ALASKA STATE COURT LAW LIBRARY

Anchorage Law Library
303 K Street
Anchorage, AK 99501
(907) 264-0585

Fairbanks Law Library
101 Lacey Street
Fairbanks, AK 99701
(907) 452-9241

Juneau Law Library
123 4th Street, Room 410
Juneau, AK 99801
(907) 463-4761

courts.alaska.gov/library
library@akcourts.gov
Toll-Free within Alaska (888) 282-2082

FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

The legislative history of a federal law is the record of legislative events preceding its passage. It may explain the motivation for the legislation or may help interpret statutory language. A complete legislative history includes reports of the Congressional committees considering the legislation, Congressional debates, and testimony offered at committee hearings.

DEFINITIONS

BILLS
Text of proposed legislation. Bills address either matters of general interest ("public bills") or narrow interest ("private bills").

JOINT RESOLUTIONS
Legislative measures similar to bills. Commonly used for continuing or emergency appropriations and constitutional amendments.

COMMITTEE HEARINGS
Committee hearings include public statements and testimony given before Congressional committees considering legislation.

COMMITTEE PRINTS
Background research studies prepared for use by committees. Includes topics related to the committee's legislative or research activities.

COMMITTEE REPORTS
Analysis by Congressional committees of proposed legislation, its likely effect, and value.

CONGRESSIONAL DEBATES
Transcripts of legislative debates and proceedings published in the *Congressional Record*. Remarks are subject to subsequent revision or amendment.

PRESIDENTIAL SIGNING STATEMENTS
Written statements issued by the President upon signing a bill into law expressing views on the bill.

STATUTES-AT-LARGE / SLIP LAWS
The first official publication of a federal statute. Slip laws can be related to matters of general interest ("public laws") or narrow interest ("private laws"). Printed in chronological order as the *U.S. Statutes-at-Large*.

PROCESS

See **Definitions** on page 1 and **Resources** on page 4 for additional information.

1. **Look for the statute**, *e.g.*, 18 U.S.C. § 1111, **in one of the following resources:**

   - *United States Code* (USC)
   - *United States Code Annotated* (USCA)

2. **Identify the Public Law number, Statute at Large citation, and enactment date**, *e.g.*, Pub.L. 103-322, Sept. 13, 1994, 108 Stat. 1796, **in the statute's credit line**.

3. **Use that citation to find the bill or resolution number**, *e.g.*, H.R. 3355, **in one of the following resources:**

- *United States Statutes at Large*
- *United States Code Congressional & Administrative News*
- congress.gov
- govinfo.gov
- For legislation passed before 1904: *Legislative Reference Checklist* by Eugene Nabors, available from HeinOnline on court and law library computers.

4. **Look for already compiled legislative histories.**

- The Anchorage Law Library has compiled histories of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) and the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), among others.
- HeinOnline includes comprehensive federal legislative histories published by the Government Publishing Office (GPO), the *Sources of Compiled Legislative Histories*, and private publishers.
- The U.S. Government Accountability Office's *Federal Legislative Histories*, available on Westlaw, provides legislative histories for most public laws enacted between 1921 and 1995.
- The *Arnold and Porter Legislative Histories*, available on Westlaw, offers searchable compiled histories for select legislation.
- *Congressional Information Service/Index* (1970-2001 available at the Anchorage Law Library). Look for separate legislative history volumes.
- Check the *United States Code Congressional and Administrative News* (USCCAN) for selected texts and citations to documents.
- The Law Librarians' Society of Washington, DC provides a guide to compiled legislative histories freely available on the Internet as part of their *Legislative Source Book*.
- Law review articles may include extensive analysis of legislative history of a law. Search HeinOnline for law review and law journal articles.
- Check the bottom of the last page of individual laws in the *Statutes at Large* or slip laws for legislative history citations.

If you cannot locate an already compiled history, you will need to compile your own using the available resources.

5. **Locate legislative documents in the appropriate source:**

DOCUMENT SOURCES

See **Resources** on page 4 for further information about individual sources.

The following items are available from the Alaska State Court Law Library. Additional materials may be available through other libraries or resources. Dates, contents, and availability of individual sources are subject to change without notice.

BILLS

1789- HeinOnline *Congressional Record* (available on court and law library computers)
- Some Senate bills are included in the *Congressional Record*, generally printed on the day they are introduced. The text of House bills is rarely included.

1951- congress.gov

1952- *United States Code Congressional and Administrative News* (USCCAN)
- Only enrolled bills that have been assigned Public Law numbers are included in USCCAN.
- 1952- Print (available at the Anchorage and Juneau Law Libraries)
- 1973- Westlaw (available on court and law library computers)

1993- govinfo.gov
1995- Westlaw (available on court and law library computers)
- 1995-Prev. Sess. Historical Federal Bills
- Current Sess. Congressional Bills

STATUTES AT LARGE / SLIP LAWS
1789- HeinOnline *U.S. Statutes at Large* (available on court and law library computers)
1789-1951 Library of Congress *United States Statutes at Large*
1789-1972 Westlaw *United States Statutes at Large* (available on court and law library computers)
1789- govinfo.gov
- 1789- *Statutes at Large*
- 1995- *Public and Private Laws*

1951- congress.gov
1973- Westlaw (available on court and law library computers)
- 1973- U.S. Code Congressional & Administrative News: Public Laws
- 1973-Prev. Sess. U.S. Public Laws – Historical
- Current Sess. U.S. Public Laws

COMMITTEE HEARINGS
Pre-1889 Ask library staff if you qualify for interlibrary loan.
1889- HeinOnline U.S. Congressional Documents – Congressional Hearings (available on court and law library computers)
1895- govinfo.gov
1987- C-SPAN Congressional Chronicle Video Library
1993- Westlaw U.S. Congressional Testimony (available on court and law library computers)
1995- congress.gov

COMMITTEE PRINTS
Pre-1865 Ask library staff if you qualify for interlibrary loan.
1865- HeinOnline U.S. Congressional Documents – Committee Prints (available on court and law library computers)
- Select items available from 1865

1923- govinfo.gov
- Select items available from 1923

1993- congress.gov

COMMITTEE REPORTS
1789- HeinOnline *U.S. Congressional Serial Set* (available on court and law library computers)
1817- govinfo.gov
- Select items available from 1817

1948- Westlaw *United States Code Congressional and Administrative News* (USCCAN) (available on court and law library computers)
1995- congress.gov

CONGRESSIONAL DEBATES (in the Congressional Record)

1789- Library of Congress *A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation*
1789- HeinOnline *Congressional Record* (available on court and law library computers)
1985- Westlaw *Congressional Record* (available on court and law library computers)
1994- govinfo.gov *Congressional Record*
1995- congress.gov *Congressional Record*

PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS & SIGNING STATEMENTS

1789- HeinOnline U.S. Presidential Library (available on court and law library computers)
1929- govinfo.gov
- 1929-2016 *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*
- 1992- *Compilation of Presidential Documents*

1936- Westlaw *United States Code Congressional & Administrative News* (available on court and law library computers)
- 1936- Executive Orders
- 1980- Presidential Proclamations
- 1986- Presidential Messages & Signing Statements
    - Signing statements are printed along with the bill when available

RESOURCES

See **Document Sources** on page 2 for specific dates and locations.

CONGRESS.GOV

The legislative documents database from the Library of Congress. Provides online access to current federal legislative history materials. Dates of available publications vary.

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD

The *Congressional Record* is the official record of proceedings and debates of the United States Congress. The full *Congressional Record* is available on HeinOnline (accessible from court and law library computers) and govinfo.gov. Limited coverage is also available on Westlaw (1985 – present) (accessible from court and law library computers) and congress.gov (1995 – present).

CONGRESSIONAL SERIAL SET

The *U.S. Congressional Serial Set* contains House and Senate documents and reports. In general, it includes: committee reports related to bills and other matters, presidential communications to Congress, treaty materials, certain executive department publications, and certain non-governmental publications. Numerical lists and schedules available on govinfo.gov. The entire set is available from HeinOnline, accessible from court and law library computers.

GOVINFO.GOV

A service of the United States Government Publishing Office (GPO). Provides online access to information from all three branches of the federal government. Dates of available publications vary.

HEINONLINE

HeinOnline is an image-based database that contains, among other things, federal legislative materials, such as the *Congressional Record*, *Congressional Serial Set*, and *Statutes at Large*, plus comprehensive federal legislative histories published by the Government Publishing Office, private publishers, and Nancy Johnson's *Sources of Compiled Legislative Histories*. Available to court staff and to public patrons using library computers.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS'S "A CENTURY OF LAWMAKING FOR A NEW NATION: U.S. CONGRESSIONAL DOCUMENTS AND DEBATES, 1774-1873"

A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation contains records and acts of Congress from the Continental Congress through the 43rd Congress. The records of the Continental Congress, the Constitutional Convention, and the United States Congress comprise a rich documentary history of the construction of the nation, the development of the federal government, and its role in the national life.

PUBLIC PAPERS OF THE PRESIDENTS

The *Public Papers of the Presidents* is a compilation of papers and speeches of the Presidents of the United States published by the Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration. The collection contains the papers of President Herbert Hoover through President Barack Obama. The full collection is available from govinfo.gov. The papers of Presidents Reagan and George H.W. Bush are available from the National Archives. Some Presidential papers may also be available from the individual Presidential libraries.

COMPILATION OF PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

The *Compilation of Presidential Documents* is the official publication of materials from the White House Press Secretary, including speeches, proclamations, executive orders, and other presidential documents. The collection contains the Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents (1993-January 20th, 2009) and the Daily Compilation of Presidential Documents (January 20th, 2009-present). The full collection is available from govinfo.gov.

STATUTES AT LARGE

The *United States Statutes at Large* is the official record of acts and resolutions passed by the United States Congress. It is a chronological arrangement of slip laws. Available from Westlaw and HeinOnline on court and law library computers.

UNITED STATES CODE CONGRESSIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE NEWS (USCCAN)

The *U.S. Code Congressional and Administrative News* (USCCAN) provides the text of federal acts and selected committee reports. It also includes references to all reports, even if not reprinted, and dates of consideration and passage in Congress. Available from Westlaw, accessible from court and law library computers, and in print at the Anchorage and Juneau Law Libraries.