



RIPS-SIS Program: What Were They Thinking and Where Do I Find It?: Strategies for Starting Legislative History Research

Tuesday, July 24, 2012,
10:15 a.m. - 11:15 a.m. @ HCC-Room 208

A Few Strategies

- With a U.S. Code citation: View the source note/historical and revision notes immediately below the statutory language to find the Public Law citation (starting with the 85th Congress, 1957-) and/or U.S. Statutes at Large citation
- With a Public Law citation: Proceed to the U.S. Statutes at Large, which has the Public Laws in chronological order, to find the bill number
 - Why is having the bill number important? (1) Allows researcher to use the “History of Bills and Resolutions” in the Congressional Record to find pages with floor debate, and (2) Allows for more search options in databases such as ProQuest Congressional
- With the Popular Name of an act: Consult an online popular name table (<http://uscode.house.gov>, www.law.cornell.edu) or the USCA/USCS print tables to find Public Law/U.S. Statutes at Large citation

Primary Documents containing Legislative History

- Committee Reports (H. Rep, S. Rep.)
 - Conference Reports (often cited as House Reports) can be especially helpful (look for Joint Explanatory Statement or Statement of the Managers)
 - Committee Reports are included in U.S. Congressional Serial Set
- Floor Debate published in the Congressional Record and its predecessors (Annals of Congress, Register of Debates, Congressional Globe)
- Committee Hearing Transcripts and Bills (especially if no report/debate)

Secondary Resources (Using Citations/Keywords to find Primary Documents)

- Compiled Legislative Histories
 - HeinOnline, ProQuest Legislative Insight, Westlaw GAO Histories, USCCAN, single and multi-volume histories in print, etc.
- Congressional Information Service (CIS) Materials
 - Print indexes, abstracts, and lists for primary documents in microform
 - Pre-1970: separate volumes for committee reports, hearings, etc.
 - Starting in 1970: volumes include references to all document types
- ProQuest Congressional: electronic version of CIS Materials...searchable, containing modules with many primary documents in PDF

Some Important Sites for Legislative History Research

- U.S. House of Representatives, Office of the Law Revision Counsel:
<http://uscode.house.gov> (U.S. Code; popular name table; list of positive law titles in the U.S. Code; tables matching U.S. Code and Public Law citations)
- Legal Information Institute at Cornell University Law School:
www.law.cornell.edu (U.S. Code; popular name table)
- U.S. Government Printing Office's Federal Digital System (FDsys):
www.gpo.gov/fdsys (U.S. Code; U.S. Statutes at Large, 1951-2009; committee reports, 1995-present; Congressional Record, 1994-present; select committee hearing transcripts, 1985-88, 1991-present)
- Library of Congress's THOMAS legislative information site: <http://thomas.gov> (full-text bills in HTML, 1989-present, and in HTML/PDF, 1993-present; committee reports, 1995-present; Congressional Record in HTML, 1989-present, in HTML/PDF, 1995-present; bill summary & status information, 1973-present)
- Library of Congress's A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation:
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw> (covers 1774-1875 in TIFF, contains U.S. Statutes at Large; select committee reports (at U.S. Serial Set link); congressional debates (Annals through Cong. Rec.); bills and resolutions)

Select Legislative History Research Guides

Federal Legislative History

- Law Librarians' Society of Washington, D.C. (LLSDC): www.llsdc.org/Fed-Leg-Hist
- Law Library of Congress: www.loc.gov/law/help/leghist.php
- LexisNexis Zimmerman's Research Guide for Federal Legislative History:
<http://law.lexisnexis.com/infopro/zimmermans/disp.aspx?z=1465>

State Legislative History

- LexisNexis Zimmerman's Research Guides for State Legislative History:
<https://law.lexisnexis.com/infopro/zimmermans/disp.aspx?z=1962>
 - Zimmerman's has dedicated legislative history guides for states such as New York, California, Massachusetts, and Washington, and legislative history sections for the general legal research guides for many other states
- Indiana University Law Library (Bloomington), State Legislative History Research Guides on the Web:
<http://www.law.indiana.edu/lawlibrary/research/guides/statelegislative/index.shtml>