

# Research Guide

## Finding Legislation from the Current Legislative Session: Federal

### A. If you have a bill number:

The bills from each chamber are enumerated chronologically in the order introduced. The number is preceded by the chamber designation: **H.R.** for House of Representatives; **S.** for Senate. This designation constitutes a bill number. The bill number is retained during the amendment process and throughout the two-year session of Congress. Unpassed bills do not carry over to the next Congress: for consideration to continue, it must be re-introduced as a new bill and assigned a new bill number.

Generally, a bill is published and available in its entirety at limited stages along its path of consideration and passage, such as when it is introduced, its final version when it passes a chamber (enrolled), and its final version after passing both chambers and as sent to the President (engrossed). In other words, while it may be amended several times, a version of the entire bill incorporating each amendment as it is added is unavailable. However, the researcher can discover the text of an individual amendment in sources such as the *Congressional Record* and determine the amendment's fate, by links provided in websites such as Thomas.gov, Congress.gov, govtrack.us and ProQuest Congressional Publications. See a Reference Librarian for assistance. (Note: *The Congressional Record* is also available in print in the LRC Reading Room, KF 35 .R431)

Note that documents on FDsys with a blue ribbon across the top stating *Certified by Superintendent of Documents* are authenticated for purposes of Federal Evidence Rules and the California Evidence Code.

#### • Online:

- **Library of Congress:** <http://thomas.loc.gov>
- **Federal Digital System (FDsys):** <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/>
- **Congress.org:** <http://www.congress.org>
- **Govtrack.us:** <http://www.govtrack.us/>
- **Westlaw:** *Congressional Bills*
- **LexisNexis:** *Congressional Full Text Bills*
- **ProQuest Congressional (enacted bills only):** <http://www.sandiego.edu/law/lrc/> > Legal Research Databases

### B. If you are searching a subject, keyword or popular name, or know the name of the bill's author:

#### • Online:

- **Library of Congress:** <http://thomas.loc.gov>
- **Federal Digital System (FDsys):** <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/>
- **Govtrack.us:** <http://www.govtrack.us/>
- **Westlaw:** *Congressional Bills*
- **LexisNexis:** *Congressional Full Text Bills*
- **ProQuest Congressional:** <http://www.sandiego.edu/law/lrc/> > Legal Research Databases

#### • Print:

- **CCH Congressional Index:** LRC Reference Indexes KF 49 .C6
  - Volume 1 contains tabbed *Subject Index* and *Author Index* for bills from both chambers.
  - The tabbed *Senate Bills* in v.1 and *House Bills* in v.2 provide a summary of each bill.
  - After obtaining a bill number, refer to §A, above, to locate the full text of the bill and amendments.

### C. If you have a U.S. Code Section:

- **Online:**
  - **GovTrack.us:** “Browse Bills by USC Reference” page, <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/billusc.xpd>
  - **Library of Congress:** <http://thomas.loc.gov>

### D. Determining the Status of Your Bill:

- **Online:**
  - **Library of Congress:** <http://thomas.loc.gov>
    - Retrieve full text of bill, then click link, *Bill Summary & Status file*.
  - **Westlaw:** *Bill Tracking – Federal – Summaries & Status*
  - **Lexis:** *Bill Tracking Report – Current Congress*
  - **GovTrack.us:** <http://www.govtrack.us/>
  - **Congress.org:** <http://www.congress.org/congressorg/issues/bills/>
    - Retrieve full text of bill, then click link at end, “Detailed, up-to-date bill status information on [bill number]”
- **Print:**
  - **CCH Congressional Index:** LRC Reference Indexes KF 49 .C6
    - See tabbed *Status* section in volume for the originating chamber

### E. Bills Enacted into Law:

If a bill is enacted into law, it is assigned a new chronological numerical designation called a *Public Law Number* (e.g., Pub. L. 112-8), as well as a parallel citation to the *United States Statutes at Large* (e.g., 125 Stat. 34). For bills enacted into law, these citations are usually the last entry in the sources listed in §D, above. The enacted form can be found in the following sources:

- **Online:**
  - **Library of Congress:** <http://thomas.loc.gov>
  - **Federal Digital System (FDsys):** <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/> (*Browse Collections > Public & Private Laws*)
  - **Lexis:** In *Status* section of *Bill Tracking Report—Current Congress*, click public law number
  - **Westlaw:** Input Public Law Number into the *Find this document by citation* box.
- **Print:**
  - **Slip Laws:** LRC Reading Room KF 50 .U52
  - **U.S.C.S. Advance Sheets:** KF 62 .U55
  - **U.S.C.A. Advance Sheets:** KF 62 .U53
  - **U.S.C.A.N. (United States Code Congressional & Administrative News):** KF 48 .W45

Please contact a Reference Librarian for further assistance: [lrcrefer@sandiego.edu](mailto:lrcrefer@sandiego.edu) / 619-260-4612

**Note: Websites with the suffix .gov, .org or .com are accessible to anyone anywhere.  
Anyone physically present on campus may access ProQuest Congressional Publications.  
Only currently enrolled USD Law Faculty and Students may access Lexis and Westlaw for educational purposes.**