

Legislative Histories & HeinOnline & Congress.gov

Overview of the Federal Register, Code of Federal Regulations, United States Code, Congressional Record, Laws, and Regulations:

What is the List of CFR Sections Affected (LSA)?

Each month the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) publishes a list of proposed, new and amended federal regulations that have been published in the Federal Register since the last LSA was published. These are also compiled annually for their respective titles. The list only says if something has been removed, added, proposed or revised, but it does not tell you what the new text looks like. For that, you have to check the e-CFR or the federal register rule. You would use it if you're looking for something specific, or if you need to find all the changes to a particular section within a specific period of time.

You can find digital copies of the LSA in FDsys from 1997- present, and in HeinOnline 1958- present, although Hein only has the annual compilations of each title, which are published quarterly.

HeinOnline Scope:

Code of Federal Regulations: 1938- present

Federal Register Library (all volumes)

What is a legislative history?

Legislative history is a term that refers to the documents that are produced by a legislative body as a bill is introduced, studied and debated. These legislative documents are often used by attorneys and courts in an attempt to determine legislative intent or to clarify vague or ambiguous statutory language. Legislative documents can only be used as persuasive legal authority, but the documents themselves do not have any binding legal authority.¹

¹ http://guides.ll.georgetown.edu/legislative_history

Legislative histories exist for all legislative bodies, but for our work, we'll be focusing on federal legislative histories. Federal legislative histories encompass documents created by the United States Congress during the passing of federal laws.

These documents include: Senate and House committee reports, congressional debates, committee hearings, presidential messages, committee prints, and congressional documents. The Library of Congress has a helpful table at the bottom of their Legislative History guide to help you identify which databases to go for different document types, and the scope of those databases. If you're not sure which database to go to, you can find that here: <http://www.loc.gov/law/help/leghist.php>

Primary Legislative History Sources:

Bills, Committee reports, Enacted laws

Secondary Legislative History Sources:

Bill-tracking, Newsletters, Treatises, and the Congressional Record

Hein Has a U.S. Federal Legislative History Title Collection (search by: Publication Title, Public Law No., Popular Name)

The database also has a Sources of Compiled Legislative Histories Database. You can search by: Bill number, congress, related document author/creator, related document date, related document title, popular name of public law, public law number, title of public law.

Test Question:

Looking for House report on the Clean Air Act Amendments on 1990 from the House on May 21, 1990 (House report 490), and the senate debate from October 26, 1990

Congress.gov Scope:

Legislative documents (Committee Hearings, Committee Reports, Congressional Record, Legislation, Treaty Documents, etc.) 1994 – present

Test Question 2:

A patron wants to find the House committee report(s) for the 2010 Department of the Interior Appropriations Act.

Test Question 3:

A patron wants to know the current status of the recent Native American Energy Act in congress. They know it's not a law yet, but they're not sure where in the process it is.