



Alaska State Court Law Library
Reference desk (Anchorage) ▪ 907-264-0585
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Reference desk email ▪ library@akcourts.us
Library website ▪ www.courts.alaska.gov/library

ALASKA LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

The first part of this handout provides instructions for researching legislative history in print, with materials available at the Anchorage Law Library. For information about researching legislative history online, skip to Steps 10 and 11, starting on page 4.

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 Anchorage in Alcove 2. 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:

CSHB 113 [House Bill 113]
HCSCSB 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. The most recent edition is shelved near the session laws. Ask for older editions at Reference.

3. ***The law library has some bill histories.***

Next you must research the history of the bill, to look for signs of legislative intent. The library has compiled histories of some bills already. Check the Vertical File list, located in the front pocket of every binder of the index to the Alaska Legislature microfiche collection. Binders are shelved around the corner from the session laws in the Reading Room and outside the microform room on top of the fiche cabinets on the West Mezzanine. Ask Reference for listed documents and audio tapes.

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

If your bill does not appear in the Vertical File list, 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 near the session laws in Alcove 2.

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 around the corner from the House and Senate journals in Alcove 2.

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 near the session laws in Alcove 2. Check each journal entry listed in the index to see what action was taken.

6. All bills are retained by the Anchorage Law Library.

- **1953 – 2002** bills are available on microfilm on the West Mezzanine in Cabinet F. Microform reader/printers are available for public use. Copies are 20¢ per page.

7. Check committee minutes.

Committee minutes summarize committee action and range from brief outlines to near-verbatim transcriptions. Minutes from **1965 – 1982** are available on microfiche. The index to the Alaska Legislature microfiche collection is shelved around the corner from the session laws in the Reading Room and outside the microform room on top of the fiche cabinets on the West Mezzanine. The law library's fiche collection is organized by year and committee and is in Cabinet F, located outside the microform room. Contact the Legislative Reference Library in Juneau (907-465-3808) for information about 1965 -1981 minutes omitted from the microfiche collection. Microform reader/printers are available for public use. Copies are 20¢ per page.

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+ (Reading Room KFA 1212.A43) 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 4.

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. The index to the Alaska Legislature microfiche collection is shelved around the corner from the session laws in the Reading Room and outside the microform room on top of the fiche cabinets on the West Mezzanine. The law library's fiche collection is organized by year and committee and is in Cabinet F, located outside the microform room. Contact the Legislative Reference Library to obtain fiche the library does not have. Microform reader/printers are available for public use. Copies are 20¢ per page.

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

Committee tapes (1969 -) provide an audio record of committee meetings. The Legislative Reference Library has compiled indexes of committee tapes (1969 – 1982, and 1982 – 2004). See the index to the Alaska Legislature microfiche collection, shelved around the corner from the session laws in the Reading Room and outside the microform room on top of the fiche cabinets on the West Mezzanine.

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

The library has a small collection of committee tapes. Check the Vertical File list, located in the front pocket of every binder of the index to the Alaska Legislature microfiche collection. Ask Reference for listed tapes. Other tapes may be obtained from Juneau. **Audio tapes (1969 – 2004)** are held at the Alaska State Archives. Contact the State Library in Juneau (907-465-2921) for more information. Starting in 2005, digital committee recordings are available on the Legislature's website: <http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis>.

House and Senate floor tapes (**1982 - current session**) are available at the law library. Ask at reference for audio tapes.

Audio tapes (1975 – year prior to current) are held at the Alaska State Archives in Juneau. An index to the audio tapes is available at the University of Alaska at Anchorage. Contact the State Library in Juneau (907-465-2921) for more information.

Video tapes (1977 – 1989) are held at the Alaska State Archives in Juneau. Ask at Reference for indexes to video tapes (1977 – 1989), which are in the law library annex. Contact the State Library in Juneau (907-465-2921) 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 1987 – current Session laws 1981 – current
journals

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 left under Tools. When you scroll over Tools you should select Gavel to Gavel from the drop-down menu. Then, scroll over Gavel Alaska at the top of the next screen and use the drop-down menu to access the Gavel Archive.

➤ **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 – Previous Year 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	- House	- House
+ 87	- 87	- 87
+ 88	+ HCRA	- HCRA
- Senate		- 87/01/21
+ 87		
+ 88		

- After viewing your document, click the Contents icon again to return to the Table of Contents.

12. **Other resources:**

Legislative Information Office (Anchorage)
716 W. 4th Avenue, Suite 200
(907) 259-0111

LIO provides legislative information including committee minutes, committee files and bill status more current than that available at the Anchorage Law Library.

Legislative Reference Library (Juneau)
(907) 465-3808

State Archives (Juneau)
(907) 465-2270

Alaska State Library (Juneau)
(907) 465-2921

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

The legislature's home page includes links to Infobases and to BASIS (Bills & Laws)

For an additional explanation of Alaska legislative history, see [Guide to Alaska Legislative History Materials](#), Legislative Reference Library (revised April 2013). It is located in Volume 1 of the [Index to Alaska Legislature microfiche](#) shelved around the corner from the Session Laws in the Reading Room and above Cabinet F on the West Mezzanine.