

the Illinois General Assembly webpage: <http://www.ilga.gov/senate/journals/default.asp> (Senate Journals) and <http://www.ilga.gov/house/journals/default.asp> (House Journals).

Legislative Synopsis and Digest

The *Legislative Synopsis and Digest* dates from the 1900s. The Library's print holdings date from 1995-2002 and are located in Row Center B. This publication contains summaries of the bills and all actions taken with respect to them. This bill status record is an indispensable tool for tracking the history of a bill before it was enacted into law. The *Legislative Synopsis and Digest* is published weekly in print. There can be a lag of several years in the print publication of the above titles. Digitized versions of the House and Senate Journals and *Legislative Synopsis and Digest* from the current and previous General Assemblies are available at the Illinois General Assembly website: http://ilga.gov/commission/lrb/lrb_digest_indices.asp.

Please do not hesitate to ask a staff member for assistance with any legislative history research materials.

**With thanks to
John Marshall Law School**

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LEGISLATIVE HISTORY RESEARCH MATERIALS AVAILABLE



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Overview of Sources

Legislative history consists of all the documentation produced during the legislative process, including bills, debates, reports and hearings. Researchers look to legislative history when the meaning of a statute is unclear and they wish to discern what the legislature intended when enacting the statute. Legislative history research is time consuming and often there may be no discussion at all of the statutory language in question. Therefore, it is usually a last resort when there are no other sources of law (i.e. caselaw) that interpret the statute. This is commonly the case with recently enacted legislation.

Statutes and Caselaw

Always check the annotations to caselaw in one of the annotated versions of the Illinois Compiled Statutes (ILCS) to find cases that have interpreted your statute. Annotations contain library references, cross-references, historical and statutory notes. The Law Library has the complete set (with up-to-date pocket parts) of *West's Smith-Hurd Illinois Compiled Statutes Annotated*. The library also provides access to these resources on electronic legal research databases.

Articles

Newspaper and journal articles related to the enactment of the law you are researching may also be quite helpful. The explanation of an author who is an expert in the field may be easier to understand than the statutory language itself. Articles from bar journals and law reviews, including the *Illinois Bar Journal* and *CBA (Chicago Bar Association) Record* can be helpful. The Law Library has the *Illinois Bar Journal* from 1951-present, and the *CBA Record* from 1967-1996. Many law reviews are also published on their respective law schools' websites.

Sessions Laws

Illinois legislative history consists mostly of the text of the bills and laws themselves and any Illinois House and Senate floor debates that occurred during their passage. Typically, one starts by finding the text of the law in the current Illinois Compiled Statutes and the Illinois session laws. The official publication of the Illinois session laws is entitled the *Laws of the State of Illinois* and is located in Row Center C of the Library. This publication dates back to the inception of the State. The Library's print holdings range from 1893 to 2014. It contains the text of the laws as first enacted in chronological, public act number order before the laws are codified (arranged by subject into a code). Session Laws (1971-Present) are also available

online via the Illinois General Assembly website: <http://www.ilga.gov/previousga.asp>.

Bills and Debates

As mentioned above, most of Illinois legislative history consists of all versions of the bill and any House and Senate floor debates about it. As mandated by the Illinois Constitution of 1970, publication of the debates began in 1971. Transcripts from the current and earlier General Assemblies (1971-Present) are also available via the Illinois General Assembly website (ILGA) at www.ilga.gov/senate/transcripts/default.asp (Senate Transcripts) and <http://www.ilga.gov/house/transcripts/default.asp> (House Transcripts).

If you wish to do thorough legislative history research, you can consult the following sources:

House and Senate Journals

Both the House and Senate publish journals, which constitute an official record of the actions taken by the legislature. The House and Senate Journals contain the voting records for each bill, text of amendments, conference committee reports and motions. These Journals began publication in 1819. The Library's print holdings range from 1982 to 2000. They are arranged in date order in Rows Center B and Center C. These can also be found on