

To obtain background information for a basic legislative history, there are a finite collection of documents that must be identified. These include:

- Introduced Bill
- Committee Prints
- Hearings
- Committee Reports
- Markups, Debates, Votes
- Enrolled Bill
- Public Laws

The route to the final goal – the creation of a new Public Law – is complicated and may create several of the above documents as the new bill proceeds on its way through Congress. The basic life cycle of a bill looks (at its most basic) like this:

House → HR # assigned → Sent to committee → Sent back to floor for vote → Sent to Senate.

Senate → S# assigned → Sent to committee → Sent back to Senate floor for vote → Sent to House.

After a bill is passed by **both chambers of Congress**, it (the “enrolled bill”) is sent to the President.

- 1) The President has three options: He may veto the bill
(a 2/3 majority of Congress may vote to override any presidential veto, making the bill a new Public Law).
- 2) He may ignore the bill if congress less than 10 days from end of current session
(a “pocket veto”).
- 3) He may sign the bill, creating a new Public Law.

After a bill is signed into law, it is given a unique id number. The first two letters of this number are “PL” (for Public Law). The next set of numbers indicates the session of congress during which the bill became law. The final set of numbers is a sequential number of new public laws for this particular session of congress. So for a bill which became the 232nd law during the 94th session of congress, the full identification number would be: PL-94-232.

After the new law receives its id and is printed as an individual “slip law,” it is then printed in the official set of all laws of the United States called “Statutes at Large”. The citation for Statutes designates first in which volume the law is found followed by “STAT” and lastly providing the page number where the printed version of the law is found in that volume. A citation for a law printed in volume 74 of Statutes at Large and beginning on page 1273 would read as follows: 74 STAT 1273.

As most people do not refer to laws by their PL number during normal conversation, most laws are also given a “popular name”. The popular name may include the word “act” and may also include the date this act became a law. Popular names are useful in locating more specific information about a law.

A basic legislative history should include the following information:

- PL #
- Statutes at Large citation
- Popular Name
- Date signed into law.
- Bill number (often also including name and affiliation of sponsor/sponsors)
(May also include any similar or “companion” bills introduced at the same time)
- Brief description of contents of bill.
- List of any documents created in while in committee (either chamber), citation and brief description.
(Committee Prints / Hearings / Committee Reports – there may be multiple of any type per law)
- List of any debates, bill markup, voting record (include dates of same)
- Any presidential action
- Codified law: Location of law when divided by subject (US Code citation/s)

If law was catalyst for new regulations in agencies under the Executive branch, check for:

- Regulations
- Codified Regulations: Location in Code of Federal Regulations (citation/s)

If at any time after the bill has become a law the constitutionality of the law has been called into question, you may find reference to a Supreme Court ruling. This is uncommon for the majority of laws. Lower court cases which help refine and define the law may be more common.

The following two pages list where to find legislative history documents by source and by document type.

You may also locate these documents by going to our website:

<http://www.umflint.edu/library>> articles and databases> dropdown menu for Legislative Histories

Call numbers for Print Resources:

[National Journal](#)-Shelved by title in periodical section

[United States Code Congressional and Administrative News \(USCCAN\)](#)- Reference Collection JK 11 .U58

Legislative History Documents Sorted by Source

Source	Information to be found here	Coverage
ONLINE SOURCES		
Lexis-Nexis Congressional (online)	Introduced Bills Popular Names of Bills (Acts) Bill Numbers Committee Prints Hearings Committee Hearings Enrolled Bills Public Laws/Statutes at Large/Legislative History	91st,2nd session-110th congress 91st,2nd session-110th congress 91st,2nd session-110th congress 91st,2nd session-110th congress 91st,2nd session-110th congress 91st-110th congress
GPO Access (online)	Bills Popular Names Committee Prints Committee Hearings Committee Reports Enrolled Bills (as sent to president) Public Laws Statutes at Large	current congress only current congress only 105th-110th congress 105th-110th congress 104th-110th congress 103rd-110th congress 104th-110th congress Volume 120, 2006 only
Thomas (online)	Bills Popular Names Committee Reports Enrolled Bills Public Laws Congressional Record	104th-110th congress 101st-110th congress 93rd-110th congress
CQ Online Suite	CQ Almanac Congress and the Nation	1945-present 1945-present
PRINT SOURCES		
United States Code Congressional & Administrative News (USSCAN)	Full text of Public Laws from "Statutes at Large" Section on Legislative History House and Senate Committee Reports Popular Names-found in Tables in back of last volume of each year	1959-present 1959-present 1959-present
National Journal	Debates, votes, background information for laws	1969-present (print), 1994-present (online)
MICROFILM / MICROFICHE SOURCES		
Congressional Record	Record of proceedings on Congress	1781-1976

Legislative History Documents

Sorted by Document Type

Document Type	Source	Coverage
Introduced Bills	Thomas (online) Lexis-Nexis Congressional	
Popular Names	USSCAN (United States Congressional & Administrative News) Tables in last volume of each year Thomas (online) Lexis-Nexis Congressional (current congress only)	1957-present present
Bill Number	Thomas (online) GPO Access (online) Lexis-Nexis Congressional	101st-110th congress 103rd-110th congress 91st-110th congress
Committee Prints	Lexis-Nexis Congressional GPO Access (online)	1970-present 105th-110th congress
Committee Hearings	Lexis-Nexis Congressional	1970-present
Committee Reports	Lexis-Nexis Congressional GPO Access (online) Thomas (online)	1970-present 104th-110th congress 104th-110th congress
Markups, Debates, Votes	National Journal Congressional Record (microfilm) Congressional Record (online at Thomas.gov) Lexis-Nexis Congressional	1781-1976 101st-110th congress 1985-present, selected older versions
Enrolled Bill	Lexis-Nexis Congressional Thomas (online) GPO Access (online)	91st-110th congress 101st-110th congress 103rd-110th congress congress
Public Laws	Lexis-Nexis Congressional Thomas (online) GPO Access (online) USSCAN (print)	91st-110th congress 93rd-110th congress 104th-110th congress congress 1959-present