



# Princeton University Library

## Legislative History Research Guide

A legislative history is a collection of documents produced by a legislature during the legislative process by which a bill becomes a law. These materials are used to determine legislative intent or to clarify statutory language, but they carry only persuasive legal authority.

Researching legislative history can be somewhat difficult. For some major statutes, scholars and librarians have published completed legislative histories. If you can find one of these already-completed legislative histories, it is a valuable resource. The following resources list compiled legislative histories:

**Sources of Compiled Legislative Histories** / Nancy P. Johnson  
Social Science Reference Center (SSRC), Firestone  
KF42.2 1979

**Federal Legislative Histories: An Annotated Bibliography and Index to Officially Published Sources** / Bernard D. Reams, Jr.  
Social Science Reference Center (SSRC), Firestone  
KF42.2 1994

**Union List of Legislative Histories**  
Social Science Reference Center (SSRC), Firestone  
KF4 .U55 2000

If there is no compiled legislative history on the statute you are researching, you must compile the legislative history documents on your own. Before starting, obtain the Public Law number of the statute you are researching. Then use the indexes (print and electronic) listed below to find relevant documents. Obtain the full document in print, microfiche or electronic format.

### Print/Microfiche

#### **For Congressional documents from 1970-present:**

##### **CIS Microfiche and Index (1970-present)**

Index: Firestone Library, Social Science Reference Center, Index Table  
KF49 .C62

Index of Congressional documents from 1970 forward. Using the CIS Number in the index, find the full document on the CIS Microfiche (Firestone Microforms Services (Film))

#### **For Congressional documents prior to 1970:**

##### **CIS Serial Set Microfiche and Index (1789-1969)**

Firestone Library, Social Science Reference Center, Index Table I  
Z1223.Z9 C65 1975  
Index of the U.S. Serial Set (Congressional reports and other documents). Then find the full document on the Serial Set Microfiche.

**CIS Congressional Committee Hearings Index**

Firestone Library, Social Science Reference Center, Index Table Index  
KF40 .C56 1981

**CIS US Congressional Committee Prints Index**

Firestone Library, Social Science Reference Center, Index Table Index  
Z1223.Z7 C57

**United States Code, Congressional and Administrative News (USCCAN)**

Law Cases and Statutes (LAW), Firestone  
KF48 .xU55

Began coverage in 1944 (78th Congress, 2nd Session). Provides edited versions of key Congressional documents related to selected Public Laws.

**Electronic Indexes and Full-Text Documents**

**Lexis Congressional**

Full-text of most Congressional documents (reports, hearings, bills, Public Laws) available from late 1980s-current. Earlier documents are indexed on Lexis Congressional, some back to 1789.

**Thomas, Library of Congress**

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

Contains full text of bills, Public Laws, committee reports from recent Congresses; bill status and summary reports

**GPO Access**

<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/>

Contains bills, prints, hearings, Cong. Rec., Cong. Rec. Index, history of bills and more, extending back into the 1990s.

The flow-chart on the following page details the law making process, documents generated at stage, and where those documents can be located.

**Possible Documents Generated**

The Bill

Committee Prints

Hearing Transcript

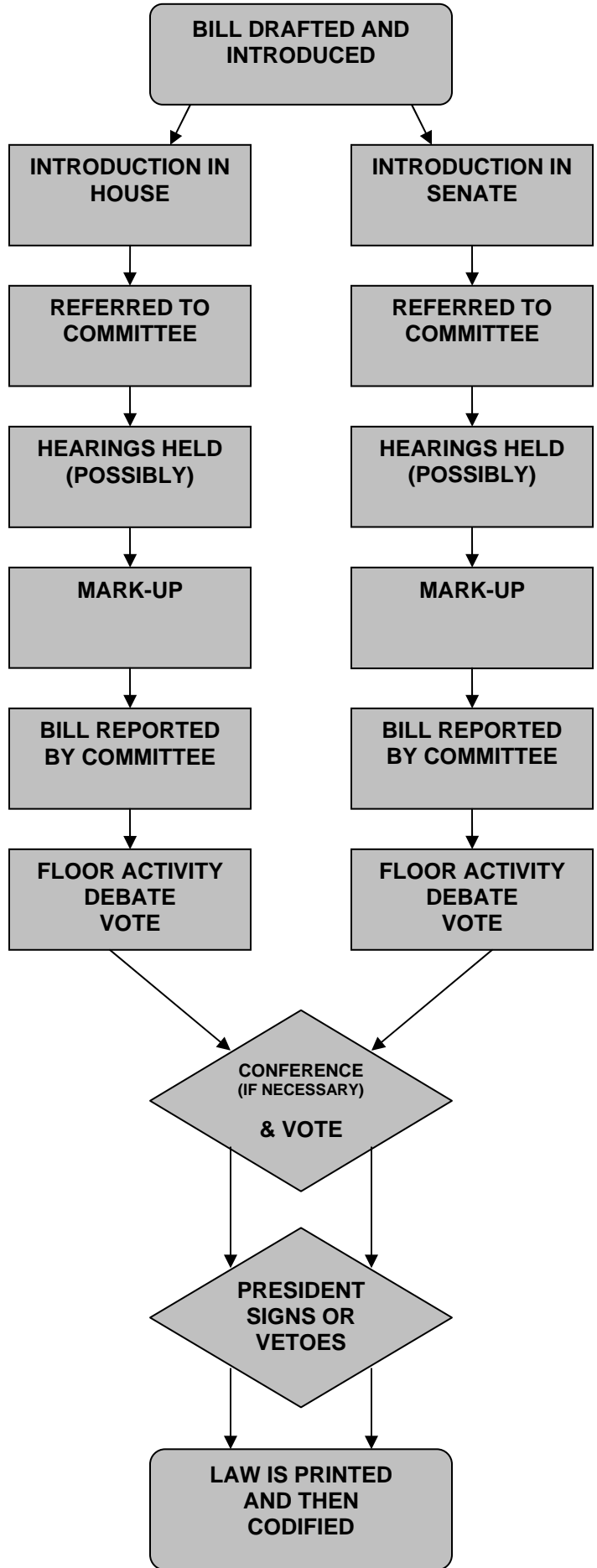
Committee Report(s)

Transcript of Debate

Conference Report

Possible Presidential Message

Public Law & Statute



**Where to Find Documents**

Congressional Record  
Lexis Congressional (1989 - present)  
GPOAccess (1993 - present); THOMAS (1989 - present)  
Lexis (1989 - present); Westlaw (1995 - present)  
Congressional Bills & Res. (microfiche 1979 - present)  
Library of Congress: A Century of Lawmaking (House 1799-1873; Senate 1819-1873)

Lexis Congressional: Index (1789-present); Full text (selected 1993-present)  
GPOAccess (1997-present)  
Lexis (1995-present)  
CIS (PRINT): CIS Index/microfiche (1970 -present); Comm. Print Index (1830-1969)

Lexis Congressional (selected from 1988-1993; full from 1993-present)  
GPOAccess (selected hearings from 1997)  
Lexis (selected transcripts from 1988)  
Westlaw (selected transcripts from 1993)  
CIS (PRINT): CIS Index/microfiche (1970-present), CIS U.S. Cong. Comm. Hearings Index (1833-1969)

Lexis Congressional: Index (1789-present); Full text (1989-present)  
U.S.C.C.A.N (selected reports from 1944-present (Westlaw))  
Thomas (1995-present)  
GPOAccess: (1995-present)  
CIS (PRINT): CIS Index/Microfiche (1970-present) & Serial Set/Index (1789-1969)

Congressional Record (1873-present) (print)  
Lexis Congressional (1985-present)  
THOMAS (1989-present)  
GPOAccess (1994-present)  
Lexis (1985-present)  
Westlaw (1985-present)

Lexis Congressional: Index (1789-present); full text (1989-present)  
U.S.C.C.A.N (selected reports from 1944-present (Westlaw))  
Thomas (1995-present)  
GPOAccess: (1995-present)  
CIS (PRINT): CIS Index/Microfiche (1970-present) & Serial Set/Index (1789-1969)

Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents (1965-present) (print)  
Public Papers of the President of the United States (1929-present) (print)  
GPOAccess (1993-present)  
Lexis (3/24/79 -present)  
Westlaw (Executive Orders from 1936 and all other document from 1984)

Statutes at Large & U.S.C.C.A.N (chronological; called Public Laws or Session Laws)  
United States Code (by subject; called statutes)