

# FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE HISTORY RESEARCH GUIDE

## Information Available from the Moritz Law Library

### How this guide is organized

The first part of the guide, below, helps you locate a document in the Moritz Law Library when you have the citation or enough information to quickly find the citation.

The second part of the guide, [Advanced Legislative History](#), is a detailed research guide to Legislative History materials at the Moritz Law Library. This part explains Legislative History research and will help you to research difficult legislative history problems.

The third part of the guide, [Congressional Quarterly and Other Congressional Publications](#), highlights CQ resources, which are helpful secondary sources on legislation, legislative history, and Congressional activity. The section briefly mentions other helpful secondary reference works about Congress at the Moritz Law Library.

[| List of All Congressional Sessions with Years |](#)

### **Part I: Quick Guide: Finding Specific Documents at the Moritz Law Library**

[Bills and Resolutions](#)

[Hearings](#)

[Reports](#)

[Public Laws](#)

## Part II: Advanced Legislative History Research at the Moritz Law Library ([back up](#))

### **Overview**

What Is Legislative History?

What Are the Primary Documents of Legislative History?

What Is a Compiled Legislative History?

Where Should I Begin (LexisNexis Congressional)?

Finding each type of Legislative History Document:

[Indexes to Congressional Documents](#), [Lists of Compiled Legislative Histories](#), [Compiled Legislative Histories](#), [Committee Reports](#), [Committee Prints](#), [Bills and Resolutions](#), [Committee Hearings](#), [Congressional Debates](#), [Presidential Signature, Veto, and/or Signing Statement](#), [Roll Call Votes](#), [Status of a Pending Bill](#)

### **What Is Legislative History?**

Legislative history is the paper trail left during the drafting, consideration, and passage of a federal bill or law. In cases where the statute is not clear, the legislative paper trail must be examined to determine whether Congress meant for a law to apply to a particular individual or class of individuals, or to particular situations. Legislative history research is employed to determine Congress's purpose, or intent, when drafting a bill or passing a law.

### **What Are the Primary Documents of Legislative History?**

The following are legislative history documents: bill or resolution, committee print, committee report, hearing transcript, record of congressional debate, presidential signature, veto, and/or signing statement, and the roll call vote on a bill in the House and Senate.

### **What Is a Compiled Legislative History?**

Sometimes an author or publisher will collect all (or the most important) legislative history documents related to a law in one volume or set of volumes, thus saving you the trouble of identifying and finding the documents yourself. Instead, you only have to read and analyze the collected documents and apply them to your legal question. These collected documents are a compiled legislative history.

In other instances, an author or publisher will provide only the citation, but not the actual text, of all of the relevant legislative history documents for a particular law. These lists of citations are often also called "compiled legislative histories." The dual use of the phrase can be confusing.

### **Where Should I Begin?**

The best place to begin your research is at [LexisNexis Congressional](#). You may have to continue your research beyond LexisNexis Congressional, but much of what you are looking for may be there (see more specific information below). LexisNexis Congressional provides an index of Congressional documents going back in time to the early Congresses, it provides a list of legislative history documents for all public laws since 1970, and in many instances LexisNexis Congressional provides a link to the full text of each document.

## Indexes to Congressional Documents ([back up](#))

### Print

#### CIS Index

*Location: KF 49 C62, Reference Stacks, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor*

*CIS Index* is an index to Congressional documents by subject, name, popular title, and bill number from 1970 to present and it provides a complete list of the legislative history documents for all public laws since 1969. For legislative histories of public laws from 1969-1983, look in the Annual Volume; from 1984 to present use the Legislative History volume. (CIS Index is the paper version of LexisNexis Congressional.)

*Dates of Coverage: 1970 to present*

#### Congressional Index (by CCH)

*Location: KF 49 C6, National Collection, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor*

The index allows you to track the status of a bill through the legislative process. You will incidentally obtain information about hearings, reports, voting records, debates, passage into law, etc. that can help you identify possible documents in the legislative history (e.g., committee report, hearing transcript, Congressional record).

*Congressional Index* is arranged by bill number, but it has index entries by author, subject, and public law number, if you do not have a bill number. An online analog is [Thomas](#) (only 1989-present).

*Dates of Coverage: 1947 to present*

### Online

#### LexisNexis Congressional

LexisNexis Congressional is the online version of CIS Index, providing a means to search for Congressional documents from the earliest Congress to present, and Legislative Histories for public laws since 1969 to present. The interface is user-friendly and allows you to search for documents by subject, title, keyword, etc., and limit your search by document type, date, or Congress.

*Dates of Coverage: 1789 to present*

#### Thomas, <http://thomas.loc.gov>

Thomas is a user-friendly, freely available, internet site that allows you to check the status of a bill in the current and recent Congresses. You will incidentally find references and hyperlinks to Congressional Record pages, Committee Reports, and occasionally other legislative history documents.

*Dates of Coverage: Generally, 1973 (93rd Congress) to present*

## Lists of Compiled Legislative Histories ([back up](#))

### Print

Nancy P. Johnson, Sources of Compiled Legislative Histories: A Bibliography of Government Documents, Periodical Articles, and Books (1979, Supp. 2007)

*Location: KF 42.2 1979, Reference Desk, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor*

This loose-leaf service provides citation to compiled legislative histories for major laws. It has indexes for author and public law by name.

*Dates of Coverage: 1789 to present*

Bernard D. Reams, Federal Legislative Histories: An Annotated Bibliography and Index to Officially Published Sources (1994)

*Location: KF 42.2 1994, Reference Desk*

This book provides the citation to and a brief description of more than 250 compiled legislative histories. The book has indexes by author, popular name, public law number, statutes at large citation, and bill number. If a legislative history was compiled for your law before the publication of this book, information about it will be in here.

*Dates of Coverage: 1862-1990*

Union List of Legislative Histories, 7<sup>th</sup> Ed. (2000, Supp. 2002)

*Location: KF 4 U55, Reference Desk*

The Union List lists the compiled legislative histories that have been compiled or acquired by libraries in the Washington, D.C. area. The list is primarily arranged by public law number, and it also has indexes by Statutes at Large number, popular name, bill number, subject matter, and holding library.

*Dates of Coverage: 1789 to 2002*

### Library Catalog

To search the [library's catalog](#) for a compiled legislative history, try a keyword search using the words "legislative history" AND [the name of the act].

### Online

#### HeinOnLine

HeinOnLine's U.S. Federal Legislative History library includes Johnson's *Sources of Compiled Legislative Histories*.

*Dates of Coverage: 1789 to present*

## Compiled Legislative Histories ([back up](#))

### Print

#### CIS Index

*Location: KF 49 C62, Reference Stacks, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor*

*CIS Index* is an index to Congressional documents by subject, name, popular title, and bill number from 1970 to present, and it provides a list of legislative history documents for all public laws since 1969. For legislative histories of public laws from 1969-1983, look in the Annual Volume; from 1984 to present use the Legislative History volume. (CIS Index is the paper version of Lexis Congressional online service.)

*Dates of Coverage: 1969 to present*

#### United States Code Congressional and Administrative News (USCCAN, sounds like "you scan")

*Location: KF 48 W45, National Collection, 2nd Floor*

For major public laws, USCCAN's Legislative History section provides the citation to all committee and conference reports, dates of consideration and passage of the bill in both houses, and presidential signing statements. USCCAN prints the text of some committee reports, and since 1986 it prints the text of presidential signing statements. It is updated frequently, so it can be helpful for the current Congress.

*Dates of Coverage: 1952 to present*

### Online

#### LexisNexis Congressional

Lexis Congressional provides complete legislative histories (including the text of the documents) for all public laws since 1999. From 1984 to 1998, legislative histories are provided only for major public laws, and from 1969 to 1983 an abbreviated legislative history is provided for all public laws. If the document is not available online, get the CIS number for the document and get the document in our CIS Microfilm collection (see [Part I](#) for more information about our collections).

*Dates of Coverage: 1969 to present (dates of available, online full text documents vary)*

#### Westlaw

Westlaw has several legislative history databases. The Arnold & Porter Collection of legislative histories for major public laws and the GAO Legislative Histories (FED-LH) are very helpful. The GAO legislative histories are available in PDF format.

**Tip:** To retrieve the Table of Contents with hyperlinks for one of the laws in the Arnold & Porter collection, click on the law, then use a Terms and Connectors search and enter ci(toc) in the search box.

*Dates of Coverage: Arnold and Porter - Selective 1974 to present; GAO – most public laws 1969 and 1995*

#### Lexis

Lexis provides some legislative histories for selected statutes. To view the available legislative histories follow this path: Legal > Federal Legal - U.S. > Legislative Histories & Materials.

*Dates of Coverage: Selective, 1969 to present*

HeinOnLine's U.S. Federal Legislative History Title Collection

HeinOnLine's Legislative History Title Collection is a collection of full-text legislative histories on selected major legislation. The Legislative Histories are arranged alphabetically by popular name of the act. All documents are provided in PDF format. Examples include the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002, Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990, Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the USA PATRIOT Act.

*Dates of Coverage: Selective from 1900 to present*

## Committee Reports ([back up](#))

### Print

United States Code Congressional and Administrative News (USCCAN, sounds like "you scan")

*Location: KF 48 W45, National Collection, 2nd Floor*

For major public laws, USCCAN's Legislative History section provides the citation to all committee and conference reports, dates of consideration and passage of the bill in both houses, and presidential signing statements. USCCAN prints the text of some committee reports, and since 1985 it prints the text of presidential signing statements. It is updated monthly, so it can be helpful for the current Congress.

*Dates of Coverage: 1952 to present*

### Online

LexisNexis Congressional

Searchable, user-friendly interface, PDF format 1789-1969.

*Dates of Coverage: 1789 (1<sup>st</sup> Congress) to 1969 (91<sup>st</sup> Congress) – PDF format; 1970 (91<sup>st</sup> Congress) to present – HTML format*

Thomas, <http://thomas.loc.gov/>

Free access. User-friendly interface. PDF format.

*Dates of Coverage: 1995 (104<sup>th</sup> Congress) to present*

GPO Access, [www.gpoaccess.gov](http://www.gpoaccess.gov)

Free access. PDF format.

*Dates of Coverage: 1995 (104<sup>th</sup> Congress) to present*

A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation (Library of Congress).

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/>.

TIFF format, viewable and printable only one page at a time.

*Dates of Coverage: 1833-1917*

Westlaw (dtb id: LH)

Searchable, text format.

*Dates of Coverage: 1990 to present; selected (those printed in USCCAN) 1948 to present.*

Lexis

Searchable, text format.

*Dates of Coverage: 1990 to present.*

### Microfilm

**Note:** you need a CIS number to find these in the Microfilm collection. You get the CIS number (CIS-NO) from LexisNexis Congressional. Choose "Search by Number," then select H.rpt. or S.rpt. from the drop down menu. Enter the Congress (*i.e.*, 82<sup>nd</sup>) and the report number (*i.e.*, 305) for your report. Note the CIS number.

1947 (80<sup>th</sup> Congress) to 1969 (90<sup>th</sup> Congress):

CIS U.S. Serial Set in the Law Library Microforms Room, cabinet 30.

1970 (91<sup>st</sup> Congress) to present:  
CIS Microfilm Collection in the Law Library Microforms Room, cabinets 16-18.

## Committee Prints ([back up](#))

### Online

GPO Access, [www.gpoaccess.gov](http://www.gpoaccess.gov)

Free Access, PDF format

*Dates of Coverage: 1997 (105<sup>th</sup> Congress) - present*

### LexisNexis Congressional

Older prints in PDF format. Some newer full text available in HTML. Indexing available for prints 1789-present.

*Dates of Coverage: 1789-1969 – PDF if the print was part of the U.S. Serial Set; 1993-2004 – Select in HTML*

### Lexis

HTML, full text, searchable.

*Dates of Coverage: Selective from 1994 (103<sup>rd</sup> Congress) to present*

### Microfilm

**Note:** You need a CIS number to find these in the Microfilm collection. You get the CIS number (CIS-NO) from LexisNexis Congressional.

1830 (21<sup>st</sup> Congress) -1969 (91<sup>st</sup> Congress)

CIS U.S. Congressional Committee Prints, Ackerman Library Microfilm Collection

1970 (92<sup>nd</sup> Congress) -present

CIS\* Microfilm Library, Law Library Microforms Room

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\* CIS stands for Congressional Information Service. If you are using the Microforms Index (white binder on the table in the Microform Room or [here online](#)), you find these Congressional Publications under Congressional Information Service.

## Bills and Resolutions ([back up](#))

**Note:** OSU holdings of the original image of bills and resolutions are limited. The Law Library of Congress is a good source for inter-library loans of bills and resolutions. See OSU holdings information below and in [Part I](#).

### Online

GPO Access, <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/bills/index.html>.  
PDF format.

*Dates of Coverage: 1993 to present*

Thomas, <http://thomas.loc.gov>.  
PDF format from 1993; HTML from 1989.

*Dates of Coverage: 1989 to present.*

A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation (Library of Congress),  
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/>.

TIFF format. Can view or print only one page at a time.

*Dates of Coverage: House – 1799-1873; Senate – 1819-1873*

Westlaw (dtb id: CONG-BILLTXT-ALL)

HTML format, full text, searchable.

*Dates of Coverage: 104th Congress (1994) to current.*

Lexis

Bills and resolutions are in a group file with Congressional Record materials. HTML format, full text, searchable.

*Dates of Coverage: 105th through 109th Congresses*

### Microfilm

1789 (1<sup>st</sup> Congress) - 1801 (7<sup>th</sup> Congress)  
OSU Depository (catalog title = Bills and Resolutions)

1985 (99<sup>th</sup> Congress) – 2000 (106<sup>th</sup> Congress)  
Law, Microforms Room, Cabinet 25

## Committee Hearings ([back up](#))

### Online

GPO Access, <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/chearings/>

Free, PDF version.

*Dates of Coverage: House hearing 1995 (104th Congress) to present; Senate hearings 1997 (105<sup>th</sup> Congress) to present.*

LexisNexis Congressional

Indexed and searchable. PDF versions available for 1824-2003.

*Dates of Coverage: 1824-present; PDF format from 1824-2003.*

### Microfilm

**Note:** you will need to obtain the CIS-NO from Lexis Congressional to find the document in the Microfilm collection. You will also need to know if the hearing is a *published* or *unpublished* hearing. The Library also has several CIS print indexes to hearings in the Reference Stacks, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, in the call number range KF 40 C.

Published Hearings 1839 to 1969

CIS U.S. Congressional Committee Hearings Retrospective Collection at Ackerman

Published Hearing 1970 to present

CIS Microfilm Collection, Law Library Microforms Room, cabinet 16-18

Unpublished Hearings (Senate 1823-1980 and House 1833-1972)

CIS Unpublished Hearings Collection in the Law Library Microforms Room, cabinet 30

Hearings 1967-1970 (Harwood Press – see Microforms Index for arrangement information)

Law Microforms Room, Cabinet 16

## Congressional Debate ([back up](#))

**Note:** HeinOnLine has a Congressional Record Daily to Bound citation conversion program covering volumes 140-153 (Jan. 25, 1994 to Nov. 23, 2003)

### Print

#### Congressional Record and its predecessors

*Location: KF35 .U58, Law National Collection, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor*

*Congressional Record, 1874 to present*

*Congressional Globe, 1837-1873*

*Register of Debates, 1824-1837*

*Annals of Congress, 1789-1824*

*Dates of Coverage: 1789 to present*

### Online

#### GPO Access

PDF format

*Dates of Coverage: 1994 to present*

Thomas, <http://thomas.loc.gov>

Daily edition

*Dates of Coverage: 1989 to present*

#### HeinOnLine

PDF format. Has a Congressional Record Daily to Bound citation conversion program covering volumes 140-153 (Jan. 25, 1994 to Nov. 23, 2003)

*Dates of Coverage: 1789 to present*

#### Westlaw

HTML, searchable

*Dates of Coverage: 1985 to present*

#### LexisNexis

HTML, searchable

*Dates of Coverage: 1985 to present*

### Microfilm

#### Congressional Record and its predecessors

*Location: Law Microforms Room, Cabinet 24*

*Register of Debates, 1824 (18<sup>th</sup> Congress) - 1837 (25<sup>th</sup> Congress)*

*Congressional Globe, 1837 (25<sup>th</sup> Congress) -1873 (43<sup>rd</sup> Congress)*

*Congressional Record, 1874 (43<sup>rd</sup> Congress) to 1988 (100<sup>th</sup> Congress)*

*Dates of Coverage: 1824-1988*

## Presidential Signature, Veto, and/or Signing Statement ([back up](#))

### Print

#### Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents

*Location: J80 A284, current in Reserve Room, older in Stacks*

Among other things, the Weekly Compilation includes the text of addresses by the president, public laws signed, vetoes, nominations, and the text of signing statements issued during the week. The set includes quarterly, semi-annual, and annual indexes.

*Dates of Coverage: 1969 to present*

#### Public Papers of the President

*Location: J 80 .A28, Stacks*

This annual title cumulates the weekly compilation of presidential documents, contains the public messages, speeches, and statements of the President, and has an index.

*Dates of Coverage: 1929 to 2004*

#### USCCAN

*Location: KF48 .W4, Law National Collection, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor*

Since 1986, USCCAN prints the text of any signing statement to a public law, along with other legislative history documents.

*Dates of Coverage: 1986 to present*

### Online

#### GPO Access

GPO maintains free, searchable-HTML and PDF forms of the Public Papers of the President the Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents.

*Dates of Coverage: Public Papers - 1991 forward (G.H.W. Bush); Weekly Compilation - 1993 (Volume 29) to present*

#### HeinOnLine

HeinOnLine's U.S. Presidential Library includes an impressive array of presidential documents, including the Public Papers of the President the Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents. The documents are available in PDF format.

*Dates of Coverage: Public Papers – 1931 (Herbert Hoover) – 2004 (G.W. Bush); Weekly Compilation – 1965-2007 (Vols. 1-43)*

#### Lexis

Lexis has the Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents and Public Papers of the President, both since 1979, in a searchable, HTML format.

#### Westlaw (dtb id=USCCAN)

Includes the signing statements since 1986 in USCCAN in a searchable, HTML format.

*Dates of Coverage: 1986 to present*

## Roll Call Votes ([back up](#))

### Print

#### CQ Almanac

*Location: Reference Stacks, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, JK 1 C66*

Provides House and Senate roll call votes for each bill voted upon during the session. The almanac includes other vote studies, too.

*Dates of Coverage: 1965 to current (Ackerman Library has 1948 to 2000)*

### Online

#### CQ Electronic Library

Includes all Congressional roll call votes. Use Advanced Search to search only roll call votes.

*Dates of Coverage: 1945 to present*

#### Thomas, <http://thomas.loc.gov/>

Thomas's Bill Summary & Status page links directly to the roll call vote as published on the House or Senate web page.

*Dates of Coverage: House – 1990 (101<sup>st</sup> Congress) to current; Senate – 1989 (101<sup>st</sup> Congress) to current*

## Bill Status ([back up](#))

### Print

#### Congressional Index (by CCH)

*Location: KF 49 C6, National Collection, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor*

The index allows you to track the status of a bill through the legislative process. It is arranged by bill number, but it has index entries by author, subject, and public law number, if you do not have a bill number.

*Dates of Coverage: 1947 to present*

### Online

#### Thomas, <http://thomas.loc.gov/>

Thomas's Bill Summary & Status pages show you all Congressional activity to date for pending bills and laws.

*Dates of Coverage: 1973 (93rd Congress) to present*

#### Westlaw (dtb id=US-BILLTRK (current Congress); US-BILLTRK-OLD (past Congresses))

*Dates of Coverage: 1991 to present*

#### Lexis

Dates of Coverage: Current Congress

## Part III: Congressional Quarterly and Other Congressional Publications ([back up](#))

### Print

#### CQ Almanac

*Location: Reference Stacks, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, JK 1 C66*

The Almanac provides an analysis of a Congressional session. The almanac dedicates a chapter of narrative description to each major area of Congressional work. The almanac follows the chapters with appendices covering members of Congress, vote studies, roll call votes, a list and description of all public laws passed, and the text of especially significant events.

*Dates of Coverage: Dates of Coverage: 1965 to current (Ackerman Library has 1948 to 2000)*

#### CQ Weekly

*Location: Current in Reserve Room, older in Stacks, JK1 .C15*

CQ Weekly magazine covers politics and activity in Congress. It is a current awareness publication for scholars and people interested in Congress, politics, and legislation.

*Dates of Coverage: 1998 to current (for older issues, use CQ Electronic Library)*

#### Other

The Moritz Library has many other resources about Congress, including political almanacs, Congressional directories (staff and committees, too), guides, research guides, statistics, voting studies, and interest group information. Many of these resources are available in the Reference Stacks on the second floor of the Library in the call number range JK. The Library's catalog and a reference librarian can help you find specific materials to aid in your research.

### Online

#### [CQ Electronic Library](#)

The CQ Electronic Library (CQEL) brings together several CQ publications in one search platform, allowing you to find research, statistics, news, roll call votes, and other information about Congress in a single search. CQEL includes *CQ Almanac*, *CQ Press Congress Collection*, *CQ Global Research*, *CQ Researcher*, *CQ Press Supreme Court Collection*, *Vital Statistics on American Politics*, *CQ Press Voting and Elections Collection*, and *CQ Weekly*.

*Dates of Coverage: Extensive, but varies by individual title.*

#### Thomas

Thomas's free, online resources contain a wealth of information on Congress, especially for Congresses since 1994, including Bills and Resolutions, Activity in Congress, Congressional Record, Schedules and Calendars, Committee Information, Presidential Nominations, and Treaties.

*Dates of Coverage: varies by area, but fairly comprehensive since 1994.*