

# Federal Laws and Secondary Sources for Legal Research

CoALL / CSL

Michele Masias - Law Librarian

U.S. Department of Justice

[Michele.Masias@usdoj.gov](mailto:Michele.Masias@usdoj.gov)



# Researching Federal Statutes

- Enacted by Congress
- With approval of the President
- Issued in a three part model for publication
  - Slip laws
  - Session laws
  - Codified

# Slip Laws

- First published in individual pamphlets
- Citation for a slip law includes the public law number
- Covers both private and public laws
- Free access to slip laws
  - [Federal Depository Library](#)
  - [Govinfo Public Laws](#)
  - [Govinfo Private Laws](#)
  - [Congress.gov](#)

# Session Laws

- Published in the United States Statutes at Large
- Official compilation of the laws of each session of Congress
- Includes both public and private laws
- Subject index a at the end of each volume.
- Free access to the Statutes at Large
  - [United States Statutes at Large](#) (Law Library of Congress)
  - [United States Statutes at Large](#) (Govinfo)

# Codified Law

- Laws passed by Congress that are of a “general and permanent” nature
- Published in the United States Code (USC) and includes
  - Statutes at Large
  - General Index
  - Popular names table
  - Classification tables
  - Executive orders & Proclamations
- Free access to the U.S. Code
  - [Office of Law Revision Counsel](#)
  - [Govinfo.gov](#)
  - [Law Library of Congress](#)
  - [Cornell Legal Information Institute](#)
  - [Justia](#)



# Resources for Finding Statutes

- When you want to see the text of the law as originally passed by Congress and *you know the public or private law number or Statutes at Large citation*
  - **PRINT**
    - Statutes at Large
  - **ONLINE**
    - [United States Statutes at Large](#) (Govinfo.gov)
    - [Statutes at Large](#) (Congress.gov)

# Resources for Finding Statutes

- When you want to see the text of the law as originally passed by Congress and *you know the name of the law*
  - **PRINT**
    - Statutes at Large
  - **ONLINE**
    - [Legislation Popular Titles and Short Titles](#) (Congress.gov)
    - [Popular Name Tool](#) (OLRC)
    - [Statute Compilations](#) (Office of the Legislative Counsel)

# Resources for Finding Statutes

- When you want to see the text of the law as originally passed by Congress and *you know the subject of the law*
  - **PRINT**
    - Use the index in the relevant volume of the Statutes at Large
  - **ONLINE**
    - Use the index in the relevant volume of the Statutes at Large



# Resources for Finding Statutes

- If you want to locate the law as codified in the United States Code and *you know the public or private law number*
  - **Print**
    - *Statutes at Large* tables in the *United States Code*.
  - **Online**
    - [Statutes at Large table to the United States Code](#) (OLRC)

# Resources for Finding Statutes

- When you want to locate the law as codified in the United States Code and *you know the name of the law*
  - **Print**
    - Popular name tables in the United States Code
  - **Online**
    - [Popular Name Tool](#) (OLRC)
    - United States Code Annotated (Westlaw)
    - United States Code Service (Lexis)

# Resources for Finding Statutes

- ▶ When you want to locate the law as codified in the United States Code and *you know the subject of the law*
  - ▶ **PRINT**
    - ▶ Use the index to the United States Code.
  - ▶ **ONLINE**
    - ▶ Search the [United States Code](#) on the OLRC website

# Related Federal Law Materials

## ➤ Bills

- [American Memory, Bills Collection](#) (Law Library of Congress)
- [Bill Summaries](#) (Congress.gov)
- [Bills](#) (Govinfo)

## ➤ Hearings

- [Hearings](#) (Govinfo)

## ➤ Committee Reports

- [Congressional Reports](#) (Govinfo)
- [Committee Reports](#) (Congress.gov)

## ➤ Debates

- [Congressional Record](#) (Congress.gov)
- [Register of Debates](#) (Library of Congress)

## ➤ Presidential Signing Statements

- [American Presidency Project](#)
- [Compilation of Presidential Documents](#) (Govinfo)

# Bill & Issue Tracking

- [C-SPAN.org](http://C-SPAN.org)
- [Govtrack.us](http://Govtrack.us)
- [Govinfo.gov](http://Govinfo.gov)
- [Congress.gov](http://Congress.gov)

# Additional Resources

- [Enactment of a Law](#) (Congress.gov)
- [How Our Laws Are Made](#) (Congress.gov)
- [Glossary of Congressional Terminology](#) (U.S. Senate)
- [The Legislative Process](#) (Congress.gov)
- [Common Abbreviations and Legal Citation Examples for Selected Federal Document](#) (LLSDC.org)

# Secondary Sources

- Legal Dictionaries
- Encyclopedias
- Periodicals
- Legal treatises
- American Law Reports
- Restatements

# Legal Dictionaries

- Black's Law Dictionary
- Nolo's Plain English Law Dictionary
- Ballentine's Legal Dictionary / Thesaurus
- Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of Law
- Words and Phrases
- [Law.com](http://www.law.com)
- [Wex](http://www.wex.com) (Cornell Legal Information Institute)



# Legal Encyclopedias

- Gale Encyclopedia of American Law
- American Jurisprudence
- Corpus Juris Secundum
- Digests
- State specific legal encyclopedias
- Where can I find legal encyclopedias?
  - Public Library
  - Law Library
  - Wex (Cornell Legal Information Institute)



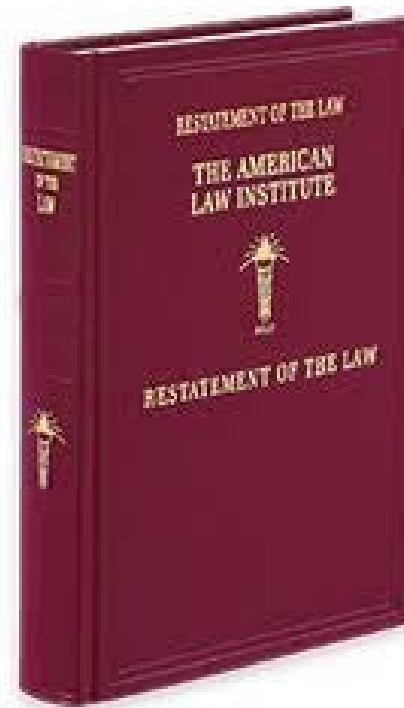
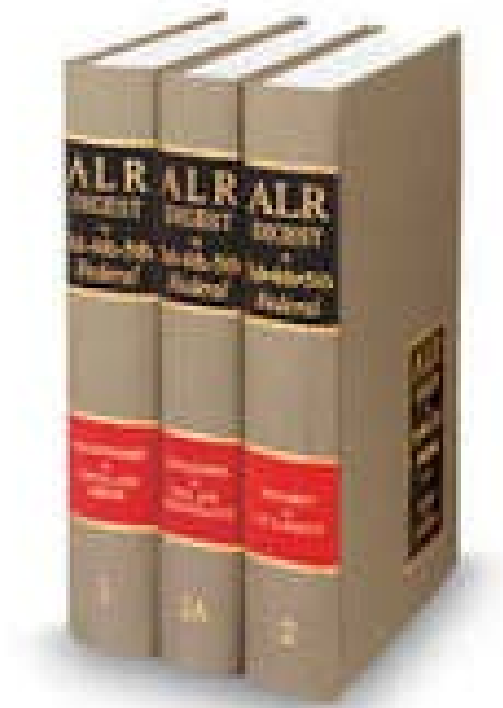
# Periodicals

- Law Reviews and Journals
- Special Interest Periodicals
- Association Journals
- Legal Newspapers
- Newsletters
- Free access to journals and periodicals
  - [Justia](#)
  - [Social Science Research Network](#)
  - [Law Review Commons](#)
  - [Free Full-Text Law Review/Journal Search](#)

# Legal Treatises, Nutshells, Hornbooks, and Deskbooks

- Criminal Law in a Nutshell
- Principles of Employment Law
- Constitutional Law
- Civil Procedure Deskbook (state)
- Where can I find a copy?
  - Public Library
  - Law Library
  - Legal Information Reference Center (Ebsco)

# American Law Reports (ALRs) & Restatements



# Where else can I go for help or resources?

- [Colorado Supreme Court Library](#)
- [Tenth Circuit Court Library](#)
- [William Wise Law Library](#) (Colorado University, Boulder)
- [Pikes Peak Public Library](#)
- [Westminster Law Library - Sturm College of Law](#)  
(Denver University Law Library - not open to the public, but open to attorneys and employees of attorneys)
- [Federal Depository Library Directory](#)

# Questions?

Michele Masias

[Michele.Masias@usdoj.gov](mailto:Michele.Masias@usdoj.gov)

202-598-1926