BASICS OF UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT AND LEGISLATION

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I. Background

a) Organizational chart of the United States Government

United States Government Manual
Most recent copy at the Reference Desk, call # KF5101 .A32
Online at http://www.gpoaccess.gov/gmanual/index.html

b) Home Pages for each Branch of Government

1. Legislative Branch
   Legislative information from the Library of Congress: THOMAS
   http://thomas.loc.gov/
   House of Representatives:
   http://www.house.gov/
   Senate:
   http://www.senate.gov/
2. Executive Branch
   White House:
   http://www.whitehouse.gov/government/
3. Judicial Branch
   United States Federal Courts home page:
   http://www.uscourts.gov/
   Federal Judicial Center home page:
   http://www.fjc.gov/public/home.nsf

II. Sources of Federal Law

The Constitution of the United States

http://www.archives.gov/national-archives-experience/charters/constitution_transcript.html
http://www.gpoaccess.gov/constitution/index.html
http://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/constitution.overview.html

Reprinted in various places, including the United States Code, the United States Code Annotated, the United States Code Service, and The United States Government Manual.
Also on Westlaw and Lexis.

Legislative Materials

United States Statutes at Large:

The official source for the laws and resolutions passed by Congress. Public laws, also referred to as Acts, are published chronologically. Abbreviated as: 1 Stat. 1 (2000) (Volume 1 of the *Statutes at Large*, page 1, 2000 edition).
Print: Main Reading Room, call # KF50
Online:
Statutes at Large, 1789-1875: http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/lwsl.html
Statutes at Large home page: http://www.gpoaccess.gov/statutes/index.html

The *United States Code*:

Official codification of U.S. statutes. Arranges laws by subject into 50 titles and is completely revised every six years with annual supplements between revisions. Abbreviated as 1 U.S.C. § 1 (2000) (Title 1 of the U.S.C. section 1, 2000 edition)
Print: Main Reading Room, call #KF62 .A2
Online: http://www.gpoaccess.gov/uscode/index.html , or
Browse: http://www.gpoaccess.gov/uscode/browse.html, or
Cornell's Legal Information Institute:
http://www4.law.cornell.edu/uscode/

United States Code Annotated (USCA) published by West/Thomson and available on Westlaw. Annotations include references to case law, legislative history, administrative regulations and various secondary sources.
Abbreviated as: 1 U.S.C.A. § 1 (2000)

United States Code Service (USCS) published by Lexis and available on LexisNexis. Annotations include references to case law, legislative history, administrative regulations and various secondary sources
Abbreviated as: 1 U.S.C.S. § 1 (2000)

Executive Materials

Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents:

Executive agreements, executive orders, proclamations, communications with Congress, Presidential speeches and other presidential documents. Abbreviated as: 1 Weekly Comp. Pres. Doc., 1 (January 1, 2000)
Print: Stacks, call # KF5051.A1 W4
Online: http://origin.www.gpoaccess.gov/wcomp/ or
http://www.gpo.gov/nara/nara003.html
Also available on Westlaw and LexisNexis.

Federal Register:

Official daily publication for rules, proposed rules, and notices of Federal agencies and organizations, as well as executive orders and other presidential documents. Abbreviated as: 1 Fed. Reg. 1 (January 1, 2000)

Print: Stacks, KF70 .A2
Online: http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/index.html
Also available on Westlaw and LexisNexis

Code of Federal Regulations:
Codification of the general and permanent rules published in the Federal Register by the executive departments and agencies of the Federal Government. It is divided into 50 titles that represent broad areas subject to Federal regulation. Each volume of the CFR is updated once each calendar year and is issued on a quarterly basis. Abbreviated as: 1 C.F.R. § 1 (Volume 1 C.F.R. section 1)
Print: Main Reading Room, call # KF70 .A3
Online: http://www.gpoaccess.gov/cfr/index.html
Also available on Westlaw and LexisNexis.

Judicial Materials

United States Reports
Official case reporter for the United States Supreme Court.
Abbreviated as: 1 U.S. 1 (Volume 1 of the U.S. Reports page 1)
Print: East Reading Room, call # KF101
Online from 1990 forward :
http://www.supremecourtus.gov/opinions/boundvolumes.html or
http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/index.html
Also available on Westlaw and LexisNexis.

Supreme Court Reporter
Published by Thomson/West with editorial synopses and headnotes for each case. The headnotes are part of the West Key Number classification system.
Abbreviated as: 1 S.Ct. 1
Print: East Reading Room, call # KF101 .W4
Available on Westlaw, with Key Numbers, and LexisNexis, without Key Numbers.

United States Supreme Court Reports, Lawyers Edition
Published by Lexis with editorial summaries and headnotes for each case.
Abbreviated as: 1 L.Ed 1 or 1 L.Ed. 2d 1
Print: East Reading Room, call # KF101 .L31
Available on Westlaw, without Lexis case notes, and on LexisNexis, with case notes.

Federal Reporter, various series.
Abbreviated as 1 F. 1 or 1 F.3d 1
Print: East Reading Room, call # KF105 .W5
Available on Westlaw, with Key Numbers, and on LexisNexis.

Federal Supplement, first and second series.

Abbreviated as 1 F.Supp. 1 or 1 F.Supp. 2d 1
Print: East Reading Room, call # KF105 .W6
Available on Westlaw, with Key Numbers, and on LexisNexis.

III. <u>Commentary and Analysis</u>

Restatements of the Law:

Published by the American Law Institute and written by legal scholars and members of the Judiciary, the Restatements aim is to extract "black letter law" from U.S. case law. The Restatements cover several broad topics, such as torts, contracts, and foreign relations of the U.S. The Restatements are not sources of primary law but are considered persuasive authority by many courts.
Available on Westlaw and LexisNexis.

Treatises:

Books or loose-leaf publications containing scholarly and comprehensive reviews of a specific area of law. One example is *Nimmer on Copyright : a Treatise on the Law of Literary, Musical and Artistic Property, and the Protection of Ideas* . (At Patron Services Desk, call # KF2994 .N54). Treatises are less persuasive than the Restatements and are not sources of law but are occasionally cited by the courts.

Law reviews and journal articles:

Scholarly articles summarizing, analyzing, criticizing or proposing laws and legal trends. Written by scholars and law students, law review articles are much less persuasive than Restatements and treatises but articles by leading scholars have been cited in court opinions.

IV. Legal Encyclopedias

Legal encyclopedias are useful for getting a general overview of a legal topic. They are non-critical statements of general propositions of law and should not be cited as authority. The law library has *Corpus Juris Secundum* and *American Jurisprudence* in and both sets are available on Westlaw. *American Jurisprudence* is also available on LexisNexis.

American Jurisprudence 2d (Am. Jur. 2d)
North Reading Room, call # KF154 .A7
Available on Westlaw and LexisNexis

Corpus Juris Secundum (C.J.S.)
North Reading Room, call # KF154 .C601
Available on Westlaw

American Law Reports (various series)
American Law Reports is a continuing series of articles that collect and analyze court cases decided on a particular point of law, discussing and explaining which cases are controlling.
North Reading Room, call # KF105 .A45
Available on Westlaw and LexisNexis

V. Legal Research Guides

Berring, Robert C. and Elizabeth A. Edinger. *Finding the Law*, 12th edition. St. Paul, MN, Thomson/West 2005. Patron Services, call # KF240 .B45 2005.
Cohen, Morris L. and Kent C. Olson. *Legal Research in a Nutshell*, 8th edition. St. Paul, MN, Thomson/West, 2000. Patron Services, call # KF240 .C54 2007.

Mersky, Roy M. and Donald J. Dunn. *Fundamentals of Legal Research*, 8th edition. New York: Foundation Press, 2002. Reference Desk, call # KF240 .J32 2002.

On the Web:

A Guide to the U.S. Federal Legal System: Web-Based Publicly Accessible Sources
http://www.nyulawglobal.org/globalex/United_States.htm

Guide to Law Online from the Library of Congress (includes a section on U.S. resources)
http://www.loc.gov/law/public/law-guide.html

Sources for Federal Legislative History
http://www.law.berkeley.edu/library/dynamic/guide.php?guide=alr/fedleg