

Federal Legislative Process



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The sources listed on this guide are a few which are helpful in tracing and understanding the histories of federal legislation from its introduction in the House of Representatives or the Senate until the President signs it into law.

Briefly, a bill is introduced in one chamber of Congress where it is analyzed and reworked by a committee and debated on the floor of that chamber before it is voted on. Anyone may write a piece of legislation, but only a Senator or Representative can introduce it. That person then becomes the bill's sponsor.

Once a bill passes one chamber of Congress it then undergoes the same process in the other chamber. Provided both chambers agree on an identical form of the bill, it is referred to the President who then may sign the bill making it a law or veto the bill sending it back to Congress, which may then override the veto with a two-thirds majority.

Books and Government Documents outlining this process:

House and Senate Bills – Y1.4/1 Microfiche. Includes the text of all bills and resolutions introduced in both chambers for each legislative session. Accompanied by a paper index – GP3.8.

Congressional Record – X1.1A Paper and Microfiche. A Daily publication and verbatim account of all happenings on the floor of both the House and the Senate. Issued daily and compiled at the end of each Session of Congress. Both daily and bound editions are fully indexed. See Congressional Record users' guide for more information.

Statutes at Large – KF 50 .U52 Ref. At the end of each Session of Congress, all bills passed during that Session are compiled in the Statutes at Large. Each volume is indexed

U.S. Code – KF 62 A2 Ref. A view of laws or statutes, which are currently in effect. Issued every five years, the U.S. Code reflects the law of the land as it is now. Has separate index volumes.

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Federal Register – AE 2.106 Government Documents Reading Room. Official daily publication for Rules, Proposed Rules, and Notices of Federal agencies and organizations, as well as Executive Orders and other Presidential Documents.

Code of Federal Regulations – AE2.106/3 Ref. This government document explains how laws and statutes are enforced by regulatory agencies. Has separate index volume.

Shepherds Acts and Cases by Popular Name – KF 80 .S52 Ref. Indexes major federal and state acts and cases identifies by popular name. Includes complete citations for Statutes at Large as well as the U.S. Code and their state counterparts.

Legislative Information on the Internet

Thomas: Legislative Information on the Internet –
<http://thomas.loc.gov>

Includes full text and legislative histories of bills for current and previous Sessions of Congress. Also includes the full text of the Congressional Record, committee information and Session Calendars.

GPO Access – <http://www.access.gpo.gov>

Includes searchable full text of the Federal Register, Code of Federal Regulations, Congressional Record, U.S. Code and other related publications.

House of Representatives – <http://www.house.gov>

The official homepage of the United States House of Representatives. Includes committee membership, voting records and information about current legislation.

U.S. Senate – <http://www.senate.gov>

The official homepage of the United States Senate. Includes information on contacting Senators and current legislation.

Legislative Process –

<http://lcweb.loc.gov/global/legislative/legproc.html>

From the Library of Congress, this page includes links to many sites which provide information about the legislative process.