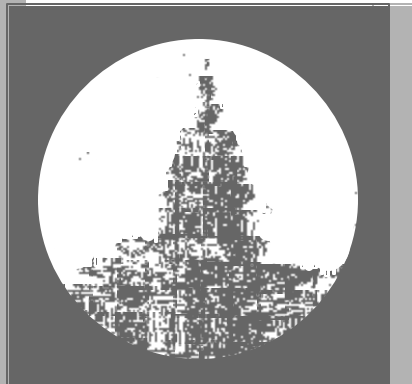


Compiling

Texas Legislative History



Legislative Reference Library

PO Box 12488 • Austin, TX 78711-2488
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Compiling Texas Legislative History

Compiling a legislative history for Texas law involves four primary steps. Begin with step 1 (Section I) if you are working from a statute, step 2 (Section IV) if you are working from a bill number.

STEP 1 Determine when and in what bill the statutory language was added—described in Sections I–III.

STEP 2 Review documents produced during the bill's movement through the legislative process—Sections IV–VI.

STEP 3 Listen to audio tapes of the bill's public hearings and floor debates—Section VII.

STEP 4 Consult additional documents, such as legislative journals and interim committee reports—Section VIII.

If needed, professional legislative research companies are available to provide assistance.

I. Locate the legislative history note

The laws of Texas are printed in *Vernon's Texas Annotated Code*. Carefully review the section of the code in question, including any historical and reference notes. At the end of the statutory section, locate the legislative history note listing the Act that added or amended the section. (See example below.)

Example:

Texas Tax Code, § 311.004.
[Added by Acts 1987, 70th Leg., **ch. 191**, § 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1987.
Amended by Acts 1989, 71st Leg., **ch. 1137**, § 17, eff. Sept. 1, 1989.]

The Acts or bills listed in the legislative history note are published as chapters in the *General and Special Laws of Texas*, also known as Session Laws. Session Laws provide text of the final or enrolled versions of the bills enacted during a legislative session.

II. Locate the language in the Session Laws

To determine which bill added specific statutory language, you may need to look at several Acts in the Session Laws. Begin by looking at the most recent amendment listed in the legislative history note, then work backward through each additional amendment until you locate the Act in which the language first appeared.

III. Note the bill number and session

To review documents produced for a bill as it moved through the legislative process, locate the bill number and session. A bill is numbered according to the chamber in which it originated and the order in which it was filed: HB 110 (House Bill 110); SB 4 (Senate Bill 4). The bill number remains the same through a specific session and is listed directly below the chapter number in the Session Laws. (See example.)

Example:

Chapter 1137
S.B. No. 888
AN ACT
relating to ad valorem tax abatement

Note the session or the year in which the bill was passed. The table below lists recent sessions and years. In addition, cross-reference tables converting chapter numbers found in the Session Laws to bill numbers are available on the library's website (www.lrl.state.tx.us).

Legislative Sessions and Years

| SESSION | YEAR | SESSION | YEAR | SESSION | YEAR |
|---------|------|---------|------|---------|------|
| 81st | 2009 | 74th | 1995 | 67th | 1981 |
| 80th | 2007 | 73rd | 1993 | 66th | 1979 |
| 79th | 2005 | 72nd | 1991 | 65th | 1977 |
| 78th | 2003 | 71st | 1989 | 64th | 1975 |
| 77th | 2001 | 70th | 1987 | 63rd | 1973 |
| 76th | 1999 | 69th | 1985 | 62nd | 1971 |
| 75th | 1997 | 68th | 1983 | 61st | 1969 |

IV. Examine the bill file

A bill file contains the official documents produced for a bill during the legislative process. Bill files may include various versions of the bill, bill analyses, fiscal notes, witness lists, and committee reports. (Transcripts of committee hearings or floor debates are not included in the bill files—see Section VII.)

Bill files are available in a variety of formats:

| SESSION | FORMAT | LOCATION |
|--------------|------------|---|
| 73rd–Present | Electronic | Texas Legislature Online (www.capitol.state.tx.us) |
| 57th–77th | Electronic | Legislative Reference Library |
| 63rd–Present | Print | Legislative Reference Library |
| Before 63rd | Print | Texas State Library (512.463.5480) |
| 63rd–70th | Microfilm | Legislative Reference Library; Dallas and Houston public libraries |

To view bill files in their original print format, you must schedule an appointment with the legislative library.

V. Daily Floor Reports

Since 1975, the House Research Organization (HRO) has prepared bill analyses for select bills when they are read on the House floor for the second time. These analyses are published in the *Daily Floor Report* and may provide legislative commentary. They do not, however, reflect changes made to the bill after the second reading. HRO analyses for recent sessions are available electronically on Texas Legislature Online (www.capitol.state.tx.us) and in print at the legislative library.

VI. Obtain the bill history

A bill history is a list of legislative actions taken on a specific bill. Printed bill histories for sessions since 1973 are available at the library. Electronic bill histories for the 71st session through present are available on Texas Legislature Online (www.capitol.state.tx.us) and on the library's website (www.lrl.state.tx.us) for the 63rd through 71st sessions. Actions for bills prior to the 63rd session may be found in House and Senate Journals.

VII. Audio tapes

Since 1973, the Texas Legislature has recorded public committee hearings and House and Senate floor debates. These recordings may be helpful in compiling a bill's legislative history. To review or request relevant tapes, locate the following information in the bill history (Section VI):

- Names of the House and Senate committees to which the bill was referred
- Dates the committees considered the bill in public hearing
- Dates of second and third readings in the House and Senate

Audio tapes may be ordered through the mail or obtained in person at the House or Senate media offices:

House Tapes 1973–Present

John H. Reagan Bldg
105 W 15th St Rm 330
512.463.0920 512.463.5729 fax

Senate Tapes (Past 3 Sessions)

Sam Houston Bldg
210 E 14th St Rm 175
512.463.0430

Senate Tapes (Prior Sessions)

Reference Section
State Archives and Library Bldg
1201 Brazos St Rm 300
512.463.5455

VIII. Other helpful documents

Statements of legislative intent may be recorded in the House and Senate Journals. Electronic journal information (76th–Present) is available on the House website (www.house.state.tx.us) and the Senate website (www.senate.state.tx.us). Printed journals for most sessions are available at the library, in law libraries around the state, and at the Dallas and Houston public libraries.

Reports issued by legislative interim committees, state agencies, the House Research Organization, the Senate Research Center, and the Sunset Advisory Commission also may help to identify legislative intent. Many of these reports are available on the website of the agency that issued the report. In addition, most interim committee reports are available on the library's website.

The library's newspaper clipping service is another resource for background material and historical perspective. The clippings service is accessible through public terminals in the library.

If you have questions that are not addressed in this guide, please call or visit the Legislative Reference Library.

The library is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM until 5:00 PM, with extended hours during legislative sessions. Please contact us if we can be of assistance.

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