# A Guide to Government Resources for Federal Public Policy

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Introduction

Public policy, defined as government action or inaction in response to a social issue, typically is generated by legal authority. Official legal sources constitute the legal foundation for public policy. At the federal level, legal authority can be categorized into three types of law:

- Statutory (legislative) law — states the overview of the law
- Regulatory (administrative) law – administers how the law will be implemented
- Case (judicial) law – interprets the policy as it applies to specific circumstances

Official (Governmental) Sources

Milner Library is a selective depository for federal publications that receives statutory, regulatory, and case law. As a federal depository library since 1858, Milner Library is one of oldest of nearly 1,200 federal depositories in the nation. As a federal depository library, Milner Library provides free access to government information to Illinois State University and the surrounding community. We strive to collect, organize, preserve and provide free and unimpeded public access to United States Government publications and information in support of Illinois State University’s mission and curricular needs. We also strive to serve the informational needs of the general public.

The following guide Federal and General Sources on Law and Legislation lists and describes many of the key print and electronic sources located within the library.
## Resources in Milner Library

### Federal and General Sources on Law and Legislation

#### General Resources

*All resources listed are located on Floor 2 unless otherwise indicated.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Access Online via &quot;Databases &amp; Article Indexes” webpage (ISU only) &lt;www.library.ilstu.edu/resources/&gt;</td>
<td><strong>LexisNexis Academic Legal Research and Campus Research from Westlaw</strong>&lt;br&gt;Indexes and provides full text for Legislative, Administrative, and Case law. Searchable by keyword, name or citation. Includes full text articles from law review publications and other legal resources.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Statutory (Legislative) Law

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>REF. DOC. Y 1.2/5:</td>
<td><strong>United States Code</strong>&lt;br&gt;All the laws in force. Has subject and popular name indexes. Updated every six years. Supplements published annually.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REF. KF90 .S52 1999</td>
<td><strong>Shepard’s Acts and Cases by Popular Names</strong>&lt;br&gt;Try this source for acts enacted before 1999. Includes references to the U.S. Code or Statutes at Large. For acts after 1999, see the POPULAR NAMES index in the U.S. Code.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AE 2.111: Floor 4–Documents Collection</td>
<td><strong>U.S. Statutes at Large (Public Laws)</strong>&lt;br&gt;Texts of laws in the form in which they were passed; later integrated into the U.S. Code. Holdings since 1789.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOC. X 1.1 and X 1.1/A: Floor 4–Documents Collection</td>
<td><strong>Congressional Record</strong>&lt;br&gt;Daily account of the proceedings of congress. Holdings since 1789.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Regulatory (Administrative) Law**

**Federal Regulatory Directory**
Outlines the duties of regulatory agencies and sometimes gives the relevant section of the Code of Federal Regulations.

**Federal Register**
Recently changed regulations, later integrated into the Code of Federal Regulations. Holdings since 1936 on microfilm. Latest paper issues retained only until replaced by microfilm.

*Citation example: 57 FR 18418*

**Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)**
Codification of the general and permanent rules published in the Federal Register by the executive departments and agencies of the Federal Government. A subject index to all sections is shelved at the Floor 2 Information Desk. Only the current editions are retained.

*Citation example: 48 CFR §124.501*

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**Case (Judicial) Law**

**Academic Universe (Lexis-Nexis) Legal Research and Campus Research from Westlaw**
Online indexes searchable by keyword, subject and case name to U.S. Supreme Court Reports (see below). Also lists periodical articles that have discussed cases.

**United States [Supreme Court] Reports**
Official supreme court reporter for court decisions of the United States Supreme Court. Holdings date since 1946.

*Citation example: 410 US 113*
Unofficial (Non-Governmental) Sources

Reviewing legal resources is important in understanding the framework of public policy as it is enacted, implemented and interpreted legally, but the legal and technical language can become a barrier to understanding the intent of law. Consequently, unofficial (non-governmental) sources can provide a more understandable overview.

These reference titles in Milner Library may be a first place to look for basic information on laws and areas of public policy.

Landmark Legislation, 1774-2002
Reference Collection—Floor 2
KF68 .S73 2003

Major Acts of Congress
Reference Collection—Floor 2
KF154 .M35 2004 v.1-v.3

West’s Encyclopedia of American Law
Reference Collection—Floor 2
KF154 .W47 1998

Historic Development or Legislative History

Researching the historic development of public policy or the legislative history of federal statutes is an important step in learning about a specific public policy. Legislative history can consist of

- Congressional hearings regarding the policy
- Congressional reports regarding the underlying act
- Congressional debates on the policy

Milner’s online catalog includes records for congressional hearings and reports in our collection. Many of the hearings and reports dating since the late 1990s are also available in a fulltext format linked directly through the catalog.
Searching Online for Legislative Histories

Official Sources

NexisLexis Congressional Publications database provides access to a variety of information by and about the United States Congress. It indexes Congressional publications from 1789 to the present and provides access to Legislative Histories for public laws from 1969 to the present; testimony from congressional hearings from 1824 to the present; bill texts and status from 1989 to the present; the Congressional Record from 1985 to the present; and the Federal Register from 1980 to the present; and information about members and committees.
The Congressional Research Service (CRS) provides Congress with research and analysis of issues being considered by the Congress. This series includes its published reports.

- Congressional Research Reports for the People http://opencrs.com/
- Congressional Research Service Reports, Hosted by UNT Libraries http://digital.library.unt.edu/govdocs/crs/

Unofficial Sources for Legislative History

These reference titles in Milner Library may be a first place to look for basic information on laws and areas of public policy.

CQ Almanac
Analysis of U.S. congressional legislation from 1945 to present
Reference Collection Floor 2, Floor 4 and Basement Storage
JK1 .C66

Congress and the Nation
Unbiased, information and analysis on the U.S. Congress
Reference Collection Floor 2 and Basement Storage
JK1001 .C5

CQ Researcher online
Focuses on current and controversial topics. Examines all sides of the issues involved. Provides citations, full text.
http://www.library.ilstu.edu/resources/detail.php?id=33

CQ Weekly online
Provides comprehensive, non-partisan information on Capitol Hill.
Provides full text.
http://www.library.ilstu.edu/resources/detail.php?id=34

National Journal online
Nonpartisan reporting on the current political environment and emerging policy trends
Available through Academic Search Premier from 2000 to present
Analysis on the Effectiveness of Public Policies

After legislation has been enacted and implemented, analysis on the effectiveness of public policies can be found.

The United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) is the investigative arm of the Congress. It publishes reports of audits and evaluations of government programs and activities. Reports can be found via Milner Catalog, online after 1995 at http://www.gao.gov/ and through the Monthly Catalog.

Agencies charged with implementing a particular policy may publish reports on their activities and experiences with the policy. Reports can be found via Milner Catalog, Monthly Catalog and directly through agencies web sites.

Congressional committees may conduct hearings investigating effectiveness and ways of improving policy congressional hearings and reports may contain analysis. Reports can be found via Milner Catalog and Monthly Catalog.

Important Things to Know about Government Documents

Call Numbers

1. Government resources are arranged in the stacks using the Superintendent of Documents (SuDocs) classification system, rather than the Library of Congress (LC) classification numbers used in much of the rest of the library.

2. SuDocs refers to a classification system created by the U.S. government. SuDoc numbers are issued based upon the government agency that produced the resource. This means that resources are grouped by their publishing agencies, not their subject area.

- Government agencies can grow, divide, or change responsibilities over time. This means that the same type of resource could be shelved in different places based upon the agency that published the resource. [For instance, the Department of Health and Human Services originated in 1980. Before 1980, it was the Department of Health, Education and Welfare from 1953.]
Limiting the Catalog Search to Government Information

Limit your search in the catalog to Government Information only:

Choose “More Limits” before beginning your search.

You will get a screen that looks like the one below:

In the Location menu, make sure to select “Federal Government Resources” and then, “Set Limits.” Now when you search, you will be searching only government resources.
Finding Government Resources on the Shelf with SuDocs

To find material on the shelf, use each element of the SuDocs number one at a time.

J 28 . 2: G 15/ 2003 (1) (2) (3) (4)

1. Government resources are shelved in alphanumeric order; first alphabetically by the first letters of the SuDocs number. The first letter(s) often signify the originating department of agency (i.e. A=Agriculture, C=Commerce, E=Energy, J=Justice, NAS=National Aeronautics and Space Administration).

2. The period is not used as a decimal point, but rather to indicate the beginning of the next element of the SuDocs classification scheme. Therefore, J 28.2:G 15/2003 is located on the shelf before J 28.12:B 13, because 2 is less than 12.


4. For those resources published prior to 2000, when a year was used at the end of a SuDocs number (signifying an edition published in that year), the first digit was dropped, so 1992 became 992. Dates are not filed in with other numbers. Therefore, J 28.2:G 15/2003 comes before J 28.2:G 15/3.

The examples below represent a shelf of U.S. Government Resources correctly arranged.


(The above explanation of shelving order of government resources was adapted courtesy of Kent State University Libraries and Media Services.)

Performing Broader Searches

GPO Monthly Catalog 1976–current

An electronic index of over 500,000 government publications and is updated monthly. The source for publications from all branches of the federal government. When available, links to full text are provided.

- You can reach this index from the Milner Library Home Page by clicking on the “Find Articles on your Topic” link on the Milner Library home page, and then searching “Databases by Title.”

- IMPORTANT NOTE: Not all government resources owned by Milner Library are cataloged – if you find a resource listed in the GPO Catalog that you’d like to see, it’s worth checking the shelves at Milner first, before trying to find out if another institution has the resource you’re looking for. If you are unsure or need help, you can always seek assistance at the Reference Desk or contact the Government Documents Librarian, Angela Bonnell, through e-mail at abonne@ilstu.edu.
Finding Historical Government Resources

To find resources that were covered before the publication of the electronic version of the GPO Monthly Catalog 1976, it is necessary to use print indexes. Below is a listing of several useful indexes, by the years they cover:

1900–1971
Cumulative Subject Index to the Monthly Catalog of United States Government Publications
Z1223 .A183 (Floor 2 Reference Stacks)
Fifteen volumes provide subject access to the Monthly Catalog.

1893–1940
Document Catalog
Z1223.A1905 (Floor 2 Reference Stacks)
Entries are under both personal and governmental authors, subject, and title.

1881–1893
Z1223.A1905 (Floor 2 Reference Stacks)
Comprehensive index of government publications from 1889-1893 that continues Poore’s Descriptive Catalogue. Arranged alphabetically by subject area with a name index in volume 2.
Map of Government Documents Collection

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01/2009