



Yale Law Library Legal Research Guide

Legislative History Documents

Published legislative histories

- Johnson, Sources of Compiled Legislative Histories at Reference Desk
- Union List of Legislative Histories, 7th ed. at Reference Desk
- Reams, Federal Legislative Histories: an Annotated Bibliography and Index to Officially Published Sources at Reference Desk
- Individually published histories, commercial or congressional, in stacks. Search morris: Keyword search using the bill title and “Legislative and History”
- CIS Annual Legislative Histories in l3 reading room and online at Lexis or Congressional Universe.

Legislative history documents: where to find them

Public Law (Pub. L. after 1957 or c. through 1956 — printed in Stat.)

Statutes at Large contains all of the public and private bills passed by both houses that become law. This is the only source for laws that are not codified in the U.S. Code, e.g. appropriations laws. Stat. is available:

Print (L3 source cite room)	1789 – date
PDF images (Lexis)	1789 – date
Electronic text (Westlaw)	1973 – date
Electronic text (Lexis)	1987 – date
PDF images (U.S. GPO)	1995 – date

A commercial reprint of Stat. is part of United States Code Congressional and Administrative News (USCCAN). Also included in USCCAN are notable committee reports and other significant legislative history. USCCAN (1941 – date) is on l3 and online on Westlaw (more comprehensive starting 1990 - date).

Bill (H.R. or S.)

Each printed version usually has some changes, allowing comparisons and illuminating choices made as the legislation developed. Varieties include: bill print, reported version, engrossed version/act version and the enrolled version.

Library of Congress	1817 – date
<i>American Memory</i> Web site	(House 1799-1873) (Senate 1819-1873)
CIS fiche set (UES law library)	1933 – 1979
GPO fiche (UES law library)	1979 – date
Thomas	1989 - date
U.S. GPO (PDF) website	1993 – date
Lexis: LEGIS;BLTxxx	1989 – date
Westlaw (from Thomas): CONG-BILLTXTxxx	1995 – date (xxx = Number of Congress)

Committee Print

Committee prints can be anything a committee wants to print – usually a version of a bill or a study that relates to pending legislation, but sometimes an interesting book or report.

CIS unpublished hearings fiche set (Mudd)	1789 – date
Print (top two shelves, UES in law library)	various (mid 1940s – mid 1970s)
CIS fiche set (UES law library)	1970 – date
Lexis & Westlaw	various (mid 1980s – date)
Committee web sites or U.S. GPO	various (begins late 1990s)

Hearings (H. or S. Hrg.)

Hearings come in several varieties—legislative and oversight are most common—and any hearing can be published or unpublished. Only hearings ordered published are “published,” unpublished hearings are available in the CIS unpublished hearings collection.

CIS unpublished hearings fiche set (Mudd)	1789 – date
CIS fiche set (UES law library)	1970 – date
Print (top two shelves, UES in law library)	various (1940s –1970s)
Thomas, Committee web sites, or U.S. GPO	various (begins late 1990s)
Lexis/Westlaw(unofficial transcripts from selected hearings)	(mid 1980s – date) daily updates

Committee Report (H. Rpt. or S. Rpt)

American State Papers (L5 law library)	1789 – 1816
United States Serial Set (Mudd)	1817 – date
United States Serial Set (online)	1817 – 1980 (in process Readex and Lexis)
LoC American Memory web site	1823 – 1873
USCCAN, selective coverage	1941 – date
CIS fiche set (UES law library)	1970 – date
Thomas/U.S. GPO	1995 – date
Lexis: LEGIS;CMTRPT	1990 – date
Westlaw: LH	(1948 -1949 USCCAN reprint) 1990 – date

Floor Debates (Cong. Rec.)

There are two Congressional Records — a daily edition and a permanent edition. The pagination is not the same and there is no cross-reference table. Each version contains the proceedings of Congress, separated by chamber. The daily edition has four sections: Senate, House, Extension of Remarks and Daily Digest. At the close of a congress, the dailies are compiled in to the permanent (hard-bound) edition. The permanent edition lacks the daily digests, but includes an index.

Fiche (Permanent Ed., UES Library)	1873 – date (2002)
Thomas (Cong. Rec. Daily Ed.)	1989 - date
Westlaw & Lexis (Daily Ed.)	1985 – date
U.S. GPO online (Daily Ed.)	1994 – date

Predecessors to the Congressional Record are the Annals of Congress (1789 - 1824), Register of debates (1824 - 1837), and the Congressional Globe (1833 – 1873). These are all available in the Library of Congress’ web collection, A Century of Lawmaking.

Minutes (House or Senate Journal, House Calendars, Senate Calendar of Business)

Not usually as helpful as the Congressional Record, the Journal of the House of Representatives of the United States contains the “minutes” of each chamber’s session. It is the official, constitutionally required record of the business of Congress.

Fiche (UES law library)	1983 – date
U.S. GPO online	1991 – 1999

The House Calendar & Senate Calendar of Business set out histories of bills reported by either house. This is helpful for tracking bills currently begin considered, but Thomas is simpler to use.

U.S. GPO online 1995 – date

See also the Maclay's Journal of Senate Proceedings (1789-1791), since Senate sessions were closed to the public until 1795, his is one of the few accounts of Senate floor activity in the early Congresses. It is available in the Library of Congress' web collection, A Century of Lawmaking.

Signing Statements (Public Papers of the Presidents & Weekly Compilation of Pres. Docs.)

When the President makes a statement when he signs a bill into law, it is printed here.

Public Papers in print (UES Law Library)	1929 – date
USCCAN	1941 – date
Lexis: GENFED;PRESDC	1979 - date
Weekly Comp. Online from GPO	1993 – date
Westlaw: WCPD	1995 – date

House and Senate Documents (H. or S. Doc.) Special reports issued by the entire body, not a committee. Includes commemorative items and reference materials, e.g. an annotated U.S. Constitution and a pictorial directory.

Senate Executive Documents (S. Exec. Doc.) Assigned a letter not a number, these are generally the text of treaties referred by the President. Ceased in 1981, replaced by Senate Treaty Documents.

Senate Treaty Documents (S. Treaty Doc.) Numbered sequentially within a session. NB: Treaties don't "die" when a congress ends, they remain available for ratification by subsequent congresses.

Senate Executive Report (S. Exec. Rpt.) Committee report on whether or not to ratify a treaty or approve a nomination.

Suggested web sites

United States Government Printing Office	http://www.gpo.gov
Library of Congress Congressional Research Service	http://thomas.loc.gov
Library of Congress American Memory	http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/lawhome.html
Westlaw	http://www.westlaw.com
Lexis	http://www.lexis.com
—consider using LexisNexis Congressional)	http://www.lexis-nexis.com/congcomp
Congressional Quarterly	http://www.cq.com
Yale Law Library (legal and historical databases)	http://www.law.yale.edu/library
United States Congressional Serial Set	http://infoweb.newsbank.com

The "help" screens of LexisNexis Congressional (a.k.a. Congressional Universe) and GPO Access are a good resource for more information on specific types of documents and how they relate to the legislative process.