

FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE HISTORY: Library Resources

This bibliography describes online, print and microfiche sources for Federal legislative history. For a description of legislative history documents and the main sources for each type of document, see the shorter bibliography, **FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE HISTORY: Legislative Documents**.

I. ONLINE SOURCES

Each of the following online sources is available through the UB Law Library web site. Some web sites, such as THOMAS and GPO Access are public, free sources. Other sites, such as HeinOnLine and LexisNexis Congressional are commercial databases, to which UB libraries subscribes. Some legislative history documents are also available to law students and faculty through Westlaw and Lexis.

A. COMMERCIAL DATABASES - AVAILABLE TO UB LIBRARY PATRONS

If you are **on campus** at any of the UB libraries, you can access these databases without logging in. Go to the law library home page. Using the pull-down menu called Law Databases and select HeinOnLine or LN Congressional. You will get a screen that describes the database. Click on the name of the database.

These databases are also available **off site** to UB students, faculty and staff. Follow the steps for on-campus access. You will get a screen asking for your UBIT name and password. Enter this information, and you will go to the database.

HeinOnLine <http://libweb.lib.buffalo.edu/pdp/index.asp?ID=204>

A number of important legislative history documents are available in PDF format on HeinOnLine. When you click on **Subscribers enter here** you get a menu of available sources.

HeinOnLine has a full run of **U.S. Statutes at Large** going back to 1789. If you know the volume and page, you can enter them in a box at the left of the screen. Or you can click on any volume, to get a table of contents for that volume.

You can also select **U.S. Congressional Documents** from the home page. This will give you links to the full run of the **Congressional Record** and its predecessors, the **Annals of Congress**, **Register of Debates** and **Congressional Globe**. Congressional Record is most easily accessed if you know the volume and page. Click on the volume. You will get a choice of page ranges. Click on the appropriate page range, then select your page.

A third option is the **U.S. Federal Legislative History Library**. This gives you links to two very useful sources for collected legislative history:

Sources of Compiled Legislative History is the online version of the book edited by Nancy P. Johnson. This is an invaluable bibliography of cites to law review articles and books that include compiled legislative history for most significant Federal statutes. Click on the Congress that passed the statute that you are researching. You will get an alphabetical list of statutes. Click on the name of your statute.

U.S Federal Legislative History Title Collection has the full text of legislative history documents for selected statutes. While this is a more selective set of statutes than the Johnson source, it is a **gold mine** when your statute is included. For example, the two-volume set of documents for the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 is included.

LEXISNEXIS CONGRESSIONAL <http://libweb.lib.buffalo.edu/pdp/index.asp?ID=104>

LexisNexis Congressional is the online version of the Congressional Information Service (CIS) an outstanding legislative resource. CIS in print-microfiche format is described below.

LexisNexis Congressional focuses primarily on Congressional committee documents, in particular committee reports. It also provides legislative histories of public laws.

The University at Buffalo Libraries owns the **Serial Set Digital Collection**, a full-text source for **House and Senate Committee Reports** going back to 1789. There are multiple points of access. Reports from the 16th Congress (1819-20) to the present can be accessed by House or Senate report number. The advanced search feature allows you to search for reports with terms in the title and/or subject field, or in the full text of the document. You can also limit your search to any range of years, or to a particular Congress. Your query will yield a short abstract describing the report, with a link to the full text of the report in PDF.

LexisNexis Congressional is an excellent source for compiled **Legislative Histories**, particularly for more recent legislation. There are essentially three generations of legislative history, with each succeeding generation becoming more complete. From 1970 to 1985, legislative histories are terse, including mainly CIS citations to relevant documents. Starting in 1986, with the publication in print of a separate annual Legislative History volume, the legislative histories become much more detailed, with short abstracts for each committee report and hearing. The legislative histories also collect cites to items generated by prior Congresses, and not just the one that passed the statute. Beginning with the 106th Congress (1999-2000) the online legislative histories feature links to the full text of committee reports.

The simplest access to any legislative history is by public law number. It is also possible to employ search terms in the title or subject fields. Searches can be limited by date or Congress.

Searching for **Committee Hearings** on LexisNexis Congressional is facilitated by the variety of fields available. In addition to the usual fields and limiters - title, subject, date, Congress - it is also possible to search for hearings by a particular committee. Also, you can search for a particular witness or witness affiliation. This last feature can be invaluable. Thus, it is possible to retrieve hearings in which an officer of a particular corporation or agency testified.

While many hearing abstracts feature links to full testimony this is a bit misleading. In many instances, the link goes to the prepared statements of witnesses, and not to the questions and answers that follow such statements.

B. FREE DATABASES

Two databases maintained by the U.S. government provide access to legislative history documents. Both databases are free, and do not require that you log in. They are: **THOMAS**, maintained by the Library of Congress; and **GPO Access**, maintained by the U.S. Government printing office.

THOMAS <http://www.thomas.gov>

Thomas is a very well-organized and accessible source for the text of public laws, bills, committee reports and floor debates.

When you know the public law number of enacted legislation, it is often best to start by retrieving the **Bill Summary and Status Report**. Click on public laws then on the number of the Congress that passed the statute. Then select the public law number from the pull-down menu. You will retrieve a grid with numerous choices. For example, Text of Legislation gives you a list of all the various versions of the bill, as it passed through Congress, with links to the text of each version. Major Congressional Actions provides a chronology of key events, including committee action and floor debates, with links to committee reports and to the Congressional Record. CRS Summary provides a summary of key provisions in the statute, written by the Congressional Research Service.

It is also possible to retrieve the Bill Summary and Status Report for any un-enacted legislation. From the home page, click on Bills, Resolutions then on Bill Summary, Status. Then click on the Congress that considered the bill, and enter the bill number as a search term. You can also enter key words to find bills or public laws on particular topics. You have a choice of searching within a particular Congress, or searching multiple Congresses.

If you know the number of a particular Committee Report, you can retrieve it directly. From the home page, click on Committee Reports then on the number of the Congress, then browse reports by either House or Senate.

You can also retrieve text of the Congressional Record, using a variety of techniques, including the name of the Senator or Representative, the date of the debate, and/or the topic debated.

Thomas is also a fine source for information regarding current activities in Congress. The Yesterday in Congress Congressional Record Daily Digest and Schedules, Calendars links provide means of accessing such information. Presidential Nominations links information on the status of nominations to judicial and cabinet posts.

GPO ACCESS www.gpoaccess.gov

GPO Access provides text of public laws, bills and debates in the Congressional Record, as well as Conference Committee Reports. Public Laws and bills are available from 1995. The Congressional Record is available from 1994. Key word searching is not typically as effective in GPO Access as in Thomas. However, if you have a public law or bill number or Congressional Record cite, the text is easily retrievable.

The Weekly Compilation of Presidential Papers, back to 1993, and the Public Papers of the Presidents for George W. Bush are available through the link labeled Presidential Materials.

C. LAW SCHOOL ONLY DATABASES - LEXIS AND WESTLAW

Two sources which are available **only to law students and faculty** also have legislative history documents. Both Lexis and Westlaw require users to sign in using passwords. Please note that Westlaw's **Campus Research**, which is available to the public, does not include the legislative history documents.

LEXIS - Lexis has two important legislative history databases. The full text of the **Congressional Record** is available, back to 1985. The text of all House and Senate **Committee Reports** is available back to 1990. These sources can be searched using the various methods utilized in other Lexis databases, including terms-and-connectors queries, date limiters and segment searching. The databases can be accessed by clicking **Federal Legal** and then **Legislative History Materials** from the Lexis directory page. Alternately, click **Find a Source** and then type in congressional record or committee reports

WESTLAW - Westlaw has the same coverage of floor debates and committee reports as Lexis - **Congressional Record** from 1985 and **Committee Reports** from 1990. Westlaw also can be searched using terms-and-connectors queries, date limiters and field searches.

Westlaw has two other potentially useful databases. United States Code Congressional and Administrative News (USCCAN), a source that has been available in print since 1948, publishes selected committee reports for virtually all significant legislation. Thus, it is **not** intended as a comprehensive source for all reports for a given statute; rather, it purports to provide the most useful reports in each instance. Westlaw has the full run of USCCAN.

Arnold and Porter collected legislative histories provide the full text of virtually all legislative history documents for selected Acts. Relative few statutes are included in this collection. However, if you are fortunate to find an Arnold and Porter legislative history for a statute that you are researching, you will have virtually everything at your fingertips.

All of these databases can be accessed by clicking on **U.S. Federal materials** and then on **Legislative History** at the Westlaw Directory page. Alternately, type the name of the database in the **search for a database** box.

II. PRINT AND MICROFICHE SOURCES

Although most legislative history research can now be done online, there are still a number of important sources available in print. Also, the CIS microfiche service remains an invaluable source for legislative history documents.

A. TEXT OF THE STATUTE

Federal statutes are first published chronologically, and then assembled topically in the United States Code.

UNITED STATES STATUTES AT LARGE is the official chronological source for the text of all public laws. Laws are published in the sequence in which they are enacted. Researchers can find a statute either by using the volume and page cite to the Statutes at Large, or by using the Public Law number. The public law number is made up of two components, the Congress which passed the statute and the sequential number of the law. Thus, consider the following citation:

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Public Law 101-336, 104 Stat. 327. This cite means that the ADA was the 336th public law passed by the 101st Congress, and that it is printed in volume 104 of the Statutes at Large, page 327.

UNITED STATES CODE CONGRESSIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE NEWS (USCCAN) also publishes the text of all public laws. USCCAN is discussed below.

UNITED STATES CODE (USC) is the official codified source for Federal statutes. USC is published in 50 titles which are each divided into sections. Thus the Code cite for the *Americans with Disabilities Act* is 42 U.S.C. §§ 12201, *et seq.*

This means that the Act is in title 42 of USC beginning at section 12201.

While the United States Code is the official source for Federal statutes, most researchers use one of the two commercial versions of the Code. There are two reasons for this. First, U.S.C. is published very slowly. A new version of the Code is published every six years, with annual cumulations in the intervening 5 years. At present, about half of the 2006 edition of U.S.C. has been published. The second reason for using commercial versions is that they include numerous editorial features which can greatly aid in research. These features will be discussed below.

The two commercial versions of the United States Code are **UNITED STATES CODE ANNOTATED (USCA)** published by Thomson-West and **UNITED STATES CODE SERVICE (USCS)** published by LexisNexis. Publication of these commercial codes is much more timely. Annual pocket parts supplement each print volume, and pamphlets provide additional updating throughout the year.

Both commercial versions of the code include numerous research features, including the following: derivation, giving the cite to the public law from which the code derives; cites to related statutes; regulations passed under the authority of the statutes; law review articles; treatises; encyclopedias; forms and other practice aids. The most-utilized feature is likely the extensive case notes, summaries of case law interpreting each section. USCA purports to be comprehensive, including case notes for virtually every published case on a given statute. USCS is more selective in its use of case notes.

Both publications include numerous finding tools. Of particular note is the Popular Name Table, which enables the researcher to find the code and public law for a statute based on its name. There are also tables cross-listing the U.S.C. and public law cites, section-by-section. Each set has an extensive general index.

B. CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE DOCUMENTS

CONGRESSIONAL INFORMATION SERVICE (CIS) - Since its inception in 1970, the Congressional Information Service has been widely recognized as the most comprehensive commercial source for legislative history documents. It also is a very accessible system, which has made searching for documents much simpler than in the past.

CIS focuses on Congressional committee items - reports and hearings, as well as other documents generated by House and Senate committees. The system comprises three elements: (1) indexes, (2) abstracts of each document and (3) the full text of each item on microfiche. Generally, a researcher goes from looking for relevant items in the index to reading descriptions of the items in the abstracts to retrieving the microfiche text. However, it is sometimes possible to short circuit the process by going directly to the text. CIS also publishes very comprehensive legislative histories, which are collected in a freestanding annual volume.

CIS MICROFICHE - In most instances, your CIS search will lead you to one or more microfiche documents. Most often, the document will be a House or Senate committee report, or the transcript of a committee hearing, with exhibits. However, two other items are also included in the microfiche set. A **Committee Print** is any document that the committee deems to be important enough to include in the legislative history. A print may be a census report, expert analysis of an issue, statistical summary or other data relevant to the issue being considered. A **Committee Document** is typically a communication from the office of the President, for example a message in support of proposed legislation.

CIS microfiche are shelved according to a rather straightforward classification system. Each document is assigned a unique alphanumeric code, which reflects the following information, in sequence: (1) the year of the item; (2) whether it is a House or Senate item; (3) the committee that generated the item; (4) the type of item (report, hearing, etc) and (5) the item's place in the sequence of similar items for that year.

For example, CIS item **98 S201-8** means:

- " The item is from **1998**
- " It is from the **Senate**
- " It comes from the **Armed Services Committee** (Senate committee number **20**)
- " It is a hearing (**1**) before that committee
- " And it is the **8th** hearing before that committee in 1998

The system is much easier to navigate than it might seem. The beginning of each CIS Index volume has a very good explanation of how it works. Also, do not hesitate to ask a librarian for assistance if you have a trouble finding an item.

The UB Law Library has a complete set of CIS microfiche documents from 1970 through 2006.

CIS ABSTRACTS - Before retrieving the microfiche text of an item, it is usually advisable to consult the description of the item in the CIS Abstracts volume. Every year, CIS publishes separate Index and Abstract volumes.

Abstracts use the same alphanumeric codes as microfiche, and are in the same order. Thus, to find the abstract for **98 S201-8**, you would go to the 1998 Abstracts volume, then to the Senate, then to section 201, and to subsection 201-8.

An abstract of a committee reports summarizes the general substance of the report as well as any section-by-section breakdown. An abstract of a committee hearing is particularly useful since, in addition to summarizing the general subjects covered in the hearing, it will also include a summary, for each witness, of that witness' comments, with cites to pages in the hearing where that testimony is located.

CIS INDEXES - CIS indexes are quite thorough, well organized and intuitive. Indexes employ multiple access points for each item, so that you seldom have guess at the indexing terminology employed by CIS. The indexes are also extensively cross-referenced, so that you will be led to more germane headings, if you use a reasonably relevant term.

Among the numerous points of access, documents are indexed based on each of the following categories: subject of the publication; subject of hearing testimony; name and affiliation of witness; name of author of exhibit or appendix; name of committee or subcommittee. Documents can also be retrieved using a range of identifying numbers. CIS has numerical indexes for report numbers; hearing numbers (if one is assigned) and bill numbers. Researchers also can look for documents based on the committee which issued them.

From 1970 to 1986, Indexes were cumulated into 4-year volumes. Since from 1986 to 2007 index volumes are annual.

CIS LEGISLATIVE HISTORY VOLUME - Since 1986, CIS has published an annual Legislative History volume. CIS legislative histories are comprehensive and exhaustive. They include cites to virtually all reports, hearings and other committee documents related to each public law passed during the prior year. CIS legislative histories are particularly valuable since they are not limited to documents generated during the congress that passed the law. Often committee consideration of a bill or issue will take place over a number of congresses, before a law is enacted. CIS legislative histories include cites to documents generated in each of the prior Congresses. From 1970 to 1985, CIS published much shorter legislative histories of all public laws in its annual volume.

UNITED STATES CODE CONGRESSIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE NEWS (USCCAN)

Where CIS is a comprehensive source for Congressional committee documents, USCCAN takes a selective approach. Typically, USCCAN publishes one or two (occasionally three) committee reports for Public Laws that the editors deem significant. This selective approach can benefit researchers who want to focus on key documents, since USCCAN editors make sound decisions as to the most important reports. Hearings and other committee documents are not included. Usually, the full text of the selected reports is printed, although occasionally, extended excerpts are included. Since 1986, USCCAN has also published the text of presidential signing and veto statements.

USCCAN is comprised of two parts. The text of all public laws is included in the first part, with the selected legislative documents in the second part. Abbreviated legislative histories, with cites to committee reports and dates of floor debates are also included. USCCAN is published in annual volumes, and is updated with frequent pamphlets during the legislative session. The pamphlets are a useful early source for the print version of recently enacted Public Laws.

Useful features include a list of Senators and Representatives, with the committee assignments of each; a list of executive orders; and a popular name table for all public laws.

HOUSE AND SENATE COMMITTEE HEARINGS - Transcripts of House and Senate committee hearings, including exhibits, are published as freestanding pamphlets by the United States Government Printing Office. Each hearing receives a Superintendent of Documents or sudoc number. While this number is a bit idiosyncratic, it can be translated without much difficulty. You can ask a reference librarian for assistance in doing so. Committee hearings are included in the University Libraries [Online Catalog](#). A title key word search is often effective in finding a such hearing.

C. FLOOR DEBATES

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD - Since 1873, the Congressional Record has been the official source for debates on the floor of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. The Congressional Record includes debates, proposed floor amendments, and votes on bills, termed yeas and nays. Each day's session comes out in a daily edition. There is also a bound annual edition. Paging of the two editions differs, with the daily edition prefacing pages with an S or H to indicate Senate and House proceedings. The annual edition does not employ those prefaces.

There are a number of useful finding tools in the annual edition, including a detailed index, a Daily Digest which summarizes each day's highlights, and a History of Bills and Resolutions which details the key events for all enacted and un-enacted legislation.

The Congressional Record was preceded by two publications. The **REGISTER OF DEBATES** summarized floor debates between 1824 and 1837. The **CONGRESSIONAL GLOBE** summarized debates from 1833 to 1851, and printed a verbatim record of debates from 1851 to 1872.

WHERE TO FIND LEGISLATIVE HEARING ITEMS

Following is a short summary of the location of print and microfiche sources described herein. A map of the law library, showing the locations of these items is available at the reference desk and on the Law Library home page.

UNITED STATES CODE, UNITED STATES CODE ANNOTATED AND UNITED STATES CODE SERVICE are shelved on the main (second) floor of the library about half way back on the right hand side.

UNITED STATES STATUTES AT LARGE AND USCCAN are also shelved on the right hand side of the main floor of the law library, just past the United States Code.

CIS INDEX, ABSTRACT AND LEGISLATIVE HISTORY VOLUMES are shelved on the law library main floor immediately to your right, as you enter the library.

CIS MICROFICHE are housed on the sixth floor of the law library, just outside the computer lab, room 630A. Microfiche readers/printers are available on the Fifth Floor in the Koren AV Center.

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, CONGRESSIONAL GLOBE AND REGISTER OF DEBATES are shelved on the sixth floor of the law library. Go through the wooden door, make a right and then an immediate right turn to get to the Congressional Record. The Congressional Globe and Register of debates are shelved immediately before the Congressional Record.

HOUSE AND SENATE COMMITTEE HEARINGS are shelved in the Government Documents collection on the first floor of Lockwood Library. As you enter the library, make a sharp left and walk down the stairs. Reference librarians are seated on the second floor of Lockwood Library, just past the elevators.