GOVT 452--Start your Legislative History in Congress.gov

Open congress.gov in another browser window to work through this tutorial side by side.

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How to Locate the History of a Bill via Congress.gov

By using this tutorial, you will learn how to use congress.gov to find a list of the actions taken on a Bill.

START THE TUTORIAL BY CLICKING THE ARROW BELOW

This tutorial will use 93 H.R. 11510 as an example throughout.

Note: You can only use congress.gov if your Bill is from 1973 or later.

How do I use this tutorial?
Enter your Bill number

1.) In the main search box, enter your Bill number with no spaces between characters, for example, 93H.R.11510
2.) Use the drop down menu to select All Legislation. (Otherwise congress.gov will only search Current Legislation)
3.) Click search.

Locate the correct Bill in the search results

1.) Look for a search result identified as a Law (a Bill that passed).

The results list displays the year and Congress number after the H.R.11510 (after the S.# for Senate Bills).

2.) When you see 93 H.R. 11510 in the list, go to the next page of this tutorial!

TROUBLESHOOTING YOUR SEARCH

Check how you entered the Bill number in the search box. Does it look exactly like this: 93H.R.11510?
Find the list of actions

1.) Click the Bill number in the results list to open the Bill record.
2.) In the Bill record, click the **Actions** tab to view the list of actions taken on this Bill.

(Note: Some devices will show a drop down menu bar containing the word Summary instead of having tabs.)
3.) Once you can see a list of actions, move on to the next step of this tutorial.

Record the actions and their dates

For your legislative history, you need to record each action and the date on which it occurred.
1.) You can select **Actions Overview** or **All Actions**.
Notice that the list shows the most recent action first. (It tells you the Public Law number assigned to this Bill after it became law.)

2.) There's just one more piece of information to collect from congress.gov. Click to the next step of the tutorial.

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**Note any reports produced**

1.) Record any Committee Reports and Conference Reports produced. Congress.gov includes citations to reports in its list of actions like this:

2.) That's all for this step.

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**Congratulations!**

You now have the basis of your legislative history! You should have a list of actions with dates & associated reports.
Next: find the Congressional Record page for key items. There's another tutorial for that here: [coming soon!]
If you need help, contact Helen at hmcmanus@gmu.edu

Feedback

What did you think of this tutorial?

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