

Researching Federal Legislative History

Always Start with the Text of the Law...

United States Code:

- Contains all public and permanent federal laws currently in force and is arranged by subject matter.
- Where to find:
 - In print (*USC*, *USCA*, *USCS*) or online via FDsys, ProQuest Congressional, Westlaw, Lexis
 - If only have name, use a popular name table

Session Laws (*United States Statutes at Large*):

- After enactment, a law is assigned a public law number – ex) PL 113-74. 1st number is Congress; 2nd is sequential.
- After legislative session ends, public laws are printed sequentially in the *Statutes at Large*.
- Where to find:
 - In print (*Statutes at Large*) or online via FDsys, Thomas, Hein Online*, ProQuest Congressional, ProQuest Legislative Insight, Westlaw, Lexis

...then, Read the Legislative History in Reverse

Bills:

- Assigned sequential numbers within each house. Bill may be amended many times throughout legislative process.
- Where to find:
 - Online via Thomas, FDsys, ProQuest Legislative Insight, ProQuest Congressional*, Westlaw, Lexis

Conference Committee Reports:

- After passage in both houses, members from each may meet to resolve differences but can't change language previously agreed upon. If available, report contains new bill language and a joint explanation of the compromise.
- Where to find:
 - In print (*USCCAN*) or online via Thomas, FDsys, ProQuest Legislative Insight, ProQuest Congressional*, Westlaw, Lexis

Floor Debate (*Congressional Record*):

- Contains verbatim account of the proceedings and debate of Congress, as well as inserted materials and communications from the President and exec agencies.
- Where to find:
 - In print (*Congressional Record*) or online via FDsys, Thomas, ProQuest Congressional*, ProQuest Legislative Insight, Westlaw, Lexis

Committee Reports:

- Committee members report and make recommendations to the House or Senate as a whole. If legislation was considered in prior session(s), report may contain history.
- Where to find:
 - In print (*USCCAN*) or online via Thomas, FDsys, ProQuest Legislative Insight, ProQuest Congressional*, Westlaw, Lexis

Hearings:

- Hearings are held to enable committees to gather opinions and information on proposed legislation.
- Where to find:
 - Online via FDsys, ProQuest Congressional*, ProQuest Legislative Insight, Westlaw, Lexis

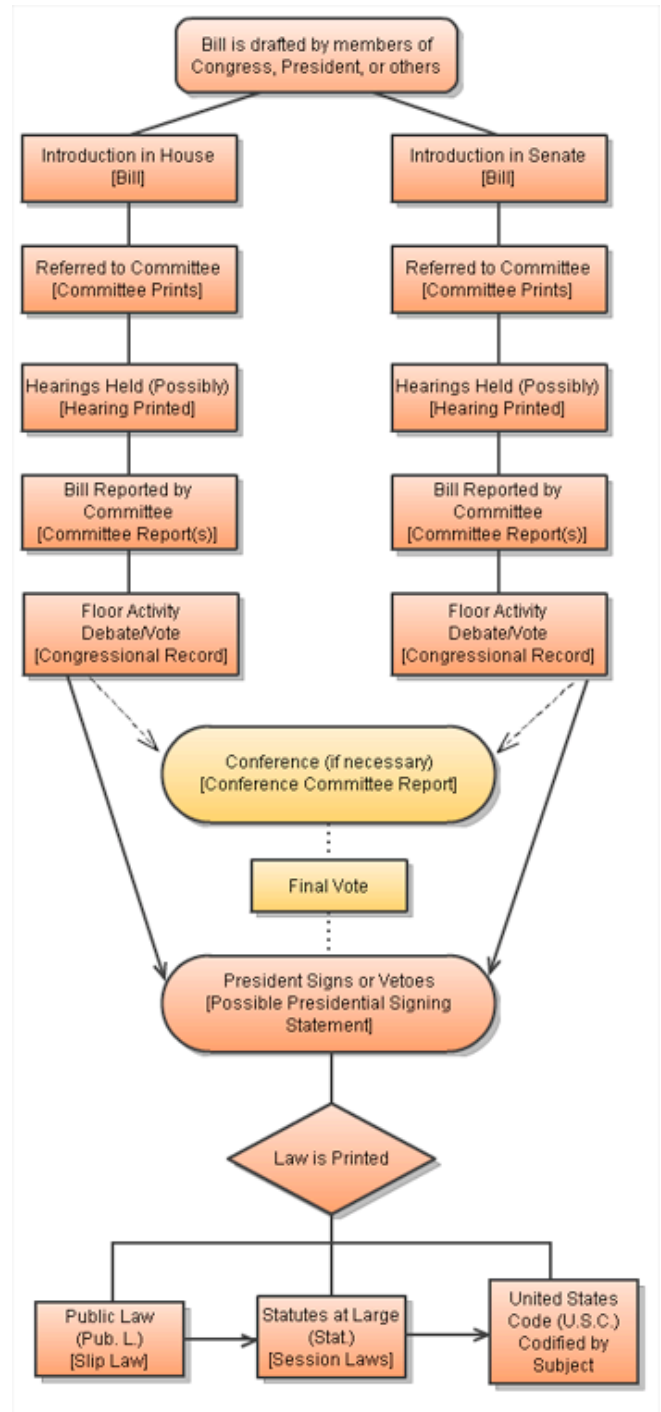


Chart from: Tarlton Law Library's Federal Legislative History Research guide, <http://tarltonguides.law.utexas.edu/federal-legislative-history>

* This source contains the most complete holdings

Guide Prepared by
Bonnie Shucha, University of WI Law Library
bjshucha@wisc.edu
Revised: March 2014

Researching Wisconsin Legislative History

Always Start with the Text of the Law...

Wisconsin Statutes (code):

- State laws currently in force arranged by subject matter.
- Where to find: In print (*Wisconsin Statutes*) or online via WI Legislature*, Westlaw, Lexis

Acts and Laws of Wisconsin:

- When enacted, a law is assigned a sequential act number and is printed in slip form (slip laws).
- After legislative session ends, acts are printed chronologically in *Laws of Wisconsin* (session laws).
- Where to find: In print (*Laws of WI*) or online via WI Legislature*, Hein Online, Westlaw, Lexis

...then, Read Legislative History in Reverse

Procedural History:

- Chronology of how bill progressed through legislature.
- Where to find: Online via WI Legislature* (with links) or in print in Bulletin of Proceedings and Journals

Governor's Veto Message (if applicable):

- Provides governor's reasons for vetoing bill language.
- Where to find: Online via WI Legislature*

Readings, Floor Debate and Record of Vote:

- Where to find: Readings & Debate – Online via WisEye**; Record of Vote - Online via WI Legislature* (procedural history) or in print Journals

Bills & Amendments:

- Language deleted is **struck through**; language added is **underscored**; bills include nonpartisan analysis by LRB.
- Where to find: Online via WI Legislature*, Westlaw, Lexis or in print/microform at UW Law Library

Committee Meetings and Recommendations:

- Where to find: Recordings - Online via WisEye**; Brief report with recommendation for or against the bill - Online via WI Legislature* or in print Journals

Hearings:

- Where to find: Recordings - Online via WisEye**; Appearance list & records submitted - Online via WI Legislature* (with committee proceedings)

Fiscal Estimate:

- Available for each bill affecting revenue or expenditures.
- Where to find: Online via WI Legislature* or in print

Drafting Records:

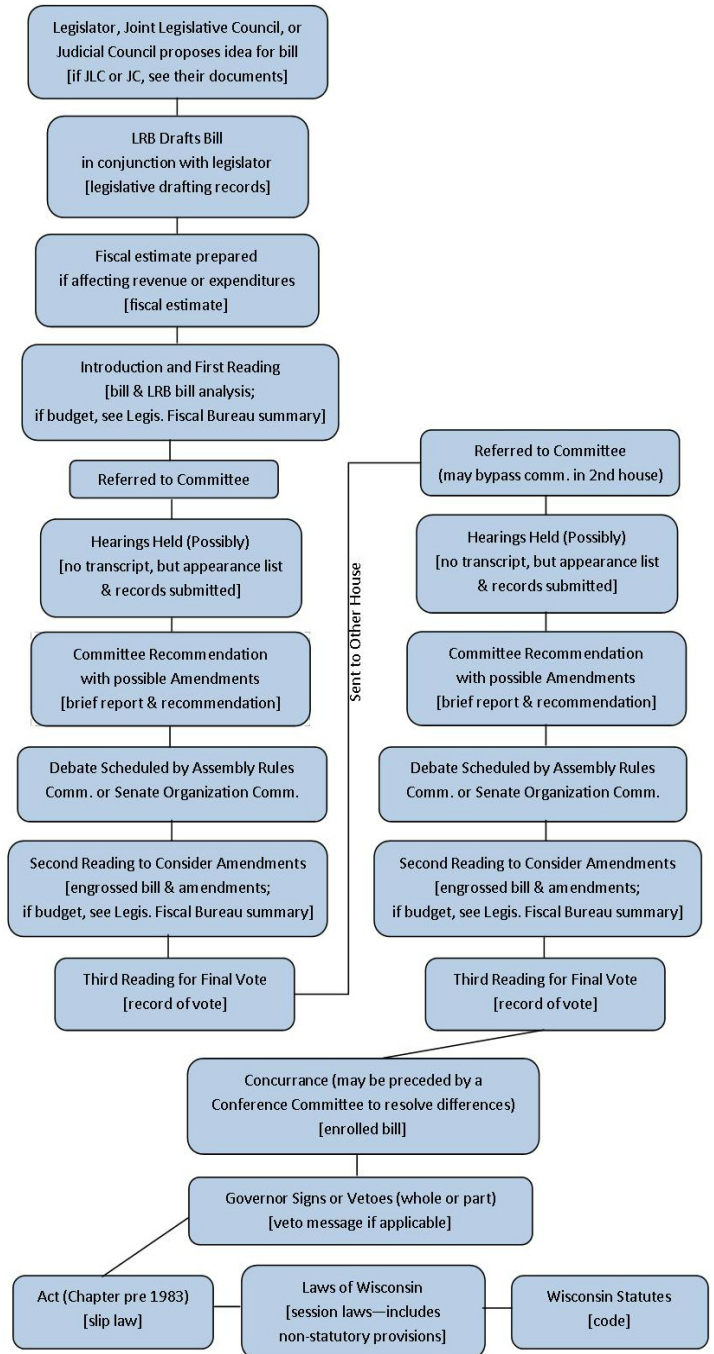
- LRB's administrative record of the bill drafting process.
- Where to find: Online via WI Legislature*, UW Law Library***

Joint Legislative Council Documents:

- Special study committees; may propose legislation.
- Where to find: Online via WI Legislature* & on file at LRB

Judicial Council Documents:

- Drafts rules & laws relating to the courts.
- Where to find: Online via WI State Law Library****



Budget Specific Materials:

- Legislative Fiscal Bureau Summary – a summary of the budget at each stage of the process.
- Budget Index Report – index to specific parts of budget.
- Where to find: Online via WI Legislature*

* Wisconsin Legislature - <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/>

** WisconsinEye - <http://www.wiseye.org/> (very recent only)

*** UW Law Library Drafting Records - <http://tinyurl.com/84mngu9>

**** WSL Judicial Council Docs. - <http://wilawlibrary.gov/search/jc.html>