

2016 National Legal Research Teach-In Kit

Research Instruction & Patron Services Special Interest Section
American Association of Law Libraries

District of Columbia Statutory Law

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The District of Columbia Statutory Law presentation was given to the Advanced Legal Research class. The presentation provides detailed information about sources of District of Columbia statutes including online and print publications, legislative tracking systems, legislative history and secondary sources. It was created with the law school student in mind as they conduct research while working in our law school clinics, local externships and write their scholarly papers.

District of Columbia Statutory Law

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Talking Points

- District of Columbia Governance
- D.C. Legislative Process
- Online/Print Sources of Statutory Law
- D.C. Legislative History
- Updating and Citing D.C. Statutory Law

History of District of Columbia Governance

- U.S. Constitution
Art. I, Sec. 8, cl. 17
- District of Columbia Self-Governmental Reorganization Act (otherwise known as **D.C. Home Rule Act**) (1973)
- The Council of the District of Columbia (D.C. Council) (1975)

District of Columbia Governance

Executive

- **Mayor**
- Enforces Laws
- Enacts Executive Orders
- Oversees D.C. budget

Legislative

- **D.C. Council**
- Enacts laws
- Oversees D.C. agencies, commissions and boards of D.C. government

D.C. Legislative Process

- D.C. Council drafts **bill** and submits to a committee, which may hold hearings
- Bill submitted to D.C. Mayor for approval:
(Now it is an “**act.**”)
- Council submits act to U.S. Congress
- Congress has 30 days to review civil act
(60 days for criminal act)
- Act becomes a **statute** (in D.C. Official Code).

D.C. Register

- Bulletin of D.C. Legislative Activity
- Publishes the following:
 - Notices of Rulemaking (proposed and final)
 - Mayor's Orders
 - Notices of Public Hearings

Online

D.C. Office of the Secretary - <http://www.dcregs.dc.gov/>
(2009 - present), (2003- 2008, Index)

Print

Mason Law Library
(Pre - 2010)

D.C. Statutory Law – Online & Print

- D.C. Statutes at Large -

<http://dccouncil.us/pages/statutes-at-large>

laws published and arranged in chronological order of enactment

Online - (Jan 2013 – present)

Print - (1976 – 1986)

- D.C. Code -

<http://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/dccode/>

laws published and arranged by topic

Online & Print

D.C. Official Code

- 51 titles
- Annotated
- Updated on a yearly basis
- Finding Aids (i.e. – Index, Parallel Tables)

Online Sources of D.C. Statutory Law

- Lexis Advance
- WestlawNext
- D.C. Council website
- D.C. Office of the Secretary



Online v. Print Materials

Online

- Natural Language
- Terms & Connectors
- Convenient and Expedient

Print

- Finding Aids
- Some DC materials only available in print
(i.e. – D.C. Practice Manual)
- Familiarity helps when online resources are not available

Sources of D.C. Legislative History

- Part I

- Annotations in D.C. Code
- Committee reports
- Testimony
- Statements
- Comments
- Formal amendment
- Case decisions

Sources of D.C. Legislative History

– Part II

- Legislative Information Management System (LIMS) – <http://lims.dccouncil.us/> - online legislative tracking system available on the DC Council's website
- Legislative Services Division - office that keeps archives of DC legislative activity
Ph: 202-724-8050
- Congress.gov – database that tracks federal legislative activity
(1975 – present)
- Proquest Legislative Insight – federal legislative history database
(available through Mason Law Library database)
Covers 1st Congress (1789-1791) – 114th Congress (2015 – present)

Secondary Sources of D.C. Law

The D.C. Practice Manual

D.C. Criminal Law & Procedure

The Law of Evidence in D.C.

Domestic Relations Manual for D.C.

Standardized Civil Jury Instructions for D.C.

Wills, Trusts & Estates for the D.C. Practitioner

D.C. Historical Collections

- UDC Mason Law Library – D.C. Historical Collection
- Georgetown Law Library
- D.C. Public Library - Washingtonia Collection
- National Archives

Updating Statutory Law

Purpose

- Make sure the law is still in force
- Find out how the law has been affected by subsequent legislation

Citator tools

- LexisAdvance – Shepard’s
- WestlawNext – KeyCite
- Fastcase - Authority Check (available through HeinOnline)

The Bluebook Rules

Bluepages

- Rule B12.1.2 – State Statutes
- Rule B13 – Legislative Materials - State Bills and Resolutions

Whitepages

- Rule 12 – Statutes
- Rule 13 – Legislative Materials

Tables

- Table 1.3
- District of Columbia – Statutory Compilations and Session Laws



Sources of D.C. Legal Research

- The District of Columbia Bar, The District of Columbia Practice Manual (2015)
(Chapter 1 – Finding the Law in the District of Columbia)
- Leah F. Chanin, Pamela J. Gregory and Sarah K. Wiant, Legal Research in the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia (2d ed. 2000)
- Law Library research guides