

THE SUPREME COURT *of* OHIO  
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Information Series

5 Federal Legislative  
History



A federal legislative history is a compilation of the documents that track a bill as it moves through Congress. Federal legislative histories are used to understand the purpose and intent of federal statutes. When a question arises concerning the applicability or interpretation of a statute, a legislative history can be compiled or consulted to better understand the reasons for the enactment of that statute. Documents used to research legislative history include:

- Committee hearings, prints and reports
- Congressional debates
- Congressional Record
- Presidential records
- Supreme Court decisions
- Various versions of a bill

#### **SUBJECT HEADINGS**

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The following subject headings can be used to search the online catalog for resources on federal legislative histories and statutory interpretation and construction.

- Law–United States–Interpretation and construction
- Legislative histories–United States
- Legislative histories–United States–Bibliography

#### **LEGISLATIVE HISTORY GUIDES**

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Compiling a Federal Legislative History from Older Records

[www.aallnet.org/products/pub\\_sp0110.pdf](http://www.aallnet.org/products/pub_sp0110.pdf)

Guide for researching early congressional documents and compiling legislative histories for older public laws.

Federal Legislative History

[www.law.duke.edu/lib/ResearchGuides/legHist/legHistframe.html](http://www.law.duke.edu/lib/ResearchGuides/legHist/legHistframe.html)

Detailed introduction to basic documents and procedures for researching the legislative history of a federal law.

Federal Legislative History Research: A Practitioner's Guide to Compiling the Documents and Sifting for Legislative Intent  
[www.llsdc.org/sourcebook/fed-leg-hist.htm](http://www.llsdc.org/sourcebook/fed-leg-hist.htm)

Detailed guide to compiling legislative histories. Includes an extensive bibliography of law journal articles related to federal legislative histories.

How to Compile a Legislative History

[www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/indiv/usgd/leghis.html](http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/indiv/usgd/leghis.html)

Selective guide to resources for compiling federal legislative histories.

U.S. Legislative Process - Research Guide

<http://gethelp.library.upenn.edu/guides/govdocs/uslegis.html>

Describes the federal legislative process and the documents produced in that process.

#### **COMPILATIONS OF LEGISLATIVE HISTORIES**

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Sources of Compiled Legislative Histories: A Bibliography of Government Documents, Periodical Articles and Books (KF 1 J65)

Compilations of legislative histories in books, government documents, legal periodicals, looseleaf services and online databases.

Union List of Legislative Histories (KF 4 U55)

#### **ONLINE RESOURCES**

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GPO Access

[www.gpoaccess.gov/index.html](http://www.gpoaccess.gov/index.html)

Free electronic access to federal legislative history resources, including the *Code of Federal Regulations*, the *Congressional Record*, the *Federal Register* and the *United States Code*.

LexisNexis / Westlaw

Subscription-based databases that contain information used to compile federal legislative histories.

#### **CONGRESS**

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Congressional Record (X 11/A:)

[www.gpoaccess.gov/crecord/index.html](http://www.gpoaccess.gov/crecord/index.html)

Official record of congressional proceedings and debates. Published daily when Congress is in session. Available on *GPO Access* from 1994 to the present.

#### Statutes at Large (KF 50 U5)

Official series of session laws enacted by Congress since 1789. Laws are printed chronologically, cited by the Congress that enacted the legislation and numbered sequentially.

THOMAS: Legislative Information on the Internet

<http://thomas.loc.gov/>

Committee reports, the *Congressional Directory*, the *Congressional Record* back to the 101<sup>st</sup> Congress and the full text of all congressional bills and public laws back to the 101<sup>st</sup> Congress.

#### United States Code (KF 62 2000 A2)

Official codification of the *Statutes at Large*. Organized by subject matter into 50 titles, arranged alphabetically and permanently established. Includes a list of acts cited by popular name and a general subject index.

#### United States Code Congressional and Administrative News (KF 48 W45)

Full text of public laws and presidential executive orders and proclamations, selected congressional committee and conference reports, and tables of public laws, legislative history, U.S. Code and popular name acts.

### **PRESIDENT**

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#### Public Papers of the President (J 80 A283)

Major statements, messages, papers, press releases, speeches of the president and a table of presidential documents.

#### Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents

[www.gpoaccess.gov/wcomp/](http://www.gpoaccess.gov/wcomp/)

Acts approved by the president, executive orders, press releases, proclamations, speeches and White House announcements. Available on *GPO Access* from 1993 to the present.

#### White House

[www.whitehouse.gov/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/)

Executive orders, press briefings, proclamations, radio addresses and speeches.

### **SUPREME COURT**

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#### Supreme Court of the United States

[www.supremecourt.us.gov/](http://www.supremecourt.us.gov/)

Official Web site of the U.S. Supreme Court. Includes casehandling guides, court rules, recent decisions and the full text of Court opinions of bound volumes 502 *et seq.*

#### United States Reports (KF 101 A2)

Official reports of the U.S. Supreme Court.

### **EXECUTIVE AGENCIES**

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#### Code of Federal Regulations (KF 70 A3)

[www.gpoaccess.gov/cfr/index.html](http://www.gpoaccess.gov/cfr/index.html)

Codification of the general and permanent rules published in the *Federal Register* by executive departments and agencies of the federal government. Available on *GPO Access* from 1996 to the present.

#### Federal Register (AE 2.106)

[www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/index.html](http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/index.html)

Official daily publication for rules, proposed rules and notices of federal agencies and organizations. Available on *GPO Access* from 1994 to the present.

### **STATUTORY INTERPRETATION**

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#### Statutes and Statutory Construction (KF 425 S56)

Comprehensive treatise on statutory construction and interpretation with chapters on the legislative function, separation of powers, the introduction of bills and legislative committees.

Contact *Government Documents Librarian Diana Mercer* at [mercerd@sconet.state.oh.us](mailto:mercerd@sconet.state.oh.us).

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1. Ohio Case Law: Where to Find It
2. Legal Periodicals: Print, Microform and Online
3. Government Documents
4. Ohio Legislative History
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6. The U.S. Supreme Court
7. Law Library Collection Guide
8. The Online Catalog
9. Ohio Legal Research
10. Reading Room Murals
11. History of the Rule of Law Oil Paintings
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