Alaska State Court Law Library - Juneau
Dimond Courthouse ▪ P.O. Box 114100 ▪ Juneau, AK 99811-4100
907-463-4761 ▪ 907-463-4784 (fax)
Toll-free within Alaska ▪ 888-282-2082
Reference desk email ▪ library@courts.state.ak.us
Library website ▪ http://www.courts.alaska.gov/library.htm

ALASKA LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

The first part of this handout provides instructions for researching legislative history in print, with materials available in Juneau. For information about researching legislative history online, skip to Steps 10 and 11, starting on page 3.

1. *Start with an Alaska Statute. Note the section number, chapter and date of the Alaska Session Law at the end of the text of the statute:*

(§1 ch 78 SLA 1983)
is read as
1983 Session Laws of Alaska, Chapter 78, Section 1

2. *Find the session law in Session Laws of Alaska and get the bill number.*

The session laws from 1913 to the current session are shelved in Stack 1-A. The session law is the designated chapter in the volume of session laws for a particular year. In the example above, you'd find the 1983 Session Laws, and turn to Chapter 78. The bill number is at the top left of the first page of the session law. The bill number sometimes includes additional abbreviations. Read the last two letters before the number to determine if the bill is from the House or Senate:

CS**HB 113**	**[House Bill 113]**
HCSCS**SB 290**	**[Senate Bill 290]**

A list of abbreviations is located in the front of Status of Bills and Resolutions, shelved near the Session Laws. The list is also on the Legislature's website: ***http://w3.legis.state.ak.us/docs/pdf/abbracro.pdf***.

Final Status of Bills and Resolutions tells you whether there were companion bills. Shelved near the session laws, in Stack 1-A.

3. *Some bill histories have been compiled.*

Next you must research the history of the bill, to look for signs of legislative intent. The Legislative Reference Library and the Anchorage Law Library have compiled histories of some bills already. Check the lists for each library, located in the front pocket of the *Guide to Alaska Legislative History Materials*, shelved near the session laws, in Stack 1-A. Please ask library staff for assistance in obtaining compiled bill histories, listed documents and audio recordings.

4. ***Look up the bill number in Senate and House journal indexes.***

If there is no already compiled history available, the next step is to trace the bill's history in the Senate and House journals. To find the right journal pages, first go to the journal indexes. These list every page of the House and Senate journals that mentions the bill.

Pre-1976 bills: Indexes are at the end of the last volume of each Senate or House journal. References are to the journal pages on which a bill is mentioned. The Senate and House journals are shelved before the session laws in Stack 1-A.

Bills 1976 – : Indexes are in separate volumes labeled Bill History and provide a brief bill description, dates of action, bill sponsor, committee names, and journal page number references. The bill history indexes are shelved after the House and Senate journals in Stack 1-A.

5. ***Check the House and Senate journals. They provide a summary of each day's legislative activity. Make a note of the committee(s) the bill passed through.***

The House and Senate journals from 1913 to the current session are shelved before the session laws in Stack 1-A. Check each journal entry listed in the index to see what action was taken.

6. ***All bills are retained by the Legislative Reference Library. Contact information is provided at the end of this handout.***

7. ***Check committee minutes.***

Committee minutes summarize committee action and range from brief outlines to near-verbatim transcriptions. Minutes from **1965 to the current session** are available at the Legislative Reference Library.

Minutes from 1982 through the current session are available electronically on the Legislature's website: ***http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/folio.asp***. Consult Committee Tapes and Minutes Lists, 1982+ at the Legislative Reference Library for a comprehensive list of committee meetings held. For more information about how to find committee minutes online, see Steps 10 and 11, starting on page 3.

8. ***Check committee files.***

The Legislative Reference Library compiles a microfiche record of material created or collected by legislative committees during deliberations. Committee files include bill drafts, correspondence, sectional analyses, research material and testimony offered.

• **1965 – current** files are available on microfiche or in print at the Legislative Reference Library. Microform reader/printers are available for public use.

9. ***Audio and video tapes and verbatim transcripts are available.***

Committee audio recordings (1970 -) provide an audio record of committee meetings. The Legislative Reference Library has compiled indexes of committee tapes (1970 – 1982 & 1982 - 2004).

Also check microfiche for tape logs, which some committees created in addition to or instead of minutes.

Audio tapes (1971 – 2004) are held at the Alaska State Archives. Contact the State Library in Juneau (465-2921) for more information.

Digital audio recordings (January 2005 +) available via Alaska Legislature website: ***http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/*** (choose Committee Minute Selection).

House and Senate floor tapes

Audio tapes (1975 – year prior to current) are held at the Alaska State Archives. An index to the audio tapes (1975-2003) is available at the Legislative Reference Library. Contact Alaska State Library (465-2921) for **current tapes** or for more information.

Video tapes (1977 – 1989) are held at the Alaska State Archives. Contact the State Library (465-2921) for more information.

10. ***Some Alaska Legislative History resources are available online in databases offered at the State of Alaska Legislature's website:***

BASIS ***http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/start.asp***
Bills, session laws, House and Senate journals and committee minutes: 1993 – current

Folio Infobases ***http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/folio.asp***

Bills	1983 – current	Committee minutes	1982 – current
House and Senate journals	1987 – current	Session laws	1981 – current

11. ***Tips for Using ALASKA LEGISLATURE ONLINE RESOURCES***

- **BASIS: BILL ACTION AND STATUS INQUIRY SYSTEM**
  http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/start.asp

  1993 - current
  Bills
  House and Senate journals
  Committee minutes
  Session laws

If you are researching legislative history from 1993 or later, use BASIS.

1. The opening screen for BASIS is a search page for the current legislative session. To search an earlier legislative session, select it from the list on the bottom right of the opening screen, under Archive.

2. If you need to find the bill number, start with the session laws. The session laws for each year are located in the menu on the left. The session laws themselves are available in PDF starting in 2003, but there are links to the bills starting in 1993. Alternatively, if you know the bill number, type the bill number in the search box at the top of the page (e.g. hb215).

3. Bill history in the house and senate journals is displayed. This is the equivalent of the print index. The page numbers are live links that take you to the journal entries.

4. Click on Committee Action with Bill History. In addition to the house and senate journal entries, entries labeled Text include links to committee minutes and other documents.

5. The "Full Text" button provides links to every version of the bill as it passed through the legislature, starting in 1995.

6. The "Minutes" button provides links to all committee minutes. These are the same minutes that appear as Text in the index below – in the index, they're in chronological order; here, they're grouped together. Audio links to committee material start in 2005.

7. The "Documents" button provides links to some material in committee bill files starting in 2009.

8. Live audio of floor sessions and committee meetings is available starting in 2002. The recordings are from public television coverage of the legislature, *Gavel to Gavel*, and are not official recordings. The audio may be incomplete or contain material added by the commentators. The link to Gavel to Gavel is on the opening screen of BASIS, on the right under Tools. On the next screen, select Audio Archive from the menu on the left.

- **INFOBASES**
  http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/folio.asp

  Bills 1983+
  House and Senate Journals 1987+
  Committee Minutes 1982+
  Session Laws 1981+

If you need session law text before 2003 or any other legislative history from before 1993, use the Folio Infobases.

1. Select your Infobase (e.g., 1981 – 2005 Session Laws).

2. If you know exactly what you're looking for, use the menu contents rather than a query search.

- If there is a gray plus sign (**+**) to the left of a link, click this plus instead of the link itself. This will expand the menu detail. Continue expanding until you find the document you are looking for.

- The blue ovals at the bottom and top left of the screen are the Next and Previous icons. Use these buttons to move backwards and forwards within the menu contents.

3. To search for a bill or document, click on the Query button and enter your search terms.

   - When searching journals or committee minutes, use the house or senate bill number as your search term. Be sure to use quotes and put a space before the bill number: "HB 231" or "SB 146"

   - Check the **Headings w/Hits** box and click the search button. Once search has run, do not click on the box displaying number of records retrieved. Instead, click on the **Contents** icon, the blue oval furthest to the right, with the picture that looks like an outline.

   - The **Contents** screen will tell you how many hits appear in each heading. Click on the plus (**+**) and minus (**-**) symbols to expand or collapse menu detail, ranging from the very broad House or Senate, to years, specific committees in each chamber, and specific dates those committees met. Plus (**+**) indicates more detail is available, minus (**-**) indicates you have reached the maximum level of detail.

```
- House
  + 87
  + 88
- Senate
  + 87
  + 88
```

```
- House
  - 87
    + HCRA
```

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- House
  - 87
    - HCRA
      - 87/01/21
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   - After viewing your document, click the Contents icon again to return to the Table of Contents.

12. *Other resources:*

Alaska State Library
State Office Building, 8th Floor
465-2921

State Archives
141 Willoughby Avenue
465-2270

Alaska Legislature website
http://w3.legis.state.ak.us/index.php

Legislative Reference Library
Terry Miller Building, Room 102
129 6th Street
465-3808 or 465-3828

Legislative Information Office
Terry Miller Building, Room 111
129 6th Street
465-4648

For an additional explanation of Alaska legislative history, see Guide to Alaska Legislative History Materials, Legislative Reference Library (revised December 2009), available as an Adobe Acrobat document on the Alaska Legislature's website at ***http://w3.legis.state.ak.us/misc/leg_history.php.*** *Located in the library in a black binder shelved on Stack 1-A before the Alaska Session Laws.*