available at <http://www.house.gov>. The *Senate Calendar of Business* (popularly known as the "Legislative Calendar") contains a section, "General Orders" that covers all Senate legislation by bill number, title, and report number. Available through the [Senate](#) website.

Components of a Legislative History

Bills

A bill is the printed version of a proposed law. There usually are many texts of a bill. A bill proceeds through the following stages: as introduced, as marked up in committee, as reported, as amended on the floor of each chamber, as engrossed, as enacted, and as enrolled.

Hearings on a problem or situation may be held prior to the introduction of specific bills to remedy the condition. These hearings may continue through more than one session of Congress.

The bill when introduced may be accompanied by a Presidential message or memorandum from an executive agency. Such messages are printed and indexed in the *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*. These are available online at the following web sites: [HeinOnline](#); [GPO Access](#) and [Westlaw](#). Presidential messages also are published in the *Congressional Record*. (University Library J11 .R52).

Frequently in the Senate, a bill is accompanied by introductory remarks by the sponsor as well as a summary and correspondence. These documents and the text of the Senate bill are printed in the *Congressional Record* for that day.

Each bill as it is introduced is printed, assigned a bill number, and then referred to a committee. The bill number is key to tracing legislative actions in status tables and identifying the documents pertaining to such actions. Bills are individually numbered in a separate series for each chamber and retain that number through both of the annual sessions of each Congress. A citation to a bill includes the number of the Congress and session in which it was introduced or printed. They are cited as follows: S. 597, 110th Cong., 1st Session (2007), or H.R. 2082, 110th Cong., 2d Session (2008). At the end of the two year Congress, pending bills lose their active status and must be reintroduced.

Library of Congress. *A Century of Lawmaking, United States Congressional Serial Set. Bills and Resolutions, 6th – 42nd Congresses.* <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/lwhbsb.html>.

United States Congress Public Bills and Resolutions (microfiche) contains the text of all public bills and resolutions, including amendments introduced in both houses of Congress from the 99th Cong., 1985 to the current Congress. (Government Documents).

Looseleaf Services may reprint important bills as releases, or they may include the bills in their compilations.

Committee Reports usually reprint bills as amended by committee when the bills are reported out of committee.

Thomas, the website of the Library of Congress, provides summaries of all bills beginning with the 93rd Cong., 1973 and the full text of bills beginning with the 101st Cong., 1989. The [Thomas](#) site includes links to bills that are expected to be acted upon on the floor of the House or Senate during the current week, to bills voted upon during the prior week, and to major bills introduced in Congress.

LexisNexis BLTEXT. These files go back to the 101st Cong., 1989. [LexisNexis](#).

LexisNexis Congressional. This includes full text of bills since the 101st Cong., 1989. <http://web.lexis-nexis.com/congcomp/>.

GPO Access, the website of the U.S. Government Printing Office provides History of Bills that includes bill texts from the 103rd Cong. 1993 forward. <http://www.access.gpo.gov/>.

Westlaw databases provide the text of bills beginning with the 104th Cong., 1995. [Westlaw](#) .

Bill Tracking

Bill tracking is the determination of a bill's stage in the parliamentary process and its current status as a bill or an act.

Congressional Index. This looseleaf provides a status table of actions taken on bills and resolutions. It also includes the following sections, "Voting Records on House Bills", "Voting Records on Senate Bills", and "Enactments – Vetoes". (KF49 .C6).

LexisNexis. Bill tracking summaries contain synopses of bills, dates of introduction, referrals to committee, and a complete legislative chronology. Citations to the *Congressional Record* are provided. Bill tracking begins with the 101st Cong., 1989. [LexisNexis](#)

LexisNexis Congressional. Federal bills may be tracked from the 101st Cong., 1989 onwards. <http://web.lexis-nexis.com/congcomp/>.

Westlaw. Summaries and status information cover public bills through each step of the legislative process. An archival database provides coverage back to the 102d Cong., 1991. [Westlaw](#).

Congress.org. The congressional web site tracks bills and votes in the current Congress. <http://www.congress.org/congressorg/issues/bills>.

Project Vote Smart. This site covers the issues and tracks the status of major legislation for the current Congress. It includes summaries of action on current bills and voting records of individual members of Congress. <http://www.votesmart.org/>.

Thomas. The Library of Congress website provides information on pending legislation. It can be searched by keyword, number, sponsor, and committee. [Thomas](#).

Comprehensive Parliamentary Proceedings Excluding Debates

The *House Journal* and the *Senate Journal* are mandated by the Constitution of the United States (Article I , Section 5). As such, they are the official source, rather than the *Congressional Record*, of parliamentary proceedings. Each *Journal* should be viewed as the minutes of floor action. It notes matters considered by the House of Representatives or the Senate, the votes, and other actions taken. Each *Journal* does not include the actual debates, reports, or hearings. The *Journals* are useful for retrospective research. From 1789-1875, the *Journals* are available electronically; [Senate Journal](#) and [House Journal](#). Before 1954 the House and Senate *Journals* were published as part of the *U.S. Congressional Serial Set*. Indices are available on [GPO Access](#) from the 102d Cong., 1991 to the last completed Congress.

Hearings

Hearings are held by standing and special committees of the House and Senate to investigate public concerns or to elicit the views of persons, agencies, and groups on proposed legislation or a pending bill. Hearings do not have to be held, and from time to time a law is enacted for which hearings have not been held in one or both houses. In that case, hearings may be found for companion bills. Not all hearings are published.

Hearings comprise transcripts of testimony, questions by the Congressmen and Senators and answers by the witnesses, exhibits submitted by interested individuals or organizations, and sometimes a print of the bill being considered.

Hearings are identified by the number of the Congress and session in which they were held, the name of the committee which held them, the short title which appears on the cover of the published hearing, the number of the bill, and the dates covered by the hearing.

Hearings – Citations

Citations to hearings may be found in [U.S. Congressional Bibliographies](#), compiled at NCSU Libraries. Senate Bibliographies includes comprehensive lists of hearings, committee prints, and publications printed by the Senate, 98th Cong., 1983 to present. House Meetings includes lists of House committee meetings recorded in the *Congressional Record's* Daily Digest 99th Cong., 1985 to present.

Congressional Index. 2 v. This looseleaf, updated weekly, lists House and Senate hearings by committee, topic, and date. (REFERENCE KF49 .C6).

Monthly Catalog of United States Government Publications provides references to hearings held on a piece of legislation. (GP 3.8/8:2004/12). The *Monthly Catalog* is available online at <http://catalog.gpo.gov/> and at the University Library (Z1223 .A18).

Hearings – Transcripts

LexisNexis Congressional includes transcripts from selected hearings from 1824 in its *Congressional Hearings Digital Collection* scheduled for completion in 2008. Since the 103rd Cong., 1993, the hearing testimony is searchable. Its "Index to Hearings" covers 1789 to present. <http://web.lexis-nexis.com/congcomp/>.

LexisNexis provides unofficial committee hearing transcripts and prepared testimony from the 100th Cong., 1988 from CQ Transcriptions, the FDA Advisory Committee, the Federal News Service, and the National Narrowcast Network Transcripts. [LexisNexis](#).

GPO Access includes selected House and Senate hearings from the 104th Cong., 1995 forward. <http://www.access.gpo.gov/>.

Westlaw provides selected unofficial transcripts and prepared testimony from CQ Transcriptions from 1993-1996, and full coverage from the 104th Cong., 1996. [Westlaw](#).

Thomas. Since the 105th Cong., 1997, committee hearings have been included. [Thomas](#).

Websites for the U.S. House of Representatives, <http://www.house.gov/> and the U.S. Senate, <http://www.senate.gov/>, furnish links to committee websites. The committee websites sometimes provide prepared transcripts of testimony furnished by witnesses at hearings.

Selected hearings may be found using the *Google U.S. Government Search* "search engine". <http://www.google.com/ig/usgov>.

Committee Reports and Conference Reports

The most important documents that comprise a legislative history are the reports of the Congressional committees and the report of the conference committee held jointly by the House of Representatives and the Senate. They are given more weight than other documents in a legislative history, because they are produced by the members of Congress who have worked most closely on the bill.

The House and Senate committees issue a report on a bill when it is sent to the whole house for consideration. At this stage the bill is reported out of committee. The committee report recommends passage of the legislation. It frequently contains the revised text of the bill including committee amendments, an analysis of content and purpose, and the committee's reasoning behind its recommendations. Because most bills introduced die in committee, committee reports exist for only the small number of bills that were sent to a Congressional committee and voted out.

If different versions of a bill were passed by the House of Representatives and the Senate, then a conference committee is convened. The conference committee includes members from both the House and the Senate. The conference committee reconciles the differences and produces an agreed compromise bill for return to both houses and final passage in each house.

The conference report summarizes the provisions of both bills explaining the compromises reached. The conference committee reports usually contain the text of the compromise bill. Conference reports are always published in the *Congressional Record*. Additionally, the conference reports can also be found in the same sources as committee reports, but they are usually published as House reports although some have been published as Senate reports.

The committee reports of each house are published as single pamphlets in a separate numbered series for each session of Congress. They are identified by their report numbers. Citations include the numbers of the Congress and session which issued them. Examples are S.Rep. No. 268, 110th Cong. 2d Session (2008) and H.R.Rep. No. 550, 110th Cong. 2d Session (2008).

United States Code Congressional and Administrative News. Since 1941, USCCAN reprints either the House or Senate report for public bills that became public laws. (KF48 1981). The USCCAN database containing reports from the 80th Cong., 1948 may be found on [Westlaw](#).

U.S. Congressional Serial Set commonly called the Serial Set, contains the House and Senate Documents and the House and Senate Reports bound by session of congress in a numbered series. Reports are located by volume numbers. (KF31) (KF32) (Government Documents). The law library's holdings are incomplete.

Looseleaf Services, Treatises, and Other Compiled Legislative Histories. Committee reports for specialized areas of legal research such as tax acts, labor legislation, and environmental laws may be available.

LexisNexis Congressional. This provides index access to reports from 1789 to present. Reports from 1789 through 1969 are available in the "Serial Set Digital Collection" in PDF format. House and Senate reports are available since 101st Cong., 1990. in full text. <http://web.lexis-nexis.com/congcomp/>.

Library of Congress. *A Century of Lawmaking, United States Congressional Serial Set.* The serial set contains House and Senate documents and reports from the 23rd Cong., 1853 – 64th Cong., 1917. <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/lwss.html/>.

Westlaw. Westlaw includes each committee report that was printed in the *United States Code Congressional and Administrative News* (USCCAN) since 1948. Since the 101st Cong., 1990, the Westlaw database contains all committee reports, even for bills that did not become law. [Westlaw](#).

LexisNexis. House and Senate reports since 101st Cong., 1990, are available. [LexisNexis](#).

GPO Access. This website provides access to House and Senate reports beginning with the 104th Cong., 1995. <http://www.access.gpo.gov/>.

Thomas. House and Senate committee reports including conference and joint committee reports are available from the 104th Cong., 1995. [Thomas](#).

Committee Prints

Committee prints are special studies prepared for the use and reference of congressional committees. These studies may be written by the committee staff, another federal agency, or outside experts, but they are paid for by the congressional committee. They may include bibliographies, analysis of legislation, compilations of statutes, the history of an agency, or any number of various topics. Because the committee prints are written by staff, they are not considered to be a primary source of legislative history. The committee prints may provide background information with regard to the condition that inspired the legislation. Rarely, a committee print may contain statements by members of a committee or subcommittee pertaining to a pending bill.

Committee Prints – Citations

CIS Index/Abstracts. From the 91st Cong., 1970 forward, the *CIS Index and Abstracts* volumes locate and describe committee prints. The CIS microfiche library reprints the committee prints. (KF49 .C62).

Committee Prints – Documents

U.S. Congressional Serial Set. Usually a committee print is designated as a House or Senate document. Then it is available in the official *U.S. Congressional Serial Set*, or in the Library of Congress. [A Century of Lawmaking, United States Congressional Serial Set](#). The Law Library has print volumes of selected portions of the *U.S. Congressional Serial Set*. (KF31) (KF32) (Government Documents). The law library's holdings are incomplete.

LexisNexis Congressional. The Congressional Research Digital Collection which is scheduled for completion in 2008 provides the full text of committee prints from 1830 to the present. <http://web.lexis-nexis.com/congcomp/>.

GPO Access. A limited number of committee prints are available beginning with the 105th Cong., 1997. <http://www.access.gpo.gov/>.

Congressional Debates

Debates on a pending bill typically take place after the bill has been reported out of a committee and sent to the floor of either chamber. However, debates can take place at almost any stage of the legislative process. During the consideration of the bill on the floor of the House or the Senate, amendments may be proposed and be accepted or defeated. Arguments may be made for and against the passage of the bill or for individual amendments. Explanations of unclear or controversial provisions may be offered.

The House and Senate *Journals* set forth the minutes of parliamentary proceedings that occurred with respect to the bill. The *Congressional Record* is published daily while Congress is in session and provides transcripts of the debates, subject to a revision and extension of remarks by Representatives or Senators. Beginning with the 95th Cong., 1978, a black dot is used to denote statements that were not actually spoken by the member on the floor.

Earlier Congressional debates may be found in the following sources.

Annals of Congress, 1st Congress, 1789 - 18th Congress, 1824. Library of Congress American Memory at <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/lwac.html>.

Register of Debates, 18th Congress, 2d Session, 1824 - 25th Congress, 1st Session, 1837. <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/lwrd.html>.

Congressional Globe, 25th Congress, 2d Session, 1837 - 42d Congress 2d Session, 1873. <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/lwgc.html>.

Congressional Record, 43d Congress, 1st Session, 1873 to present. Full electronic coverage began with the 103rd Congress, 1994. <http://www.access.gpo.gov/>.

Sessions of Congress with Corresponding Debate Record Volume Numbers (1789-2006) is a table that provides the congress, session, dates, volume number and the source of Congressional debates. <http://llsdc.org/sourcebook/docs/sess-cong.pdf>.

Since the 80th Cong., 1947, each daily issue of the *Congressional Record* has included a "Daily Digest" which summarizes the day's proceedings, lists actions taken and enactments signed by the President that day, and provides committee information. The "Daily Digests" are cumulated and indexed in one volume of the bound permanent edition of the *Congressional Record* that is published at the end of each session.

A fortnightly index to the proceedings by subjects, names, and titles of legislation is included in the *Congressional Record*. A cumulative annual index appears with the bound volumes. These include "History of Bills and Resolutions" sections, which list the bills introduced that session and summarize their legislative history. The bound volumes also include "History of Bills Enacted into Public Law". Arranged by public law number, this table provides bill numbers, committee report numbers, and dates and pages of consideration in the *Congressional Record*.

Congressional Record: Proceedings and Debates of Congress, Permanent Edition is available in paper and in microfilm. This differs from the daily edition in pagination and does not include the "Extensions of Remarks" from 1955-1968. The permanent edition is the accepted source for research and citation.

The *Congressional Record* is available in print from 1956-1976 at the University Library (J11 .R52). It is available on microfilm from 1977 to present in Government Documents.

HeinOnline. This database includes the *Congressional Record* from 1873-1928, and from the 94th Cong., 1975 to present. <http://heinonline.org>.

Westlaw. Coverage of debates began with the 99th Cong., 1985. [Westlaw](#).

LexisNexis. Coverage of debates began with the 99th Cong., 1985. [LexisNexis](#).

LexisNexis Congressional. Debates have been published since the 99th Cong., 1985. <http://web.lexis-nexis.com/congcomp/>.

Thomas. The Library of Congress website contains full text of the daily edition of the *Congressional Record* from the 101st Cong., 1989. The fortnightly Index coverage begins with the 103rd Cong., 1994. <http://thomas.loc.gov/>.

GPO Access. An index to the *Congressional Record* began with the 102d Cong., 1992. Full coverage began with the 103rd Cong., 1994. <http://www.access.gpo.gov/crecord/>.

Presidential Approval or Veto

After a bill is passed by both houses of Congress, the enrolled act is sent to the President. If the President approves an act, it becomes law. If the President vetoes an act, in order to become law the act must be repassed by both houses by a two-thirds majority. The President may issue a message when he signs or vetoes an act. The President has sometimes used signing statements to convey his interpretation of disputed provisions in the act.

Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents. Veto messages, signing statements, and earlier messages to Congress are included. It also includes a list of acts approved by the President. [HeinOnline](#) contains the *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* from the 89th Cong., 1965 in PDF format. [GPO Access](#) includes the *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* from 103rd Cong., 1993 to date. [Westlaw](#) provides the *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* from the 104th Cong., 1995 in full text.

Public Papers of the Presidents. This annual series began with President Hoover's administration. It includes material printed in the *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*. (University Library REFERENCE J80 .A283). *GPO Access* includes *Public Papers of the Presidents* from the 102nd Cong., 1991 in PDF format. <http://www.access.gpo.gov/>.

Older Presidential papers are included in *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897*; published, by authority of Congress, by James D. Richardson. (J81.2 .B96).

LexisNexis. Public Papers of the Presidents and the Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents have been published on LexisNexis since the 96th Cong., 1979. <http://www.lexisnexis.com/lawschool>.

United States Code Congressional and Administrative News (USCCAN). Since the 99th Cong., 1986, USCCAN reprints in the legislative history volumes of the set, the text of presidential signing statements. These, as reprinted in USCCAN, are available through *Westlaw*. <http://lawschool.westlaw.com>. (KF48 1981).

Westlaw provides access to the *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* from the 106th Cong., 2000 to present in WCPD database. <http://lawschool.westlaw.com>.

White House web site. The White House web site contains presidential documents for the current administration. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/>.

For Additional Information

The following publications furnish more information in greater detail on how to compile federal legislative histories and provide a better understanding of the legislative process in particular.

Folsom, Gwendolyn B. *Legislative History : Research for the Interpretation of Laws*. Charlottesville, Virginia : University Press of Virginia, c1972. 136 p. (KF425 .F64 1972).

How Our Laws Are Made. Revised and updated by Charles W. Johnson, Parliamentarian, U.S. House of Representatives. Presented by Mr. Ney, June 30, 2003. <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/lawsmade.toc.html>.

Koneski-White, Bonnie L. *Federal Legislative Histories*. In Mersky, Roy M. ; and Dunn, Donald J. *Fundamentals of Legal Research*. 8th ed. New York: Foundation Press, 2002. pp. 181-220. (RESERVE KF240 .J32 2002).

Legislative History. In Cohen, Morris L. et al. *How to Find the Law*. 9th ed. St. Paul, MN : West, 1989. pp. 217-260. (RESERVE KF240 .C538 1989).

McKinney, Richard J.; and Sweet, Ellen. *Federal Legislative History Research: A Practitioner's Guide to Compiling the Documents and Sifting for Legislative Intent*. Washington, DC: Law Librarians' Society of Washington, D.C., 2001. 22 p. Note: Last revised in January 2005. <http://www.llsdc.net/sourcebook/fed-leg-hist.htm>.