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Federal Research

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Chapter 6: Federal Research

By Yolanda Patrice Jones

Introduction

Finding legal information in the United States can be difficult and/or confusing for the layperson. Electronic databases such as LexisNexis or Westlaw may only be accessible for those who can afford it. Even with access to these databases, those without legal training may find them to be overwhelming. This chapter aims to shed some light on the process of doing federal legal research as well as recommend Internet sites where the layperson can get access to free legal resources.

The Branches of Government

When doing legal research, it is important to remember that there are three branches of government, which are the sources of our law in the United States. In terms of federal research, the judicial branch is the court system, which includes federal district courts (trial courts), the federal courts of appeal, and the United States Supreme Court. The legislative branch includes the United States Congress, and the executive branch includes the White House and federal administrative agencies, such as the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

As modern federal law is developed in all three branches of government, a researcher will usually be consulting several interconnected resources. You may need to consult federal cases, statutes, and regulations during your research. Secondary sources such as books and journal articles may help to provide background information on federal legal issues and point you to the cases, statutes, and regulations, which are the primary sources of law. See

the end of this chapter for references to helpful sources of background information on doing federal legal research.

Is This Really a Matter of Federal Law?

Determining the appropriate jurisdiction and the applicable law can be tricky. A federal court may wind up applying state law, while a state court may wind up applying federal law, or both may apply both!

- First, you may want to start with the assumption that your issue is state law. The powers of the federal government are specifically set forth in the Constitution. Those powers not expressly prescribed in the Constitution are left to the jurisdiction of the fifty states.
- Does the issue you are researching fall under the subject matter jurisdiction of the federal courts? There are certain subjects within the jurisdiction of the federal sources such as federal income taxation, bankruptcy, admiralty, antitrust, copyright, and patents. Federal courts usually have jurisdiction over cases involving federal law, a federal treaty, or the Constitution.
- Does the issue involve a federal statute or regulation? Does the issue involve the Constitution or one of its amendments (for example, First Amendment freedom of speech issues or civil rights claims)?
- Is there a federal agency involved? A good rule of thumb is if federal funds are involved, federal law may be involved. This is not an exhaustive list, but these are a few of the things you should consider.

Federal judicial branch sources

Jurisdiction and the Three-Tier Courts System

The judicial branch of the United States is divided into jurisdictions, or areas in which the courts have the authority to issue opinions (also known as cases, decisions or rulings). There are court systems on the federal level

and for each of the fifty states. Each jurisdiction (federal and the fifty states) has any number of courts, usually one of three types:

- 1) a trial court,
- 2) a court of appeals, and
- 3) a "court of last resort," often (but not always) known as a Supreme Court.

On the federal level, there is a Supreme Court of the United States, a United States Court of Appeals, and a trial court, which is known as the United States District Court. The federal appellate courts are subdivided into numbered "circuits." Michigan, for example, is in the jurisdiction of the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals.

Binding Authority

The decisions of a higher court in a jurisdiction are usually "binding" or mandatory authority. For example, the decisions of the United States Supreme court are *binding* on all of the courts in the United States. In other words, all courts in the United States must follow, or obey, United States Supreme Court decisions. The decisions of the high court of a particular state are binding on the courts within that state, and so on. However, the decisions of a Michigan state court may or may not be followed by a federal court in the Sixth Circuit, which includes the state of Michigan. Many researchers try to find US Supreme Court cases as they are binding authority over all other US courts, however, if you are in federal court, other federal decisions can also be used in legal documents if there is no United States Supreme court decision on the issue.

Searching by Citation - Federal Reporters and Their Citation Abbreviations

One of the biggest challenges for those new to doing legal research is being able to understand and use legal citations to retrieve documents. The basic citation pattern for a case is:

(Case Name), Volume number/court reporter abbreviation/ page number
(year)

For example: *Troxel v. Granville*, 530 U.S. 57 (2000)

The citation format above was developed in conjunction with the printing of court decisions in *reporters*. The *Troxel* case was is a US Supreme Court opinion. It follows at standard citation format where 530 is the volume number, U.S. is the abbreviation of the book, in this case, the **United States Reports**, and 57 is the page number. The case was decided in the year 2000. You can use this basic information to find the case in print, in an electronic subscription database, or on a free website.

There are hundreds of reporters publishing legal opinions from courts and tribunals all over the United States. The trick is being able to recognize the reporter abbreviation if you are retrieving the case in print. The citation system most used by attorneys and courts is **The Bluebook, a Uniform System of Citation**. A good website which provides explanation and examples of Bluebook citation formats is **An Introduction to Legal Citation**, by Peter W. Martin at <http://www.law.cornell.edu/citation/>. Most electronic databases will recognize these standard citation formats.

United States Supreme Court

The reporters for the US Supreme Court are the official **United States Reports (U.S.)** and the unofficial, commercially published **Supreme Court**

Reporter (S.Ct.) and United States Supreme Court Reports, Lawyer's Edition (L.Ed.).

Individual court websites may provide *slip opinions* (the text of brand new cases that may not yet have citation information). Supreme Court opinions are highly sought after the moment they are issued by the court. The **US Supreme Court website** at <http://www.supremecourt.gov> is the first place you should go to find recent Supreme Court cases. They are made available on the website as soon as they are released. The website also has an archive of older Supreme Court opinions.

Other good free sources for Supreme Court opinions and other legal information are the **Cornell Law School Legal Information Institute** at <https://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt>, **Findlaw** (<http://www.findlaw.com/casecode/supreme.html>) and the **Justia** website at <https://supreme.justia.com/>. The home page of each of these websites are great general starting points for free legal information sources.

The Supreme Court website provides PDF copies of the bound volumes back to 1991. They also provide archives of older Supreme Court opinions. Cornell Law School provides a search feature for all Supreme Court cases going back to the earliest opinions. They also have an archive of Supreme Court opinions organized by topic, and information about cases currently being argued before the Supreme Court.

The **Google Scholar** website at <http://scholar.google.com>, provides a database which includes Supreme Court opinions back to the very first opinions which were issued. You can both search Supreme Court opinions and browse them by year at the **Justia** website at <http://law.justia.com/> and the **Public Library of Law** (<http://www.plol.org>) can be searched from the earliest opinions to the present. The **Scotus Blog**

(<http://www.scotusblog.com>) provides “breaking news” coverage of new Supreme Court opinions.

United States Court of Appeals (Federal Circuit Courts)

The reporter for the published Court of Appeals decisions is the **Federal Reporter** (F. or F.2d or F.3d). The courts of appeals are divided into 13 circuits. Michigan is in the *Sixth Judicial Circuit*. Individual court websites may provide recent (particularly on hot issues) and/or older opinions.

A good place which links to individual federal websites is the official **US Courts** website at <http://www.uscourts.gov>. It has a court locator, which you can search by location or by clicking on a map. You can search for court of appeals cases at **Google Scholar** (<http://scholar.google.com>), which at the time of this writing, covers federal cases from 1923 to the present.

You can search or browse federal appeals cases at **Justia** (<http://law.justia.com/>) and the **Public Library of Law** (<http://www.plol.org>) allows searching of the federal circuit courts from roughly 1950 to the present. **OpenJurist** (<http://openjurist.org/>) has Court of Appeals decisions from about 1880. News and information about recent federal appellate cases is available via the **How Appealing** blog at <http://howappealing.law.com>.

Federal District Courts (trial level)

The reporter for the published federal district court decisions is the **Federal Supplement** (F. Supp., F.Supp. 2d, F.Supp. 3d). An example of the name of a federal district court is *United States District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan*. You can search for federal district court cases at **Google Scholar** (<http://scholar.google.com>), which at the time of this writing covers

federal cases from 1923 to the present. You can search or browse district court cases at **Justia** (<http://law.justia.com/>).

Parallel Citations

Not all cases are published in one place. Any number of parallel citations (the same case published in a different reporter) may follow the main citation. In the example above, the *Troxel* case was published officially in the **United States Reports** (abbreviated as **US**), as well as in the commercially published **Supreme Court Reporter (S.Ct.)** and the **United States Supreme Court Reports, Lawyer's Edition (L.Ed.)**. The **Bluebook** rule is to provide a citation to the official reporter - for example: *Troxel v. Granville*, 530 U.S. 57 (2000). However, it is common to see a citation provides the parallel citations as well –

for example: *Troxel v. Granville*, 530 U.S. 57, 120 S.Ct. 2054, 147 L.Ed. 2d 49 (2000).

More on Retrieving Cases from Websites

Many times, copies of cases are placed on websites of the courts, the parties, or organizations or groups with an interest in the case. In those instances, an official citation may not be included, but a web search engine should be able to retrieve them by the names of the parties.

The main problem with online cases is that they may or may not be provided by an official or authoritative source or have the official print pagination required by the major legal citation systems. If you have access to a library which owns the **Bluebook**, consult that publication for information about citing to web resources. Otherwise, an **Introduction to Basic Legal Citation**, by Peter W. Martin at <http://www.law.cornell.edu/citation/> includes a section on citing to sources from the web.

It is by far easier to work with the official cites, if possible. The **Google Scholar** website provides official and/or commercial print citation and pagination.

Searching for Cases in Google Scholar by Topic Keyword, Party Name, and Exact Legal Citation

The **Google Scholar** website (<http://scholar.google.com>) provides access to both state and federal court cases. As of this date Google Scholar includes all United States Supreme Court Cases, Federal appellate and trial court cases from 1923 to the present, and State appellate and Supreme Court cases from 1950 to the present.

Google Scholar is not on the menus from the main **Google** web page, so go to <http://scholar.google.com>. Click on the bullet next to *Case Law*, and type in your search terms. You are often given the option to narrow your search to cases from your home state or another state below the search box.

Your terms can be subject keywords, the names of the parties of a case (for example, the name of our sample case, *Troxel v. Granville*), or the exact legal citation (in our example, 530 U.S. 57). You can also select to search federal courts only, the courts in your state (what you see as the default varies according to where your computer is located), or you can select one or more specific courts.

Once you do a search, browse the results list to see if any of the items are relevant to your search. You can filter or limit the search by type of courts (Federal courts, or Michigan courts), and by date. Once you have your result set, click on the link of the case you wish to read.

In a sample search I ran using the name of the case in the general Google Scholar search box without choosing a specific court, the *Troxel* case was

the first case in the search results. The *Cited By* link shows that the case has been cited by a large number of people. Clicking on *How Cited* brings up quotes from other representative cases on the issue and other cases which cited the *Troxel* case.

Star Pagination

Star pagination is used in unofficial reporters or databases to provide corresponding page numbers in official or print reporters. In our example for the *Troxel* case, **Google Scholar** provides the citation for the “official” ***United States Reports (U.S.)***. The citation to the case, 530 U.S. 57 (2000), is at the top of the document. The case starts at page 57. Notice as you scroll through the case that page numbers corresponding to the print version of the case are visible in the left margin. For example, *60 and *61. These numbers indicate the print page numbers that you can cite to in your document.

Is Your Case Still Good Law? Use a Citator Before You Stop Your Research

Once you have found a case, you must make sure that it has not been overturned by a higher court. Lawyers use *citators* such as **Shepard’s Citations** (print/LexisNexis) or **KeyCite** (Westlaw) to make sure that their case is still *good law*. They are becoming rare in print, but a law library that is open to the public may allow access to an electronic version of Shepard’s or other citators. Electronic database citation research is recommended, and many libraries no longer carry the print volumes.

Be familiar with the common **Shepard’s/KeyCite** signals, especially those which indicate that at least part of your case has negative treatment (or, is no longer “good law”). Online, look for the red stop sign (Shepard’s on Lexis), or red flag (KeyCite on Westlaw). Remember that if you see a red Shepard’s or KeyCite symbol, it does not necessarily mean that your *entire*

case has been overturned. You must read the case carefully to determine whether a particular issue received strong negative treatment.

If you cannot gain access to a commercial citator in print or a citator database, try the *Cited by* and *How cited* features at [Google Scholar](https://scholar.google.com). You will get a general idea of how your case has been cited and quoted, but it does not tell you with certainty if your case has been overturned/is still “good law.”

Research tip: if you have found one case that seems to be on your topic, you can expand your research using a citator to find other court opinions that cite to the one “good case” as well as relevant secondary sources such as journal articles. You can also search for the case by citation or name at <http://scholar.google.com> and use the *How cited*, *Cited by*, and *Related Articles*, features to find related cases and journal articles.

Federal Docket Information - PACER

What is a Docket?

The *docket* is a file of all documents associated with a particular court case. The file may include the *briefs of the parties*, *motions*, *transcripts*, *exhibits*, and other documents. For any one court case, there may be dozens of documents filed with the court that are tracked using the docket listing. Often, when people refer to the *docket*, they are actually talking about the listing of all the docket files, which is used to request specific documents. Each file is given a number, called the *docket number*, which is used to retrieve the docket listing. The docket number can also be used to search for a copy of the case itself in online databases, as it is often included at the beginning of the text of the court opinion.

The PACER System

The official, though not quite free, source for federal docket searching is the **PACER (Public Access to Court Electronic Records)** website at <http://www.pacer.gov>. The **PACER** system includes background materials connected with a federal appellate or district court case. Any links to docket information from a federal appeals court or federal district court website will direct you to the PACER system.

PACER charges around 10 cents per page, and requires that you set up an account with a username and password to access the database. Anyone can register for a PACER account - you do not need to be an attorney. If you are a party to the litigation you may petition the court for free access to PACER. See the **PACER Frequently Asked Questions** and video tutorials at <http://www.pacer.gov> for more information.

Using Docket Numbers

When a case is first filed with a court, it is given a number called a docket number, which the court uses to track the case through the court system. If you go to a court to look for background documents for a case, you will often be asked for the docket number. If you do not already have the docket number, it will be more difficult to retrieve the case. If a case has been published, you can often search for the case in a free or subscription database to retrieve the docket number. If a case is pending, or otherwise has not been published, obtaining the number can be difficult. PACER does allow for name searching through its **US Case/Party Index** (now called the **PACER Case Locator**), but there are sometimes large numbers of cases to look through before finding the correct one.

Docket numbers are usually provided after the party names in a case. Going back to **Google Scholar**, I searched for the case *Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action v. Regents of the University of Michigan*, at 701 F.3d 466 (2012). At the beginning of the case, directly below the names of the parties are a series of docket numbers, beginning with 08-1387. These are the docket numbers which can be used to search **PACER** or other databases. Most of the time, only one docket number is given to a case; however, if there were several cases that were joined together, there may be more than one docket number. This case was decided in the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit (the **F.3d** citation lets the researcher know this is a federal Court of Appeals case), of which Michigan is a part.

You can select your region, such as the Sixth Circuit (Michigan). This helps to narrow the scope of your search so you do not have to browse through as many search results as an unrestricted search. You can also select the type of case, such as *civil*, *bankruptcy*, etc. However, it may be better to use the default settings, which searches all types of cases. This is helpful if you are unsure what type of case you have.

You can search by the *docket number* (called the *case number* in **PACER**), the case title (for example, *Smith v. Jones*), the party name (last name first, such as *Smith, John*), or other information such as the date filed or decided.

Although searching by docket number is the most systematic method, it can often be the most difficult part of a **PACER** search. Each jurisdiction may have a slightly different format for their docket numbers, which are *normalized* in PACER. For example, you may see a listing for "2008-cv-1387." Unfortunately, that means that you may not be able to find your case with the docket number format you obtained from the text of the case. If you are having problems, try searching by party names.

If a document is available online, you can click on the link next to the docket listing. Note that not all docket information is available online. Online docket links are generally available in cases after 2000 or so. The older the case, the less likely the chance of finding the full text of the case documents linked from the docket. In addition, either all or part of or the proceedings may be sealed, by order of the court.

Other Sources of Docket information

There are other free sources of docket information on the web, such as **Justia.com** (<http://dockets.justia.com/>) and the **Law Librarian's Resource Exchange (LLRX) Court Rules, Forms, and Dockets** guide. The **LLRX** guide contains a listing of free state and federal court docket sources on the web (<http://www.llrx.com/courtrules/>). **Justia.com** has offered a federal docket search at <http://dockets.justia.com>.

Court Rules and Forms

Some courts provide court rules and forms free on the web while others do not. One of the largest collections of links to court rules and forms on the web can be found at **LLRX.com** (<http://www.llrx.com/courtrules/>). Legal forms can be some of the hardest documents to find because one person may call a form by one name while another person knows it by an entirely different name (neither of which may be the actual, official name of the form). Law libraries often have many sets of formbooks to search and may have library guides to help you find local forms. Often the most direct method is to look for your local court on the web. They may post copies of their most requested forms on their website.

Finding Federal Cases Checklist

1. Take stock of what you already know. Do you already have information about a specific case you wish to find?
 - a. Name of one or more of the parties.

b. Exact citation

- United States Supreme Court
 - *United States Reports* (official reporter): _____ U.S. _____
 - *Supreme Court Reporter*: _____ S.Ct. _____
 - *United States Supreme Court Reporter*: _____ L.Ed. _____
- Federal Courts of Appeal
 - Federal Reporter
 - _____ F. _____
 - _____ F. 2d _____
 - _____ F. 3d _____
 - Federal District Courts
 - Federal Supplement
 - _____ F. Supp. _____
 - _____ F. Supp. 2d _____
 - _____ F. Supp. 3d _____

c. Docket number

- Example: 08-1387
- Example: 2008-cv-1387

2. If you have specific information about a case as listed above, search for your information in the resources below:

- a. Google Scholar (<http://scholar.google.com>), by exact citation, docket number, or party name. Google Scholar covers all US Supreme Court Cases, Federal cases back to 1923, and State cases back to 1950.
- b. Justia (<http://www.justia.com>). Look under "Laws: Cases & Codes," which allows you to search by circuit, by state, and by year back to 2001.
- c. Public Library of Law (<http://www.plol.org>), by exact citation, docket number, or party name.
- d. OpenJurist (<http://openjurist.org/>) has U.S. Court of Appeals decisions from about 1880.
- e. In print, if a library has the print reporter set, the first number in the citation is the volume number and the last number is the page number.
 - Local law libraries or academic libraries with access to the public may provide access to subscription databases such

as Lexis, LexisNexis Academic, and Westlaw, as well as print tools for finding cases.

- f. READ THE CASE! Do not just quote the summary at the beginning of the case.
3. If you do NOT have specific information about a case:
 - a. Brainstorm for search terms to use in electronic databases and print indexes. Use words from your fact situation and write your question in sentence form about what you are looking for.
 - b. Use your search terms as keyword searches in sources such as Google Scholar, Justia, the Public Library of Law, and OpenJurist.
 - Local law libraries or academic libraries with access to the public may provide access to subscription databases such as Lexis, LexisNexis Academic, and Westlaw, as well as print resources.
 - c. Read the case. Double check: is this really a matter of federal law?
 4. Is your case still good law? Use a citator service to make sure that your case has not been overturned.
 - a. Local law libraries or academic libraries with access to the public may provide access to subscription databases such as Lexis, LexisNexis Academic, and Westlaw.
 - b. The Google Scholar "how cited" feature provides basic information about cases which have cited to your case. Remember, it does not provide specific information about whether a case is still "good law."
 5. Need docket information? (background documents)
 - a. Supreme Court
 - Use the Supreme Court website (<http://www.supremecourt.gov>) to find United States Supreme Court docket information.
 - b. Federal appellate and district court docket information.
 - Pacer (<http://www.pacer.gov>)
 - Justia (<http://dockets.justia.com/>)
 - c. See generally LLRX Court Rules and Forms guide - <http://www.llrx.com/courtrules/>.
 6. Tracking news about the Federal Courts?
 - a. Try blogs such as <http://www.scotusblog.com>, and <http://www.howappealing.law.com>.

- b. Newsworthy cases may receive coverage in local or national news outlets.
- c. Jurist legal news (<http://www.jurist.org/>). The Jurist site is covers legal news nationwide but if your topic is covered it will also often include links to documents (such court complaints) related to the story.

Legislative Branch Sources

United States Constitution and Other Founding Documents

The **United States Constitution** is available at the **Government Printing Office Federal Digital System**, or **FDSys**, website (<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/>). Note that this website was formally known as **GPOAccess** and will soon be updated again under the name **Govinfo** (<http://www.govinfo.gov/>).

An annotated text called **The Constitution of the United States of America, Analysis and Interpretation** is available at **FDSys**, but a more readable version resides at the **Cornell Law School Legal Information Institute (LII)** (<http://www.law.cornell.edu/anncon/html/index.html>).

The **National Archives** website has links to the **Constitution**, the **Declaration of Independence** and other documents at <http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/>.

Another very useful source for the Constitution is the **National Constitution Center** (<http://constitutioncenter.org/>).

The **Congress.gov** (<http://www.congress.gov>) website links to these documents under *Founding Documents*.

Federal Statutes

The Life Cycle of a Statute

A statute is passed by an elected body, such as the **United States Congress**. There is legislation for the federal jurisdiction as well as for each of the states. There is a "life cycle" to the publication of statutes that helpful in understanding how to find them. Federal statutes first start as individual *slip laws*, then are published chronologically as *session laws* known as the **Statutes at Large**. Finally, the statutes are arranged in subject order in books called Codes.

Public Law

Statutes start their "lives" by being signed by the President, and are then given a **Public Law** number (abbreviated as **P.L.** or **Pub.L.**) It is then issued as a *slip law* that can be found on the web at places such as the **Congress.gov** website at <http://www.congress.gov> (formerly known as **Thomas.gov**). Congress.gov is maintained by the Library of Congress and is the official United States legislative information system. It provides information about federal legislation such as whether it became a public law, its congressional sponsors, and links to related reports and **Congressional Record** legislative debates. The amount of coverage varies, with less information provided for its materials in the early 1970's to more extensive materials provided the closer you get to the present day. In print, you could use the year of passage and the public law number to find text of the law in books known as *session laws*.

Session Laws

At the end of a Congressional session, all laws passed in that session are arranged in chronological order by public law number, and bound in volumes known as **Session Laws**. The session laws for federal statutes are

published in the **United States Statutes at Large**. For example, the **Civil Rights Act of 1964** is known as **Public Law 88-352**. *88* stands for the number of the congress in which the law was passed, *i.e.*, the 88th Congress. *352* means that it was the 352nd law passed in the 88th Congress. For laws passed after the mid 1990's, researchers often utilize a source like <http://www.congress.gov> to retrieve the session law by the public law number.

United States Code

Most researchers start their federal statutory research by consulting a version of the codified statutes. To *codify* means to arrange by subject, so the statutory codes are sets of statutes that are arranged into subject categories that are generally noted on the spines of the print volumes. The official code for federal statutes is the **United States Code (USC)**. The publisher is the **Office of the Law Revision Counsel of the U.S. House of Representatives**. A base set is printed every 6 years, followed by a set of supplemental volumes that updates the base set. Both the base set and the supplements must be searched to make sure that you have found all potential changes to the statute. Various commercial publishers print annotated codes, with changes added in paperbound pocket parts in the back of the volume, or supplementary pamphlet volumes.

Many who have access to print statutes argue that the print layout is superior for reading and browsing. If you have access to print statutes, they are quite useful. However, there are now several resources for accessing federal statutes online, the most important being the **United States House of Representatives** website at <http://uscode.house.gov>. Other good places to search the United States Code are the **Cornell Law School Legal Information Institute** (<http://www.law.cornell.edu/>) and at <http://www.justia.com>.

United States Code Website

Unfortunately, if you visit a law library and look for the official print **United States Code**, you would find that it is one to two years out of date. The **United States Code website** at <http://uscode.house.gov>, however, now has close to real time updating.

Title VII of the **Civil Rights Act of 1964** is a good example of how knowledge of the entire life cycle of a statute may be needed to understand how to retrieve a federal statute in either print or digital format.

When the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was signed by President Lyndon Johnson on July 2nd, 1964, it became (public law) **P.L. 88-352**. Title VII, on Equal Employment Opportunity, began at section 701 of P.L. 88-352. The public law was later published in chronological order in the **Statutes at Large** with the citation **78 Stat. 253**, where *78* is the volume number, *Stat.* is the abbreviation for the **Statutes at Large**, and *253* is the page number.

Newspapers and journals of the day referred to the provision simply as *Title VII* and the name stuck. However, once the law was classified by subject in the **United States Code**, it was given another numbering scheme. It now became known as **42 USC §2000e**. The **United States Code** is divided into many topic areas, which are given *Title* numbers. *Title 42* stands for Public Health and Welfare. Each title is then divided into section numbers. Title VII was now 42 USC §2000e, which stands for *Title 42, United States Code, section 2000e*.

Both the print and web versions of the **United States Code** provide tools to help researchers translate to the United States Code citation if they have, for example, only the name of the act or **Statutes at Large** citation. If you have the **United States Code** citation, you can retrieve the law in print or in a database such as the one at <http://uscode.house.gov>. Click on the

Search and Browse link and type in the title and section number in the provided *Jump to* boxes. The United States Code Website provides close to real time updating. If you do not have the exact citation you can click on *Search the United States Code* to search by keyword. The *Advanced Search* link allows you to search past versions of the **US Code** back to the 1994 edition.

You can also select the *Popular Names Table* link to find **United States Code** citations using the name of the statute. Also, if you only have the **Statutes at Large** citation, such as 78 Stat. 253, as in the example above, you can use the *Table III – Statutes at Large Tool* (found under the *Other tables & tools link*) to translate **Statutes at Large** citation to **United States Code** citation.

To retrieve 42 USC 2000e in print, one would go find the volume which includes Title 42 (should be visible on the spine of the book, like a volume number), and then look for the desired section. The print **United States Code** has a subject index, a popular name table, and a table to convert **Statutes at Large** citations to **United States Code** citations.

Other free sources for federal statutes include **Justia** (<http://www.justia.com>), the **Public Library of Law** (<http://www.plol.org>), and the **Cornell Law School Legal Information Institute** (<http://www.law.cornell.edu>). For more detailed information about statutory research, see the **Law Librarian’s Society of Washington D.C Legislative Sourcebook** (<http://www.llsdc.org/sourcebook>).

Annotated Codes

Most lawyers use the more current, commercially published **United States Code Annotated (USCA)** or the **United States Code Service (USCS)**. They are called *annotated codes* because specially-trained editors have

located and developed case notes or summaries of court or administrative decisions that address or interpret a law or even a section within that law. Annotate codes may also include references to journal articles, legal encyclopedias, and other research materials providing additional interpretation and background about an issue, so it is good to look at an annotated code either in print or on Lexis/Westlaw as soon as you know there is a statute involved in your research problem.

Retrieval from print annotated codes is similar to the methods for the print official **United States Code**. You can search subject index, a popular name table, and a table to convert **Statutes at Large** citations to **United States Code** citations.

Online, the annotated code services are only available via subscription databases. The **United States Code Annotated (USCA)** is published by Thomson publishing, and can be searched online as part of the Westlaw database. The **United States Code Service (USCS)** is published by LexisNexis Publishing, and can be searched as part of the Lexis service. If you wish to search an annotated code, check with a local law library that may be able to provide access to these or similar services.

Legislative History

In addition to the text of the current law itself, you may also have to research the background documents connected with the statute, which is known as *legislative history*. Legislative history refers to documents generated by a legislative body during the process of passing a bill. It includes bill text, hearings, congressional debates, committee reports, presidential messages, and other documents. You may need detailed information about the definition of a particular term, more detailed information about the purpose of the law, or you may only need general history and background information.

Legislative history is often used to find *legislative intent* and to provide additional context which can be used to interpret the meaning of a statute. **Black's Law Dictionary** defines *legislative intent* as the "design or plan that the legislature had at the time of enacting a statute." In other words, what was the outcome that the legislature wanted to produce by passing the statute?

To find background information about a statute, it is important to understand the process of how a bill becomes a law. Information about the legislative process is available at <http://www.congress.gov/legislative-process>. For a more amusing viewpoint, see the old **Schoolhouse Rock** video, **I'm Just a Bill**, which is available on **YouTube**.

How a Bill Becomes a Law

As a general overview, the legislative process begins when a *bill* is introduced in either the House or the Senate. A bill can have one or more sponsors. Once it is introduced it is assigned to a *committee* who decides whether the bill should be voted on by the legislature. The bill can be sent to the floor of the House or Senate for a vote, usually accompanied by a *report* by the committee. Before the vote there may be *debates* in the House and/or the Senate. The bill is then voted on and sent to the other chamber of Congress for a vote. For example, if the bill originated in the House and passes, it would be sent to the Senate for a vote.

Sometimes the House and the Senate pass different versions of the bill, in which case a *conference committee* with members from both chambers work out the differences. The revised bill would then be sent back to both houses of Congress for a vote.

If the bill passes both houses of Congress, it is sent to the President for signature. If the President signs the law, it is given a public law number and goes through the publication process described at the beginning of this section. The President may also issue a *signing statement*.

Each stage in the legislative process generates documents that may be useful in determining congressional intent. For recent statutes, many legislative history documents and resources can be found free on the web. Older statutes may require searches in law libraries and/or government depositories. The section will focus on getting the most out of free web legislative history sources.

Locating Legislative History Documents

Congress.gov, see <http://www.congress.gov>, provides the full text of proposed bills, bill status information (Did it become a public law? To what committee was it referred?), the text of debates from the **Congressional Record**, the full text of committee reports and other legislative information such as the *roll call* information, which records which legislators voted for and against a bill.

Congress.gov may also contain information about which Member of Congress sponsored a bill. If you are researching legislation that is still under consideration, the legislator's website may be a source of background information. You can generally contact the office of the bill's sponsor, locating email and telephone information on websites such as <https://whoaremyrepresentatives.org>.

Presidential signing statements may be found in the **Compilation of Presidential Documents**, at the **FDSys** website at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/> (or the new beta site <https://www.govinfo.gov/>).

Check to see if a local library is a *Federal Depository* library. Depository libraries often have the text of older hearings, reports, and debates in print, and may have microfiche or electronic database subscriptions to a wide variety of federal legislative history sources. The **Library of Michigan** is one such depository library, see <http://www.michigan.gov/libraryofmichigan>.

Finding Compiled Legislative Histories

Always try to find out if someone has already done some of the legislative history work for you! Check the online card catalog of an academic library near you, as well as the **Michigan Electronic Library (MEL)** at <http://www.mel.org> and the **Worldcat** catalog at <http://www.worldcat.org>. Check **Google Scholar** at <http://scholar.google.com> for journal articles that may include legislative history information. Depository libraries may provide access to government documents that include legislative history information, and these documents are can often be found via their online card catalog. If you must compile a federal legislative history from scratch, a checklist is below. An interesting example of a compiled legislative history is the legislative history of the **Civil Rights Act of 1964** from the **Dirksen Congressional Center** website at http://www.dirksencenter.org/print_basics_histmats_civilrights64_contents.htm.

Tracking Recent Legislation, Hot Bills and Legislative Documents

A good snapshot of “hot” issues is the *Most Viewed Bills* feature at <http://www.congress.gov>. If you are interested in pending legislation that has not yet come up for a vote, you may want to look for interest groups that may be tracking the issue. Such groups often place information about the legislation they are tracking on the web, and may have staff willing to talk with you about the proposed legislation. You can find associations and

interest groups by using a search engine such as **Google** or by using the **Encyclopedia of Associations** at your local library.

Members of Congress also often place fact sheets and briefing documents about recent legislation on their websites, and their aides may be willing to speak about the issue. The **Congressional Research Service**, which is part of the Library of Congress, writes reports on new legislation for members of Congress, and these reports are often available on the web at websites such as <https://archive-it.org/collections/1078>. Also, the **Govtrack.us** website at <http://www.govtrack.us> is a good source for tracking pending legislation and voting records. Another handy voting records website is **Project Vote Smart** (<http://votesmart.org/>). The **Jurist Legal News** (<http://www.jurist.org/>) provides news coverage on a national level. If your topic is covered it will also often include links to documents (such as bills) related to the story. For political news try **The Hill.com** (<http://www.thehill.com>) and **Roll Call** (<http://www.rollcall.com/>).

In addition, the **Library of Congress** has written some useful blog posts called **Federal Statutes: A Beginner's Guide** (<http://blogs.loc.gov/law/2013/09/federal-statutes-a-beginners-guide/>); **How to Trace Federal Legislation** (<http://blogs.loc.gov/law/2014/01/how-to-trace-federal-legislation-a-research-guide/>); and **Congressional Voting Records, a Beginner's Guide** (<http://blogs.loc.gov/law/2013/01/congressional-voting-records-a-beginners-guide/>).

Federal Statutes Checklist

1. Take stock of what you already know. Do you already have information about a particular federal statute?
 - a. United States Code Citation:
_____ USC _____ or _____ USCA _____ or _____ USCS

 - b. *Statutes at Large* Citation: _____ Stat. _____
 - c. Public Law Number: P.L or Pub. L. _____
 - d. Statute Name (ex. Civil Rights Act of 1964)
2. To find a statute using the United States Code Citation:
 - a. Look up the citation on a free website
 - i. Official US Code Website – <http://uscode.house.gov>
 - ii. **FDSys** - <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/> (or the new beta site <https://www.govinfo.gov/>).
 - iii. Cornell Law School Legal Information Institute - <http://www.law.cornell.edu>
 - iv. Justia - <http://www.justia.com> (see “Laws: Cases & Codes”)
 - b. Look up citation in print volumes in a local library.
 - c. Look up citation in subscription databases such as Lexis, LexisNexis Academic, or Westlaw in a local library.
3. To find a statute using a United States Statutes at Large Citation:
 - a. Use **FDSys** - <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/>
 - i. Click on “Retrieve by citation” and enter the volume number and the page number.
4. Look up the Public Law Number in:
 - a. **FDSys** - <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/>
 - b. Congress.gov (formerly Thomas) – <http://www.congress.gov> (back to 1973)
5. Search by the name of the statute in:
 - a. Official US Code Website – <http://uscode.house.gov> see the “Popular Names” link.
 - b. **FDSys** - <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/>
 - c. Justia - <http://www.justia.com> (see “Laws: Cases & Codes”)
 - d. Cornell Law School Legal Information Institute - <http://www.law.cornell.edu>
6. Has your statute been repealed or amended?

- a. At the Official US Code Website – <http://uscode.house.gov>, use the *USCprelim* search, or search the United States Code website beta.
7. Looking for the United States Constitution and Founding Documents?
- a. The National Archives website links to the constitution, the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence and other documents at <http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/>.
 - b. **FDSys** - <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/>, has the text of the constitution and an annotated interpretation, called *The Constitution of the United States of America, Analysis and Interpretation*, which is also available at <http://www.law.cornell.edu/anncon/html/index.html>.
 - c. Congress.gov - <https://www.congress.gov/founding-documents/>

Federal Legislative History Checklist

1) Make sure that you have the essential bill information. Check the bill history information at the end of the statute online at <http://uscode.house.gov> or in a print resource such as the United States Code (USC) or the United States Code Annotated (**USCA**). Look for;

- a. the Public Law Number (PL. or Pub.L. _____)
- b. the *Statutes at Large* Citation (___ stat. ___),
- c. Check the Statutes at Large for the Bill Number (H.R. ___ or S. _____).
- d. Optional: if you have access to the United States Code Annotated (USCA) check for a citation to the *United States Code Congressional and Administrative News* (USCAAN).

2) Look for **compiled legislative history** (don't reinvent the wheel!).

Check secondary sources:

- Search for journal articles in Google Scholar (<http://scholar.google.org>).
- Check your online catalog and WorldCat (<http://www.worldcat.org>) to see if compiled histories exist at your library or at a library near you. If there are none near you check with your local library to see if you can Interlibrary Loan items using services such as MEL.

- Look for Congressional Research Service (CRS) reports (<https://archive-it.org/collections/1078>).
- Try a Google search – [your act] “crs report.”

3) Use tools to find **individual documents**:

- Congress.gov (<http://www.congress.gov>) for bill versions, committee reports, and congressional record (debates), and who sponsored the bill (may be a resource for further information), and voted for and against the bill.
- Govtrack (<http://www.govtrack.us>)
- Presidential signing statements and speeches – <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/executive.html>. See the *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*.
- Optional: If you have access to a law library check their online card catalog to see if they provide information about individual congressional hearings or other documents. A reference librarian can help you identify resources.
- Optional: If you have access to a law library which subscribes to the Proquest Congressional Service or the USCAAN database or Legislative History (LH) database on Westlaw.

4) Find/ contact an *advocacy group* that is tracking the issue (use a search engine such as Google or the **Encyclopedia of Associations** at your local library).

More details on doing a Federal legislative history can be found in FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE HISTORY RESEARCH: A Practitioner's Guide to Compiling the Documents and Sifting for Legislative Intent, from the Law Librarians' Society of Washington, D.C. (LLSDC) at <http://llsdc.org/sourcebook/fed-leg-hist.htm>. See also the CRS Report, Legislative History: a Basic Guide for Constituents (<http://www.senate.gov/reference/resources/pdf/RS21178.pdf>).

Executive Branch Resources

Federal Regulations

Regulations are rules issued by administrative agencies such as the **Internal Revenue Service (IRS)** or the **Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)**. In the world in which we live, there is almost no aspect of our environment that is not regulated, from the air and water, to the width of aisles and the height of furniture for disabled access, to food safety. Agencies are created by legislatures (elected bodies), or by the White House, and are authorized to act in particular areas.

A legislature usually has neither the time nor the expertise to administer all details of a particular statute. It may, for example, pass a statute mandating clean water. However, it delegates the authority to implement the statute to a government agency, such as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) (<http://www.epa.gov>). Agencies issue administrative regulations to implement the details of the *enabling legislation* that gave the agency authority to act.

Agencies may also issue *quasi-judicial* opinions that functionally are the same as court opinions, but are issued via divisions of the agency. Recent quasi-judicial opinions can often be found on the website of the issuing agency, or in a **Federal Depository Library** (see <http://www.gpo.gov/libraries/>).

Life Cycle of a Regulation

The challenge is to track down the rules, regulations, and publications of federal administrative agencies. In terms of rules and regulations, administrative regulations have a "life cycle" that is very similar to that of statutes. Regulations start out as an agency document, which many

agencies now post on the web. They are then published in chronological order in *registers*, and finally are published in subject order in *codes*.

Federal regulations are first published in the **Federal Register (FR)**. The Federal Register is published each weekday and contains proposed rules, announcements, and final rules/regulations. Regulations are codified (arranged by subject/agency) in the **Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)**. The **CFR** is published only once a year (on a rotating basis), so recently enacted regulations will be found in the **Federal Register**. The system was created so that the public would have notice of new and proposed regulations and the ability to comment on proposed regulations.

Locating Federal Regulations

The **Federal Register** and the **Code of Federal Regulations** are available at the Government Printing Office **FDSys** website at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/>. Go to <http://www.regulations.gov> to comment on proposed federal rules and regulations.

Both the **CFR** and the **Federal Register** are among the featured collections on the **FDSys** main page. You can browse by year back to 1996 or click on the link for the **Electronic Code of Federal Regulations (e-CFR)**. You can also access the **e-CFR** directly at <http://www.ecfr.gov>.

Updating the CFR

The **e-CFR** provides real time updating of the regulations. If you browse the **CFR** from the main **FDSys** webpage (as opposed to from the **e-CFR** site), to update for new rules and changes to existing rules, you must refer to the publication called the **List of Sections Affected (LSA)**, which is available in the same section of the website.

To find out if there has been a change with respect to a particular regulation a *print CFR* user has to go through a two-step process of checking 1) the **List of Sections Affected (LSA)** and 2) the *CFR Parts Affected* section the latest issue of the **Federal Register** for the current month. On the web, consult the **e-CFR** project at **FDSys**, or consult the **List of Sections Affected** on **FDSys** at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/>.

Other Sources of Executive Branch and Federal Agency Documents

The **United States Government Printing Office** publishes the federal regulations and presidential documents mentioned above, in addition to many other federal information sources. Check their **FDSys** website at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/> for electronic versions. Items in print may be found at local federal depository libraries. Federal depository libraries in your area may carry a variety of print and electronic federal agency resources. Search for a federal depository library near you at <http://www.gpo.gov/libraries/>.

Libraries may include federal agency documents in their online catalogs, and sometimes link to federal documents which are available either free on the web or via a library subscription database. You can search for federal agency documents directly using the **Catalog of U.S. Government Publications** at <http://catalog.gpo.gov>.

General information about the major federal government agencies, including their contact information and web address, can be found in the **United States Government Manual** (<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/browse/collection.action?collectionCode=GOVMA> [N](#)). Tip: next to *view entire edition* click on *PDF*.

Other publications of federal agencies can be found individually via their websites such as FCC.gov, EPA.gov, and IRS.gov. If you want to search

documents from multiple agency websites, the official portal for US government information is **USA.gov** (<http://www.usa.gov>).

For those who are more phone-oriented, the **National Contact Center** (<http://www.usa.gov/About/FEDINFO.shtml>) at (800) 333-4636 will refer you to someone at a government agency who can answer your question about Federal programs, benefits or services. See the <http://answers.usa.gov> website. The **National Contact Center** is part of the **Consumer Information Center** (<http://publications.usa.gov/USAPubs.php>) which has now merged with the main **USA.gov** website.

Presidential Documents (White House)

The foremost executive branch entity is, of course, the Office of the President. The **White House**, <http://www.whitehouse.gov> has its own website, which provides access to many current Presidential documents. Presidential documents such as *Executive Orders* and *Proclamations* are published in **Title 3** of the **CFR** and the **Compilation of Presidential Documents**. Selected documents from past Presidents are available in the **Public Papers of the Presidents** at **FDSys** - <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/>. The **National Archives** at <http://www.archives.gov> archives presidential library websites. The **National Archives** also provides on the web the **Codification of Presidential Proclamations and Executive Orders** at <http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/codification/>. Other information, documents, and papers of the presidents can be found at the **American Presidency Project** at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/>.

How Statutes Work with Regulations

The relationship between statutes and regulations means that you usually never consider just a regulation alone. You will probably have to look at the

related legislation and any cases that interpret the statute and regulation, as well as any related Presidential documents. This intertwined grouping of regulations, statutes, and cases is often best deciphered using secondary sources such as books and journal articles (See Chapter 3, *Secondary Legal Resources* section).

Finding Federal Regulations Checklist

1. Take stock of the information that you already have.
 - a. A Code of Federal Regulations citation: _____ CFR _____ ?
 - b. A Federal Register citation: _____ FR _____ ?
2. If you have a Code of Federal Regulations citation
 - a. Use **FDSys** - <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/> (covers CFR back to mid-1990's)
 - i. Click on "Retrieve by citation" and enter the volume number and the section number (also known as the "part" number).
 - ii. Select the Code of Federal Regulations from the **FDSys** front page, then choose the year and browse for your CFR title and section.
 - b. Browse the Electronic Code of Federal Regulations (e-CFR), which provides real-time updating, at <http://www.ecfr.gov>.
 - c. Check local libraries for availability in print or in a subscription database such as Lexis, Westlaw, or HeinOnline for older CFRs.
3. If you have a Federal Register citation
 - a. Use **FDSys** - <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/> (covers Federal Register back to mid-1990's)
 - i. Click on "Retrieve by citation" and enter the volume number and the page number.
 - ii. Select the Federal Register from the **FDSys** front page, then choose the year and browse for your Federal Register volume and page number. Or chose retrieve by citation from this page.
 - b. Check local libraries for availability in print or in a subscription database such as Lexis, Westlaw, or HeinOnline for older Federal Registers.
4. If you do not have a specific CFR citation

- a. Use **FDSys** - <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/>
 - i. Search by keyword using the search box on the **FDSys** front page.
 - ii. Narrow your search by type of document, date, etc. from the search results page.
 - b. Search the Electronic Code of Federal Regulations (e-CFR), which provides real-time updating, at <http://www.ecfr.gov>.
 - c. Search the CFR by keyword at <http://www.law.cornell.edu/>.
 - d. Check local libraries for availability in print or in a subscription database such as Lexis, Westlaw, or HeinOnline for older Federal Registers.
5. If you do not have a specific Federal Register citation
- a. Use **FDSys** - <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/>
 - i. Search by keyword using the search box on the **FDSys** front page.
 - ii. Narrow your search by type of document, date, etc. from the search results page.
 - b. Check local libraries for availability in print or in a subscription database such as Lexis, Westlaw, or HeinOnline for older Federal Registers.
6. Updating CFR citations
- a. To make sure that you have the most up to date version of a regulation in the CFR, it is recommended to search the Electronic Code of Federal Regulations (e-CFR), which provides real-time updating, at <http://www.ecfr.gov>.
 - b. Another method is to go through a two-step process of checking 1) the List of Sections Affected (LSA) and 2) the "CFR parts affected" section of the latest issue of the Federal Register for the current month. The List of Sections Affected can be found on the CFR web page on **FDSys** at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/>.
7. Looking for a government agency document?
- a. Search the specific agency website.
 - i. Use a web search engine such as Google to search for federal agency website.
 - ii. If you want to search documents from multiple agency websites, the official portal for US government information is Firstgov, at <http://www.firstgov.gov>.

- b. Federal depository libraries in your area may carry a variety of print and electronic federal agency resources.
8. Looking for information from the President/Whitehouse?
- a. Search or browse <http://www.whitehouse.gov/>.
 - b. Presidential documents such as Executive orders and Proclamations can be found in Title 3 of the CFR.
 - c. The *Codification of Presidential Proclamations and Executive Orders* is at the National Archives - <http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/codification/>.
 - d. Compilation of Presidential Documents at **FDSys** - <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/>.
 - e. Selected documents from past Presidents are available in the *Public Papers of the Presidents* at **FDSys** - <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/>.
 - f. The National Archives at <http://www.archives.gov> archives presidential library websites.
 - g. Other information, documents, and papers of the presidents can be found at the American Presidency Project at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/>.

For Further Information

This chapter is a general overview, but you may need additional guides which provide more in-depth information about federal legal research or about specialty topic areas, such as federal tax research. Your local library will may have research guides on a wide variety of topics. Also feel free to call a law library near your area to see if they have research guides that you can visit the library to browse.

Recommended Print Resources Include:

- Mary Garvey Algrero et.al., *Federal Legal Research* (2012)
- “Federal Law,” chapter 7 of *Locating the Law: A Handbook for Non-Law Librarians* - <http://www.aallnet.org/chapter/scall/locating/ch7.pdf>.
- Penny A. Hazelton, ed., *Specialized Legal Research* (updated periodically). *Specialized Legal Research* provides chapters on several federal research topics such as Securities Regulation, Federal Income Taxation, Copyright Law, Federal Labor and Employment Law, Environmental Protection, Admiralty and Maritime Law, Immigration Law, Military and Veterans Law, Banking Law, Federal Patent and Trademark Law, and Federal Government Contracts.
- There are also separate guides on Federal Tax such as Gail Levin Richmond’s *Federal Tax Research*.

Good Web Sources Include:

- The Zimmerman Guide - <http://www.lexisnexis.com/infopro/Zimmerman/> provides a handful of the best places to start in both print and electronic format for a wide variety of legal topics.
- LLRX.com - <http://www.llrx.com> – Law and technology resources for legal professionals. LLRX has several great research guides on topics
- For legislative history, see *A Practitioner's Guide to Compiling the Documents and Sifting for Legislative Intent*, from the Law Librarians' Society of Washington, D.C. (LLSDC) at <http://llsdc.org/sourcebook/>.

- For federal regulatory research see the LLSDC guide Research Guide to the Federal Register and the Code of Federal Regulations - <http://llsdc.org/sourcebook/>.
- Congressional Research Service Reports (good for federal legislative issues) - <https://archive-it.org/collections/1078>.

Finding Current News and information about “Hot” Topics

- Legal news can be found at
 - Jurist legal news (<http://www.jurist.org/>). The Jurist site will also often include links to documents (such as reports and court complaints) related to the story.
 - Findlaw legal news (<http://legalnews.findlaw.com/>).
 - CNN Justice (<http://www.cnn.com/JUSTICE/>).
- Try Legal blogs (or blawgs, as they are sometimes known) in your area of interest. A directory of blawgs is provided by the American Bar Association at <http://www.abajournal.com/blawgs>. Justia also has a legal blog search directory at <http://blawgsearch.justia.com/>.
 - Current news and information about US Supreme Court cases is available via the SCOTUS blog at <http://www.scotusblog.com/>.
 - News and information about recent federal appellate cases is available via the How Appealing blog at <http://howappealing.law.com>.
- Interest group websites (search Google or other web search engine).
- Generally see the Library of Congress listing of News & Periodical Resources on the Web (<http://www.loc.gov/rr/news/lists.html>).

Getting Help

- You can find listings of various types of law libraries in Michigan (along with a copy of this chapter) at the Library of Michigan website at <http://michigan.gov/libraryofmichigan> (click on the “Law Library” icon). County law libraries are usually open to the public and several Michigan academic law libraries are also. However, not all law school libraries are open to the public so call ahead for their access policies.
- Look for an e-mail or online chat-based “ask a librarian” service. Michigan law libraries may provide an online ask a librarian service. Check the library’s website for the online services which are available.