How to Follow Current Federal Legislation and Regulations

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HOW TO FOLLOW CURRENT FEDERAL LEGISLATION AND REGULATIONS

SUMMARY

This report has been prepared primarily for the use of constituents wishing to follow the legislative or regulatory activities of the Federal Government, but it may be of interest to anyone unfamiliar with the basic steps in tracking legislation or regulations. It provides a listing of the key primary and secondary sources from which current information can be obtained, as well as suggested sources of further information. Brief annotations indicate the scope of each item.
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INTRODUCTION

Tracking the status of current legislative and regulatory issues is often perceived as a formidable task, requiring an in-depth knowledge of the issue, a vast library of costly publications, and an intimate understanding of the inner workings of the Federal Government. This is not necessarily true. While the researcher may be aided by access to sophisticated retrieval methods and a well-founded comprehension of the governmental system, it is perfectly possible for most people to follow an issue using a variety of resources available locally. However, it can still be very complicated and time-consuming, depending on the scope of the issue and the amount of primary source material generated.

This guide has been designed to introduce the researcher to the essential and useful publications needed to acquire background information or specific facts on the status of Federal legislative or regulatory activities. Primary source publications, secondary source publications, and directories of organizations that track areas of interest are included. Annotations describing the contents and organization of each publication are included so that the researcher can judge which sources most nearly fit individual needs.

Many of the publications cited in this guide can be found and used in local public or research libraries. The publications of the Federal Government can usually be found in those libraries designated as Federal depository libraries.

Several computer databases exist which may expedite a particular search. Since some of these may be available to the researcher through a large public, research, or special library, brief listings of pertinent databases are provided in the "Selected Databases" section.

For all other materials, purchasing information, including publishers and addresses, has been provided. Publications from the Government Printing Office (GPO) can be ordered, prepaid, by mail or by telephone (202-783-3238) on VISA or MasterCard.

GPO bookstores located in selected cities throughout the United States can be identified by consulting a local telephone directory under the listing "U.S. Government."

The prices given are accurate as of the time of this printing; they are, of course, subject to change.
TRACKING CURRENT FEDERAL LEGISLATION

Action on legislation passed or pending in the current Congress, and its status in the legislative process, is reported in the Congressional Record. This is the primary source for the text of floor debates and the official source for recorded votes.

Two useful publications from the Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress are the Digest of Public General Bills and Resolutions and Major Legislation of the Congress. These tools provide digested or summary information on pending and completed legislation.

Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report and the Congressional Index are commercial publications which track the status of current legislation.

Since some current legislation amends previously enacted legislation, it may occasionally be necessary to consult the earlier laws in the U.S. Statutes at Large or the U.S. Code.

PRINTED SOURCES

Congressional Record
Superintendent of Documents
U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, DC 20402
Telephone: (202) 783-3238

Subscription: $225 per year, $112.50 for six months, or $1.50 for single issue
Frequency: Published each day that one or both Houses are in session, except infrequent instances when two or more consecutive issues are printed together

The Congressional Record contains the edited transcript of the activities on the floor of the House and Senate. The "Daily Digest" section includes summaries of: action in each chamber, committee hearings, bills signed, and committee meetings scheduled for the following day. Indexes are issued twice a month. The subject indexes can be used to identify bills by subject, and the "History of Bills and Resolutions" portion tracks action on specific bills.

For information on computerized access to the Congressional Record, see the "Selected Databases" section.

Digest of Public General Bills and Resolutions
Superintendent of Documents
U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, DC 20402
Telephone: (202) 783-3238
Subscription: Price varies per congressional session (or year); free to Members of Congress through the Congressional Research Service
Frequency: Irregular

This publication furnishes a brief synopsis of each public bill and resolution that has been introduced into Congress at the time of publication. Indexes provide retrieval by sponsor, cosponsor, identical bills, short title, and subject.

**Major Legislation of the Congress (MLC)**
Superintendent of Documents
U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, DC 20402  Telephone: (202) 783-3238

Subscription: $19 for the 101st Congress; 102d Congress -- price undetermined; single issues available (price varies); free to Members of Congress through the Congressional Research Service
Frequency: Irregular

This Congressional Research Service publication summarizes major legislation of the current Congress. Arranged by subject, it includes background on the topic and information on the content and status of major bills affecting that topic. A summary issue is provided at the conclusion of each Congress.

**Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report**
Congressional Quarterly, Inc.
1414 22nd Street, NW.  Telephone: (202) 887-8500
Washington, DC 20037  (800) 432-2250

Subscription: Rates furnished on request
Frequency: Weekly, with special supplements and annual *Almanac*

This is a weekly summary of congressional action and developments. There are sections on committee and floor action, a table indicating the status of major legislation, and charts showing recorded votes in both chambers. Most issues include articles providing background information on topics of legislative interest. The annual *Congressional Quarterly Almanac* is a comprehensive review of the legislative session.

For information on computerized access to this publication, see the "Selected Databases" section.

**Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents**
Superintendent of Documents
U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, DC 20402  Telephone: (202) 783-3238

Subscription: $55 per year; $2 for single issue
Frequency: Weekly, with quarterly, semiannual, and annual indexes

This weekly periodical is the source for such information as the dates on which the President signed or vetoed legislation. In addition, it provides transcripts of: Presidential messages to Congress, Executive orders, and speeches and other material released by the White House.

For information on computerized access to this publication, see the "Selected Databases" section.

**Congressional Index**

Commerce Clearing House, Inc.
4025 West Peterson Avenue
Chicago, IL 60646

Telephone: (312) 583-8500

To order: (708) 940-4600
(ask for Public Relations)

Subscription: $675 per year for two-year subscription, $745 for one-year, new subscription; $607 per year to Members of Congress

Frequency: Weekly while Congress is in session

This loose-leaf service reports the status of all pending legislation. There are indexes by subject, sponsor, and companion and identical bill number. Congressional action on reorganization plans, treaties, and nominations is indicated. The count on roll-call and recorded teller votes is given by party, along with a list of Members who did not vote with their party's majority. Measures enacted are indexed by public law number, bill number, subject, and sponsor, and there is a chronological list of measures vetoed. This publication includes biographical information on Senators and Representatives and lists of members of all committees. A chronological list of hearings held by each committee indicates whether the transcript has been printed.

**TELEPHONE SOURCES**

At times, information is needed on legislation so current that the facts needed will not yet be available in any printed source. Or, there may be occasions when only one elusive date, bill number, or page number is needed. The offices listed below can provide certain specific facts as explained in each entry. However, when this information is needed on a regular basis, or when in-depth coverage of an issue is needed, it is essential to consult the published sources that have been listed in this guide.

The following telephone numbers may be useful:

**Switchboard in the U.S. Capitol**

The office of any committee or subcommittee can be reached by calling (202) 224-3121.
Status of Legislation
The Office of Legislative Information on Capitol Hill will respond to telephone inquiries from the public, providing up-to-date information on current legislation. By using a computer, a trained and knowledgeable staff can give the following information: status of any given piece of legislation, bills introduced by any given Member of Congress, or bills introduced on any given subject. A maximum of six items identified by bill number can be handled per call. The number is (202) 225-1772.

Daily Calendar Information
Both the Democrats and the Republicans in the House and the Senate provide recorded messages of the proceedings on the floor of each chamber every day they are in session. The numbers to call for these Cloakroom recordings are:

Senate: (202) 224-8541 (Democratic)
(202) 224-8601 (Republican)

House: (202) 225-7400 (Democratic)
(202) 225-7430 (Republican)

White House Records
The Office of the Executive Clerk at the White House can provide information on when a bill was signed or vetoed and give the dates of Presidential messages, Executive orders, and other official Presidential actions. This office can be reached at (202) 456-2226.

TRACKING CURRENT FEDERAL REGULATIONS

Regulations are issued by agencies of the Federal Government under the authority delegated to them by a Federal law or by a Presidential Executive order pursuant to law, and have the force of law. Final regulations are first printed in the Federal Register, and then codified annually by subject in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). By using these two sources with their many indexes and tables, it is possible to identify all currently existing regulations in a subject area or pertaining to a specific section of the U.S. Code, to identify regulations issued pursuant to a specific public law, or to find proposed regulations which are not yet final.

The Federal Regulatory Directory describes the regulatory responsibilities of more than 100 Federal agencies, and the weekly National Journal frequently reports on regulatory activities.
PRINTED SOURCES

_**Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)**_
Superintendent of Documents
U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, DC 20402

Subscription: $620 per year; varies by individual title
Frequency: Revised annually, one quarter of the titles as of the first of January, April, July, and October

The CFR codifies final regulations having general applicability and legal effect which have previously appeared in the *Federal Register*. They are arranged by subject in 50 titles (over 190 volumes). The annual revision incorporates new regulations and drops superseded ones, so that the CFR reflects regulations in effect at the time of printing. Several indexes and tables accompany the set.

For information on computerized access to the CFR, see the "Selected Databases" section.

**Federal Register**
Superintendent of Documents
U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, DC 20402

Subscription: $340 per year; $170 for six months, or $1.50 for single issue
Frequency: Daily, Monday through Friday; not published on Saturdays, Sundays or on official holidays

The Federal Register is the official announcement of regulations and legal notices issued by Federal agencies. These include: Presidential proclamations and Executive orders, proposed and final Federal agency regulations having general applicability and legal effect, documents required to be published by Act of Congress, and other Federal agency documents of public interest. It also functions as an update to the CFR. Daily and monthly indexes, and an accompanying publication, *List of CFR Sections Affected*, assist in its use.

For information on computerized access to the Federal Register, see the "Selected Databases" section.

**Bowker's Code of Federal Regulations Indexing Service**
R.R. Bowker
Order Department
P.O. Box 31
New Providence, NJ 07974

Telephone: (800) 521-8110
Frequency: Annual, with quarterly cumulative supplements

By using this reference tool, one can gain access to the *Code of Federal Regulations*’ more than 190 volumes by: *CFR* title, legal topic, key word (with cross references), statute, and governmental agency. Coverage in this relatively new source begins with the 1986 *CFR*.

**CIS Federal Register Index**  
Congressional Information Service, Inc.  
4520 East-West Highway, Suite 800  
Bethesda, MD 20814  
Telephone: (800) 638-8380

Subscription: $595 per year  
Frequency: Weekly, with monthly, quarterly, and semiannual cumulations

This annotated index provides numerous points of access to the *Federal Register*, such as: subject; personal, organizational, and corporate name; issuing agency; authorizing legislation; geographic area; *CFR* section number; and agency docket number. Also, a listing of deadlines, effective dates, and hearings is maintained.

**CIS Index to the Code of Federal Regulations**  
Congressional Information Service, Inc.  
4520 East-West Highway, Suite 800  
Bethesda, MD 20814  
Telephone: (800) 638-8380

Subscription: $745 each for 1983-1989 editions; $695 each for 1980-1982 editions  
Frequency: Annual

This *CFR* index is arranged by: subject; geography--by political entities containing federally regulated activities, and by proper name of physical entities administered by the Government (national parks, monuments, etc.); descriptive headings for various portions of the *CFR*; and reserved headings either anticipated for future use or no longer in use. In addition, there is an administrative history of the *CFR*. (The 1977-1979 indexes were published by Information Handling Services; the 1980 index by Capitol Services International; and the 1981-to-date indexes by Congressional Information Service, Inc.)

**Federal Regulatory Directory**  
Congressional Quarterly, Inc.  
1414 22nd Street, NW.  
Washington, DC 20037  
Telephone: (800) 543-7793

Price: $80  
Frequency: Every four years
Profiles describing the mandates and operations of more than 100 Federal regulatory agencies are provided in this directory. It also contains lists of telephone contacts, information resources, organizational charts, regional offices, and congressional committees with jurisdiction over various regulatory issues. Historical and current overviews explain the evolution of the regulatory process. Additional aids are the full texts of key regulatory acts and Executive orders, along with subject and personnel indexes.

National Journal
National Journal, Inc.
1730 M Street, NW., Suite 1100
Washington, DC 20036
Telephone: (202) 862-0620

Subscription: Rates furnished on request
Frequency: Weekly

This magazine contains summary reports on current legislative issues such as defense spending and energy policy, and on regulatory activities and reform. Brief examinations of policy and politics appear in the "Washington Update" section, while the "At a Glance" section gives capsulized views of major issues. Other sections focus on congressional matters, the White House, and statistical data. Detailed indexes provide retrieval by individual name, Government agency, private organization, geographic region, subject, congressional committee, and author.

For information on computerized access to this publication, see the "Selected Databases" section.

TELEPHONE SOURCES

As is the case with legislation, there are times when more information is needed on regulatory activity than appears in the printed materials, or when assistance in using the printed sources is required. Again, the telephone can be helpful.

Federal Register
The finding aids office at the Federal Register can identify the location and date of recent items appearing in the Federal Register and can assist in using the CFR; its number is (202) 523-5227. The Public Information Office can send single copies of the Federal Register until the supply is exhausted, and can supply up to 10 pages of photocopies, at a cost of $.35 per page. It can be reached at (202) 523-5240.

Federal Agencies
The Federal agencies responsible for regulatory activities in specific areas and the individuals in charge can be identified in the Federal Regulatory Directory (see pages 7-8), where telephone numbers are furnished.
**White House Records**

The Office of the Executive Clerk at the White House can provide information on the dates Executive orders and Presidential proclamations appeared in the *Federal Register*. This office's phone number is (202) 456-2226.

**SELECTED DATABASES**

Several computer databases are available which can provide valuable help in tracking both Federal legislation and regulations. Brief descriptions of selected ones are provided in this section. Also included is the address and telephone number of the database producer.

Because of the rapidly changing nature of this field, no attempt has been made to compile a comprehensive listing. For the same reason, no material has been provided on subscription fees, online rates, or access information. To obtain these, the appropriate database producer must be contacted at the address provided.

**CIS/Index (CIS)**

Congressional Information Service, Inc.
4520 East-West Highway, Suite 800
Bethesda, MD 20814
Telephone: (301) 654-1550
(800) 638-8380

Abstracts of such congressional publications as hearings, reports, documents, and committee prints are available in this database. Testimony by hearing witnesses can be tracked by the individuals' names. "CIS/Index," which is the electronic version of the *CIS/Index to Publications of the U.S. Congress*, provides coverage from 1970 through the present.

**Congressional Tracking System**

Washington On-Line
4200 Wilson Boulevard, 10th Floor
Arlington, VA 22003
Telephone: (202) 543-9101

This database provides: full texts of legislation; histories of bills; Members' voting records; congressional schedules and calendars; and campaign finance information. Coverage is from 1985 through the present.

**CQ Washington Alert Service**

Congressional Quarterly, Inc.
Washington Alert Service
1414 22nd Street, NW.
Washington, DC 20037
Telephone: (202) 887-6258

Material on congressional bill status, floor actions, legislative histories and complete text of all bills introduced, schedules, roll-call votes, lists of new committee publications, and the full text of the *Congressional Quarterly*
Weekly Report are some of this database's highlights. Time spans covered vary depending upon the category of information sought.

**ELSS (Electronic Legislative Search System)**
Commerce Clearing House, Inc.
Marketing Dept.
4025 West Peterson Avenue
Chicago, IL 60646
Telephone: (312) 940-4600
(312) 583-8500

Abstracts of Federal legislation introduced during the current legislative session are provided. Some of this database's retrieval points are: bill number, sponsor, bill status, public law number, effective dates, congressional vote totals, and subject.

**LEGISLATE**
LEGISLATE, Inc.
111 Massachusetts Avenue, NW.
Washington, DC 20001
Telephone: (202) 898-2300

With a wide range of information on all congressional bills and resolutions introduced since 1979, committee reports, and the full text of the Congressional Record, this database allows users to track legislation. Specialized voting records for Members of Congress can be produced with the database's vote rating service. Those interested in regulation would be aided by the Federal Register, indexed since 1981 and available in full text since 1985. Also provided in full text are: daily press briefings at the State and Defense Departments and at the White House; National Journal; and the Washington Post.

**LEXIS/NEXIS**
Mead Data Central, Inc.
9393 Springboro Pike
P.O. Box 933
Dayton, OH 45401
Telephone: (513) 865-6800
(800) 227-4908

Each of these databases provides full-text coverage of several publications useful in tracking legislation and regulations. Both offer the Congressional Record, the Federal Register and the Code of Federal Regulations, as well as the full texts of bills from the current Congress, digest information on bills from previous Congresses, and statistical forecasts of the chances of passage of pending legislation. Among NEXIS highlights are the National Journal, the Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, pending bill status, floor and committee votes, Members' voting records, and committee schedules. In its General Federal Library, LEXIS provides access to the U.S. Code, public laws, and numerous Federal judicial decisions.
In addition to tracking bills and providing histories of legislation, this service contains information on lobbyist activities, voting records, political contributions, and committee and floor votes.

WESTLAW
West Publishing Co.
50 West Kellogg Blvd.
P.O. Box 64833
St. Paul, MN 55164-9752
Telephone: (612) 228-2500
(800) 937-8529

While WESTLAW was designed primarily as a legal reference database, many of its files contain material useful to anyone tracking legislation or regulations. The Congressional Record is available in full text, as is the Federal Register and the current Code of Federal Regulations. Also available in full text are executive documents and Federal laws. For congressional bills, legislative histories, committee reports, abstracts, and passage forecasts are provided.

OTHER SOURCES

There are numerous sources which, while not directly related to tracking legislation and regulations, can often be useful for identifying sources of information on these topics. National organizations which represent specific interest groups are keenly aware of legislation and regulatory activities in their areas. They often follow these issues closely, publishing newsletters and making reference material available on these topics.

The Encyclopedia of Associations contains essential information on more than 22,000 national organizations. With a subject arrangement, the Washington Information Directory provides information on governmental and private groups in Washington. National Trade and Professional Associations of the United States offers information on some 6,250 national trade associations and professional societies. Washington 90 is a directory of key Washington officials and institutions.

REFERENCE SOURCES

Encyclopedia of Associations
Gale Research Company
835 Penobscot Bldg.
Detroit, MI 48226-4094
Telephone: (312) 961-2242
(800) 877-4253

Frequency: V. 1 & 2 are annuals; V. 3 is a periodic supplement

V. 1 of the Encyclopedia of Associations provides the name, address, phone number, and name of the top official of a staggering variety of non-profit organizations in the United States. For each group, an annotation describes its history, resources, goals, activities, publications, and meetings. The index to V. 1 provides retrieval by title or key word. Access by State, city, and executive name is given in V. 2. V. 3 has information on newly formed or newly reported associations.

National Trade and Professional Associations of the United States
Columbia Books, Inc.
1212 New York Avenue, NW., Suite 330 Washington, DC 20005

Telephone: (202) 898-0662
FAX order number: (202) 898-0775

Price: $55
Frequency: Annual

This soft-bound volume lists "about 6,250 national trade associations, labor unions, professional, scientific, or technical societies and other national organizations composed of groups united for a common purpose." Basic information includes: address, telephone number, FAX number (if available), number of staff and members, publications, meetings, and budget. Subject, geographic, and budget indexes are provided. The budget index separates organizations which have provided budget data into 10 categories ranging from less than $10,000 to more than $5 million.

Washington [year]
Columbia Books, Inc.
1212 New York Avenue, NW., Suite 330 Washington, DC 20005

Telephone: (202) 898-0662
FAX order number: (202) 898-0775

Price: $60
Frequency: Annual

Listings in this directory cover about 20,000 key officials of some 4,000 Washington, DC, area institutions, such as international organizations, Government agencies, embassies, media organizations, cultural institutions, national associations, public interest groups, businesses, banks, local colleges, universities, and hospitals. The current edition is known as Washington 90.
Rather than arranging Washington's information sources by agency or organization, this directory categorizes them by subject. Each of its 17 subject areas has three categories of information sources: executive branch agencies, Congress, and private or non-governmental organizations. Each entry contains the name of the source, its address, telephone number, and the name of a key official. A capsule description of the work performed by the agency, committee, or organization is included. Useful lists of congressional offices, labor unions, diplomatic personnel, State and local officials, and Federal regional offices, as well as subject and name indexes, are provided.

MEDIA SOURCES

A variety of information on what is happening in Washington can be absorbed through exposure to an assortment of editorial perspectives, "inside" reporting, and political analysis.


Both commercial and public radio and television are providing increasing coverage of the legislative and regulatory happenings in Washington. Virtually every community has access to weekly broadcast programs which provide in-depth political analysis from reporters, legislators, and executive branch officials.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

For those who may want more information about the legislative and regulatory activities of the Federal Government or about the sources and techniques of tracking laws and regulations, this short bibliography is provided. Library of Congress call numbers are included.

This volume describes, in considerable detail and in a readable format, the origins and development of Congress, its powers, rules, and procedures, the qualifications and conduct of Members of Congress, their relationship to their constituencies, and much more. Several appendixes and an index are included.


"The purpose of this book is to provide a guide for locating U.S. Government publications. Its workbook format incorporates illustrations and appropriate indexes and abstracts, plus questions and answers."


This newly updated successor to the fourth edition of Pollack's *Fundamentals of Legal Research* is a clear and detailed guide to in-depth legal research, which includes research in Federal legislation and administrative, or regulatory, law.


This book serves as an introductory guide to a variety of basic information sources on Federal Government publications, and includes sections on public documents, GPO, the depository library system, and legislative, executive and judicial branch publications.


Well-written chapters on legislative and regulatory information sources are part of this comprehensive, readable guide to sources of Federal information. Explanations of types of sources which focus on representative works are provided, along with information on any "freebies," footnotes, and bibliographies.


Revised periodically, this pamphlet provides "a readable and nontechnical outline of the background and the numerous steps of our Federal lawmaking process from the origin of an idea for a legislative proposal..."
through its publication as a statute." It concentrates on procedures observed by the House of Representatives.


This pamphlet, which is periodically revised by the Parliamentarian of the Senate under the direction of the Secretary of the Senate, provides an overview of the legislative process. It focuses on procedures observed by the Senate.


This research guide to congressional publications covers the vast amount of information utilized and issued by the United States Congress and focuses on printed materials.