



**Finding Illinois Law:
A Librarian's Guide for Non-Lawyers**

Second Edition

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Chicago Association of Law Libraries

2021



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Contents

	Preface to Second Edition <i>Sarah Reis & Sarah Walangitan</i>	
1	Introduction to the United States Legal System <i>Konya L. Moss</i>	1
2	How to Read Legal Citations <i>Maribel Nash (updated by Sarah Reis)</i>	7
3	Statutes <i>Ramsey Donnell</i>	12
4	Cases <i>Jamie Sommer (updated by Bridgette Thoma)</i>	17
5	Administrative Law <i>Deborah Darin (updated by Philip Johnson)</i>	21
6	Municipal Law: Cook County and the City of Chicago <i>Walter Baumann (updated by Lisa Winkler)</i>	26
7	Researching Outside of Illinois: The Laws of Indiana and Wisconsin <i>Heidi Frostestad Kuehl</i>	31
8	Illinois Legislative History <i>Jean Wenger</i>	37
9	Free and Low-Cost Legal Research Resources <i>Tom Keefe</i>	50
10	Avoiding the Unauthorized Practice of Law <i>Tom Gaylord (updated by Ariel Scotese)</i>	61
11	Where to Seek Additional Help <i>Victor Salas</i>	64
12	Recommended Publishers & Resources <i>Joseph Mitzenmacher (updated by Sarah Walangitan)</i>	80

Preface to Second Edition

The Chicago Association of Law Libraries (CALL) is a network of legal information professionals whose mission includes advocacy and education in the legal information community.

The CALL Government Relations Committee presents this guide as a tool to assist the general public with conducting legal research. The first edition of *Finding Illinois Law* was published in 2012. Online access to legal information has improved and expanded since the first edition was published nearly a decade ago, so the second edition reflects these developments.

Finding Illinois Law begins with an overview of the U.S. legal system and how to cite to legal materials in Chapters 1 and 2, respectively.

Each branch of government produces its own source of law from cases to statutes to administrative regulations. Chapters 3 through 7 discuss these sources of law, focusing on the law of Illinois, but also including information about federal law and the laws of our neighboring states. Chapter 8 provides an overview of how to conduct Illinois legislative history, which is a new chapter added in this second edition of this publication.

Because this guide is intended for an audience of non-lawyers, it includes advice in Chapter 9 on how free internet legal research resources compares with the commercial services generally used by attorneys. Librarians who conduct legal research on behalf of another individual or who assist patrons with locating legal information will be interested in Chapter 10, which covers the unauthorized practice of law to ensure that the assistance they are providing does not cross the fine line between reference assistance and providing legal advice.

Chapter 11 offers resources for where to seek additional help. If a situation arises where legal representation is needed, consult the list of law school clinics, legal organizations, and lawyer referral services to locate free and low-cost legal assistance. Librarians who are looking to add legal titles to their collection should consult the list of recommended publishers and resources in Chapter 12.

We would like to thank the CALL members who generously donated their time and wisdom by contributing and updating chapters in this guide. This second edition of *Finding Illinois Law* also would not have been possible without the support of the CALL Executive Board. We hope that this guide will be a valuable resource for librarians and non-lawyers throughout Illinois.

Sarah Reis, Chair, Government Relations Committee, 2020-21
Sarah Walangitan, Chair, Government Relations Committee, 2019-20
Chicago Association of Law Libraries
March 2021

Chapter 1

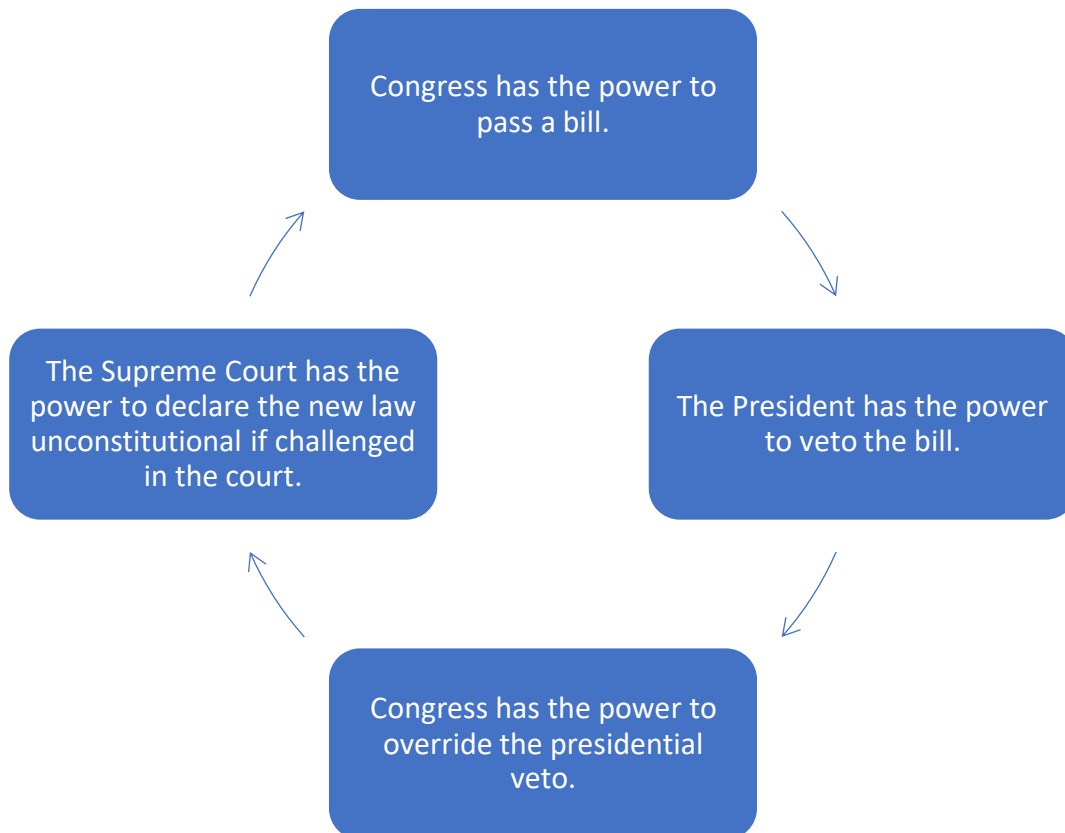
Introduction to the United States Legal System

By **Konya L. Moss**
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This chapter provides an overview of the United States legal system. The Constitution of the United States is “the supreme Law of the Land”; therefore, this primer on the U.S. legal system will begin with the importance of the Constitution, followed by discussion of the three branches of government, and conclude with sources of law.

The Constitution

Effective since 1789, the U.S. Constitution is the oldest functioning written government charter in the world. It is a governmental framework containing two important principles: (1) a system of checks and balances to guarantee that none of the three branches dominates the government; and (2) the distribution of power between national and state governments through a system known as federalism. The chart below illustrates one example of checks and balances. Notice the equality between the branches, as none of the three branches are more powerful than another.



Finding Illinois Law

The U.S. Constitution does much more than set up the three branches of government. Specifically, it sets the parameters of federal and state powers. The federal government only has the powers stated in the Constitution. Limitations on state powers are enumerated in Article I, Section 10, of Amendment X and broadly describes the powers reserved to the states as all “powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States.” In practice, this means that federal courts hear disputes regarding federal statutes and the constitution. State courts hear disputes regarding state statutes, the state constitution, and issues governed by common law.

The United States still operates from the original Constitution, though twenty-seven amendments have been added since ratification. All fifty U.S. states have their own constitution, and each state exercises its own discretion as to the writing, amending, enforcing, and rewriting of that constitution. For example, Illinois has held six Constitutional Conventions, but only four Illinois Constitutions have been ratified by popular vote in 1818, 1848, 1870, and 1970.

The Constitution of the State of Illinois models the Illinois government after the government of the United States in that Illinois has a bicameral legislature, a judicial branch, and an executive branch of government.

Please make use of the resources listed throughout this primer to learn more about the Constitution, the branches of government, and the sources of law.

Resources on the Constitution of the United States and the Illinois Constitution	
Illinois Digital Archives	Find PDFs of constitutions and constitutional conventions in Illinois.
Illinois General Assembly	Find the current (1970) Illinois Constitution.
Library of Congress	Find primary sources from the drafting of the U.S. Constitution.
Constitution Annotated (Congress.gov)	Find analysis and interpretation of the U.S. Constitution.
The National Archives	Find images and transcripts of documents such as the U.S. Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, and the Bill of Rights.
U.S. Government Manual	Find the U.S. Constitution and a listing of persons filling federal offices along with their contact information.
Ben’s Guide to the U.S. Government for Kids	Find explanations of the U.S. government for kids of all grade levels.

The Three Branches of Government

For both the United States government and the Illinois government, the three branches are coequal in power and separate in functions. The Legislative Branch enacts the law, the Executive Branch enforces the law, and the Judicial Branch interprets the law. They are explained here in order of their appearance in both constitutions: the Legislative Branch, the Executive Branch, and the Judicial Branch.

The Legislative Branch

The Legislative Branch enacts statutory law by passing identical bills through both the Senate and the House of Representatives. In the U.S. Congress, representation in the Senate is equal among the states with each state having two Senators. Representation in the House of Representatives is based on state population, with Illinois having 18 U.S. Representatives. This bicameral system is also found in the Illinois General Assembly. The Illinois Senate has 59 members and the Illinois House of Representatives has 118 members.¹ See [Chapter 3: Statutes](#) for a detailed explanation of how a bill becomes a statute.

Resources on the Legislative Branch	
Illinois General Assembly	Find Illinois Public Acts, bills, and transcripts for the Illinois Senate and Illinois House of Representatives.
How Our Laws Are Made	Find detailed descriptions of each step of the legislative process for the U.S. Congress.
Congress.gov	Find Public Laws, Congressional debates, committee reports, and the Congressional Record of the U.S. Congress.
U.S. House of Representatives	Find information on U.S. House representatives, leadership, committees, votes, calendars, and reports.
U.S. Senate	Find information on U.S. Senate members, leadership, committees, votes, calendars, and reports.
govinfo	Find U.S. Congressional committee reports, bills, and the Congressional Record.

The Executive Branch

It is the job of the Executive Branch to enforce the laws using federal or state regulations. Statutes can be broadly written, so administrative actions fill in the gaps to give citizens and administrations specific details as to compliance with the law. The Executive Branch of the United States is led by the President, and the executive for the State of Illinois is the Governor. There are respectively federal and state administrative agencies to assist each executive in the “faithful” execution of the laws. See [Chapter 5: Administrative Law](#) for discussion on administrative rules and regulations.

¹ U.S. Constitution, art. 1, sec. 10 and the Constitution of the State of Illinois, art 4, sec. 1.

Finding Illinois Law

Resources on the Executive Branch	
The Federal Register	Find the daily publication of documents from various government agencies including addresses, letters, notices, proposed rules, final rules, vetoes, and presidential documents.
The National Archives	Find online editions of the public papers and photographic portfolios of the current and historical Presidents dating back to 1991. See a Federal Depository Library for print editions.
The White House	Find information on the current presidential administration.
Illinois.gov	Find information on the Illinois Executive Branch.

Judicial Branch

The Judicial Branch has adjudicative powers for actual controversies; it issues no advisory opinions. Illinois courts consist of the Illinois Supreme Court, Appellate Courts, and lower circuit courts. The federal judicial system includes the U.S. Supreme Court, the U.S. District Courts, and the U.S. Courts of Appeals. The Supreme Court of the United States is the highest court in the land and the only federal court provided by the U.S. Constitution. Jurisdiction for this high court includes cases involving foreign ambassadors, cases between states, and cases that have been appealed through the lower federal courts. All inferior courts are bound by the decisions of the Supreme Court. See [Chapter 4: Cases](#) for discussion on the judicial system and common law.

Resources on the Judicial Branch	
<i>BNA's Directory of State and Federal Courts, Judges, and Clerks</i>	Find contact information on justices and clerks as well as organizational charts of court hierarchies.
Illinois Courts	Find dockets, opinions, and court rules from the Illinois Judicial Branch.
Oyez Project	Find recordings of oral arguments, transcripts of cases, and virtual tours of the Supreme Court of the United States.
PACER	Find public access to court electronic records (fee involved).
Supreme Court of the United States	Find the calendar of the Supreme Court, reported opinions, biographies of the Justices, and court rules.
U.S. Code, Title 28	Find codified U.S. laws, particularly related to the federal judicial system.
Court Listener	Find free access to opinions from state and federal courts.

Sources of Law

Each of the three branches of government produces law. The Legislative Branch produces bills and statutes, the Executive Branch produces regulations, and the Judicial Branch produces case law. Some of these sources are online in an official format, but for others, a trip to the library is necessary. The Federal Depository Library Program makes sources of law available to the public. Even if the library belongs to a private institution, if it is a member of the FDLP program, the public may enter free of charge. For example, in Illinois, Northwestern University is a private university, but because the Deering Library as well as the Pritzker Legal Research Center of Northwestern University are members of the Federal Depository Library program, the public may enter and use the government documents section of those two Northwestern University libraries. See the chart below for sources of law and visit fdlp.gov/about-the-fdlp/federal-depository-libraries to find your local Federal Depository Library.

	Legislative Branch (Statutes)	Judicial Branch (Court Opinions)	Executive Branch (Regulations)
Federal	U.S. Code	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U.S. Reports (U.S. Supreme Court opinions) • Federal Reporter (U.S. Court of Appeals opinions) 	Code of Federal Regulations
Illinois	Illinois Compiled Statutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illinois Reports (Illinois Supreme Court opinions) • Illinois Appellate Court Reports (Illinois Appellate court opinions) 	Illinois Administrative Code

Primary and Secondary Sources

A legal researcher must note the difference between primary and secondary sources of law. Primary sources are the law. Examples of primary sources include statutes, cases and regulations. Secondary sources are not the law, but they are *about* the law. Secondary sources serve to provide explanation, commentary, or analysis about the primary sources that are produced directly by a governing body.

One example of a secondary source is a journal article. Legal periodicals offer new scholarship and often offer the opinion of the author. Legal journals are generally published by professional associations for attorneys such as the American Bar Association or by law schools. For a comprehensive listing of periodicals, see the *Index to Legal Periodicals & Books*.

Finding Illinois Law

In addition to journal articles, there are several other examples of secondary sources: legal dictionaries, legal encyclopedias, and treatises. A legal dictionary defines legal terms and phrases. Legal encyclopedias are a good place to start a legal research project because they offer background information on a topic. A treatise is a legal resource on a specific area of law such as contracts or criminal law. Treatises can include books that are a single volume or multiple volumes, but they are more narrowly focused than an encyclopedia because a treatise usually covers only one topic. All secondary sources are useful for their summaries or analysis of the law, but they are also good sources to find citations to relevant primary sources.

The Constitution itself is a primary source. A law review article discussing a new interpretation of the Constitution is a secondary source. As a rule, secondary sources are not used as authority in documents submitted to a court. Courts prefer to see citations to primary law such as statutes and cases. However, if an attorney wished to persuade a judge to follow a new interpretation of the law, a law review article could be cited as a secondary, persuasive authority. See the chart below for examples of primary and secondary sources.

Examples of Primary and Secondary Sources	
Primary	Constitutions Case law Legislation Executive materials Regulations Treaties
Secondary	Dictionaries , such as: <i>Black's Law Dictionary</i> and <i>Ballentine's Law Dictionary</i> Treatises , such as: <i>Corbin on Contracts</i> , <i>Search and Seizure: A Treatise on the Fourth Amendment</i> , <i>Illinois Practice Series</i> , and <i>Illinois Law and Practice</i> Encyclopedias , such as: <i>American Jurisprudence 2d</i> and <i>Illinois Jurisprudence</i>

Chapter 2 How to Read Legal Citations

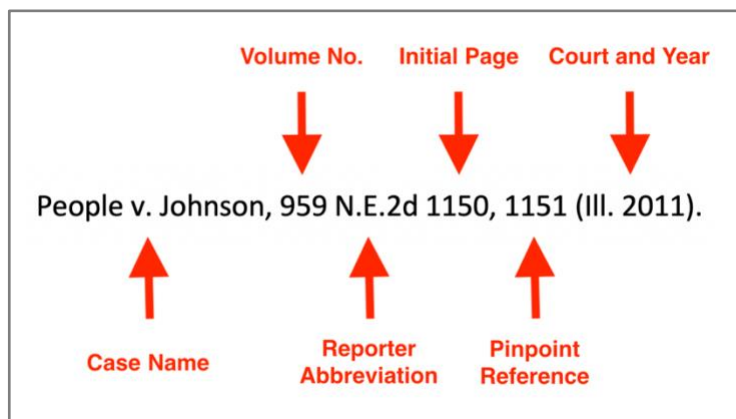
By Maribel Nash
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Legal *citations*, or *cites*, are references to specific legal sources. They serve as shorthand to assist researchers in quickly identifying legal authority. A typical citation describes what is being cited, where the reader can find the information, when the information was produced, and who produced it. Citations may refer to primary law (*e.g.*, court opinions, statutes, constitutions, or administrative rules and decisions) or secondary materials (*e.g.*, law review articles or treatises). This chapter describes common legal citations: cases and statutes. This chapter also provides a list of legal citation manuals for further information.

Case Law

A common type of legal citation is a citation to a court case or judicial opinion. The process of case law research is described in detail in [Chapter 4: Cases](#) of this publication. Most citations to court cases appear as illustrated below:



Citations to court cases or judicial opinions generally begin with the name of the case. The complete citation to the print reporter follows. In the example above, “N.E.2d” refers to the *North Eastern Reporter, Second Series*.² The volume number in which the opinion appears always precedes the reporter abbreviation, and the case’s initial page follows it. Therefore, *People v. Johnson* can be found in volume 959 of the *North Eastern Reporter, Second Series*, and the opinion starts on page 1150. A second page number, a pinpoint reference to a specific page within the opinion, may also be included in the citation. At the end of the citation, the court that decided

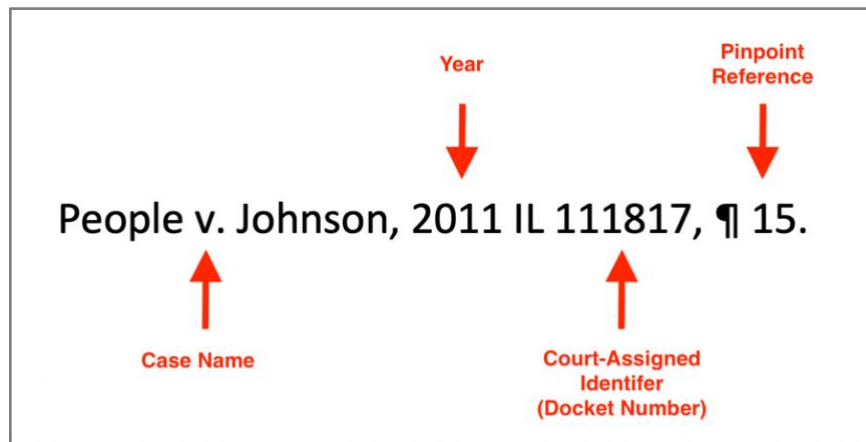
² The *North Eastern Reporter* is one of seven regional reporters in West’s National Reporter System, published by Thomson Reuters.

Finding Illinois Law

the case—in this case, the Illinois Supreme Court—and the year the case was decided will appear in parentheses.

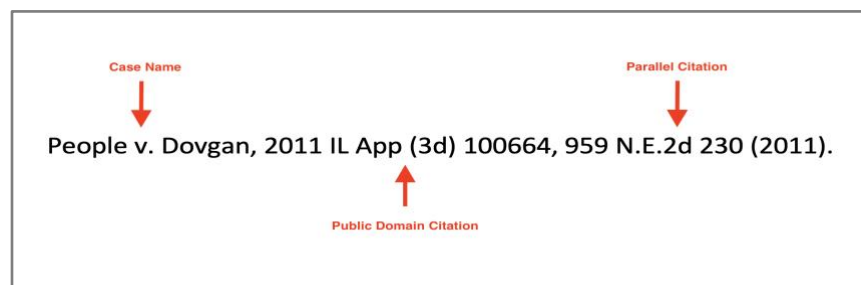
Until 2011, Illinois state court opinions were published in official reporters: *Illinois Reports* (abbreviated “Ill.” or “Ill. 2d”) for Supreme Court decisions and *Illinois Appellate Reports* (abbreviated “Ill. App.,” “Ill. App. 2d,” or “Ill. App. 3d”) for Appellate Court opinions.

Publication of these print reporters was discontinued in 2011. That year, the Illinois Supreme Court adopted a public domain citation format for Illinois Supreme Court and Appellate Court decisions. The public domain citation format includes the year of the decision and a sequential number, or identifier, assigned to the opinion. Instead of pinpoint references to page numbers, a paragraph number now indicates where the cited information is located within the opinion. Using these public domain citations, researchers can easily find Illinois opinions on the [Illinois Courts website](#). An example of a public domain citation from the Illinois Supreme Court appears below:



The [Illinois Supreme Court rules](#) allow, but do not require, parallel citation to the unofficial print reporters.³ Researchers may see a long citation containing multiple references to the same case.

The following is an example of a citation to an opinion from the Illinois Court of Appeals:



³ Rule 6 states: “Citation of Illinois cases filed prior to July 1, 2011, and published in the Illinois Official Reports shall be to the Official Reports, but the citation to the North Eastern Reporter and/or the Illinois Decisions may be added. For Illinois cases filed on or after July 1, 2011, and for any case not published in the Illinois Official Reports prior to that date and for which a public-domain citation has been assigned, the public-domain citation shall be given and, where appropriate, pinpoint citations to paragraph numbers shall be given; a citation to the North Eastern Reporter and/or the Illinois Decisions may be added but is not required.”

Chapter 2: How to Read Legal Citations

Illinois researchers frequently encounter the abbreviations in the following chart when reading cases and other legal materials. For a list of legal abbreviations, refer to the tables in *The Bluebook* or *Bieber's Dictionary of Legal Abbreviations*.

Court	Abbreviation	Reporter
U.S. Supreme Court	U.S. / S. Ct. / L. Ed.	United States Reports (official) / Supreme Court Reporter (West) / United States Supreme Court Reports, Lawyers' Edition (Lexis)
U.S. Courts of Appeals (Federal appellate level)	F. / F.2d / F.3d	Federal Reporter [First, Second, or Third Series] (West)
U.S. District Courts (Federal trial level)	F. Supp. / F. Supp. 2d / F. Supp. 3d	Federal Supplement [First, Second, or Third Series] (West)
Illinois Supreme Court	IL / Ill. / N.E. / Ill. Dec.	Illinois public domain citation format (official) / Illinois Reports (official) / North Eastern Reporter (West) / Illinois Decisions (West)
Illinois Court of Appeals	IL App / Ill. App. / N.E. / Ill. Dec.	Illinois public domain citation format (official) / Illinois Appellate Reports (official) / North Eastern Reporter (West) / Illinois Decisions (West)

Statutes

Researchers are also likely to encounter citations to statutes. The process of statutory research is described in detail in [Chapter 3: Statutes](#). Illinois statutes are published in the *Illinois Compiled Statutes* (abbreviated "ILCS"⁴). An example of a citation to an Illinois statute appears below:

⁴ *The Bluebook* requires the abbreviation "Ill. Comp. Stat.," but that abbreviation is not in compliance with Illinois law. See 25 ILCS 135/5.04 (2020).

Finding Illinois Law



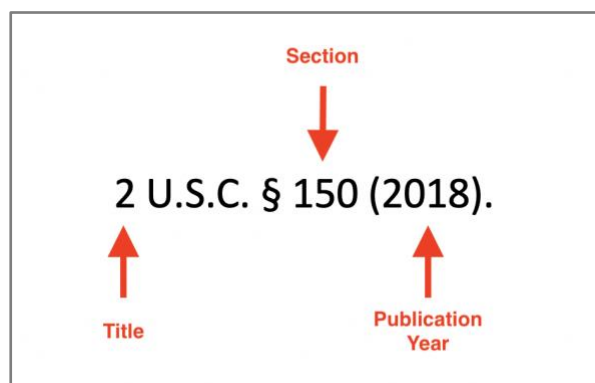
The *Illinois Compiled Statutes* are organized, by topic, into Chapters. The topical chapters are then subdivided into Acts and Sections. West publishes an annotated version of the ILCS, the *Smith-Hurd Illinois Compiled Statutes Annotated* (abbreviated “Ill. Comp. Stat. Ann.”). A citation to the print version of the unofficial annotated statutes also includes a reference to the publisher in the parentheses as well as the year of the print publication: 750 ILL. COMP. STAT. ANN. 5/505 (West 2019).

For a citation to the unofficial annotated statutes from a commercial electronic database such as Westlaw or Lexis, the parentheses should include the name of the database and information about the currency of the database as provided by the database itself: 750 ILL. COMP. STAT. ANN. 5/505 (West, Westlaw through P.A. 101-619 of 2019–2020 Legis. Sess.).

Notice that statutory citations, unlike case law citations, do not include parallel citations.

Official publication of federal statutes is in the *United States Code*. The official edition of the United States Code is printed by the U.S. Government Printing Office every six years with annual supplements. Both Thomson Reuters (West) and LexisNexis publish unofficial annotated versions of the United States Code. West publishes the *United States Code Annotated* (abbreviated “U.S.C.A.”), and LexisNexis publishes the *United States Code Service* (abbreviated “U.S.C.S.”).

Federal statutes are organized by topic into Titles. Within the statutory citation, the title number precedes the U.S.C. abbreviation. The next number in the citation is the statutory section. The date of code edition cited appears in the parentheses, but the 21st edition of *The Bluebook* made the inclusion of the date of code edition optional.



Chapter 2: How to Read Legal Citations

Examples of federal statutory citations are listed in the chart below. Note that the section numbers for the U.S.C.A. and U.S.C.S. correspond to the same section numbers in the United States Code.

	Citation
<i>United States Code (official)</i>	2 U.S.C. § 150 (2018).
<i>United States Code Annotated (unofficial – bound print volume)</i>	2 U.S.C.A. § 150 (West 2016).
<i>United States Code Annotated (unofficial – commercial database)</i>	2 U.S.C.A. § 150 (Westlaw through Pub. L. No. 116-140).
<i>United States Code Service (unofficial – bound print volume)</i>	2 U.S.C.S. § 150 (LexisNexis 2016).
<i>United States Code Service (unofficial – commercial database)</i>	2 U.S.C.S. § 150 (LEXIS through Pub. L. No. 116-140).

Citation Manuals

For further information on citations, consult the following sources:

- *The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation* (21st ed. 2020).
- [Introduction to Basic Legal Citation \(Legal Information Institute 2020\)](#).

For more comprehensive lists of legal abbreviations, consult:

- Mary Miles Price, *Prince's Bieber Dictionary of Legal Abbreviations* (6th ed. 2009).
- Abbreviation tables in *The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation* (21st ed. 2020).

Chapter 3 Statutes

By Ramsey Donnell
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What Is a Statute?

In the United States, a statute, also called an act, is a written law passed by a legislature or other lawmaking body.⁵ “Legislature” refers to those elected bodies we commonly associate with lawmaking, such as the U.S. Congress or the Illinois General Assembly. Other enactments are sometimes referred to as statutes—for example, legislation enacted by administrative boards, the constitution adopted by the people of the United States or a given state, and ratified treaties.⁶ For purposes of this discussion, we will focus on the most common statutes: the enactments of legislatures.

After a statute is passed by a legislature and signed by the executive (*i.e.*, the President of the United States or the governor of a state), it is compiled and integrated with all of the outstanding laws of the jurisdiction. These compiled sets of laws are often called codes. For example, the compiled set of laws passed by the U.S. Congress is called the *United States Code* and the full body of laws passed by the Illinois General Assembly is collected in the *Illinois Compiled Statutes*.

How Are Statutes Created?

Do you remember the old “How a Bill Becomes a Law” poster from your junior high classroom? Despite its frayed edges and yellowed borders, this old standby encompasses most of what a layperson needs to know about the process of enacting legislation. In very broad strokes, here is how the process works in the U.S. Congress and the Illinois General Assembly:

- A. Federal Law (*For an interactive diagram of the process, see this [flowchart from LexisNexis.](#)*)
 1. Introduction of Legislation. A member of Congress, either a U.S. Representative or Senator, introduces a proposed, written piece of legislation, called a bill. It is assigned an identifying number (*e.g.*, H.R. 1 for the House or S. 1 for the Senate).
 2. The Bill is Referred to Committee. The Speaker of the House of Representatives or the presiding officer of the Senate refers the bill to the appropriate committee, where it is analyzed and amended. Ultimately, the committee votes on whether or not to send the bill back to the House or Senate. If the bill fails to get out of committee, it is most often dead.

⁵ BLACK’S LAW DICTIONARY 1703–06 (Bryan A. Garner, ed., 11th ed., West 2019).

⁶ *Id.*

Chapter 3: Statutes

3. Debate and Vote. When a bill returns to the full House or Senate, legislators in that body debate the bill and vote on whether or not to pass it.
 4. Referral to Other Chamber. If the bill passes one chamber of Congress, it then goes to the other chamber (*e.g.*, if the bill passes in the House, it would then go to the Senate). The other chamber goes through a similar process—referral to committee, approval by committee, debate and vote. Often, separate House and Senate versions of a bill make their way through the process at the same time.
 5. Conference Committee. With major legislation, it is common for the House and Senate to pass different versions of the bill. When this happens, a Conference Committee consisting of members of both chambers meets to reach a compromise on the bill’s final language.
 6. The Bill Goes to the President. After both chambers pass the bill or approve the Conference Committee’s version, the bill goes to the President for signature. If the President signs the bill, it becomes a law. The President may veto a bill, in which case it does not become a law, unless the veto is overridden by Congress.
- B. Illinois Law (*For a diagram of the process in Illinois, see this [chart maintained by the Illinois Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability’s Research Unit.](#)*)
1. Introduction of Legislation. As with federal laws, Illinois laws begin their journey to enactment when a bill is introduced in either the Illinois House or Senate. Upon introduction, there is a first reading of the bill in the chamber in which it is proposed. (The Illinois Constitution requires three readings in each chamber.)
 2. The Bill is Referred to Committee. Following introduction, the bill is referred to the applicable committee where hearings may be held and amendments made to the text of the bill. The committee recommends whether or not to pass the bill. If it recommends passage or the full house overrides a “do not pass” recommendation, the bill goes back to the chamber in which it originated.
 3. Additional Readings; Vote. When the bill comes out of committee, it is read a second time, during which floor amendments may be proposed. It will then be read a third time and voted upon. Any debate on the bill occurs at the third reading, prior to the vote.
 4. Referral to Other Chamber. If the bill passes the first chamber, it is sent to the second chamber. A similar process is followed: the bill is read a first time, referred to committee for analysis and amendment, read a second time with the possibility of floor amendments and finally read a third time and voted upon.

5. Conference Committee. If a bill passes the second chamber in a different version than that passed in the first, a conference committee may be convened to recommend a compromise version.
6. The Bill Goes to the Governor. After both chambers pass the bill or approve the conference committee's compromise, the bill goes to the governor for signature. If the governor signs the bill, it becomes a law. The governor may veto the bill in total, make an item or reduction veto or an amendatory veto. If the General Assembly fails to override the governor's veto action, the bill may be dead (following a total veto) or passed in the reduced or amended form suggested by the governor.

How Are Laws Organized?

Myriad bills have successfully wended their way through the legislative process and been signed into law by the president or governor; taken together, they comprise the laws of the nation or state. How do you find the laws you are interested in? To answer this question, it helps to understand how laws are organized and published.

Public Laws and Public Acts

After becoming law, a statute is assigned an identifying number. With U.S. laws, these identifiers are called Public Law numbers (*e.g.*, P.L. 101-73); in Illinois, they are called Public Act numbers (*e.g.*, P.A. 87-1226). In both cases, the numbers provide the same information: the first digits refer to the number of the Congress or General Assembly and the second set of digits refers to the chronological order of that law's passage. So, in the foregoing examples, P.L. 101-73 refers to the 73rd law passed by the 101st U.S. Congress, and P.A. 87-1226 refers to the 1226th law passed by the 87th Illinois General Assembly. The number of the Congress and General Assembly tells you when the law was passed. For example, the 101st U.S. Congress sat in 1989–1990 and the 87th Illinois General Assembly sat in 1991–1992.

Session Laws

Eventually, all of the laws are published in chronological order as what are called session laws. For U.S. laws, this publication is called the *Statutes at Large*. In the *Statutes at Large*, P.L. 101-73 would be followed by P.L. 101-74, etc. Illinois session laws are published as the *Laws of Illinois*, and P.A. 87-1226 would be followed by P.A. 87-1227. These sets contain every law passed by a particular legislature, including laws that have subsequently been repealed or amended.

Codes

Most people don't look for laws in the order in which they were passed; they look for them by subject matter. Consequently, researching federal or Illinois statutes using solely the *Statutes at Large* or *Laws of Illinois* would be a difficult task. To make the laws more accessible, U.S. and

Chapter 3: Statutes

state governments also organize their laws by subject, integrating the Public Laws and Public Acts into an existing structure that contains all laws currently in effect. These subject-based arrangements of the law are called codes, and codes are what most researchers rely on when trying to analyze the law. The U.S. code is called the *United States Code*, and the Illinois code is called the *Illinois Compiled Statutes*.

A. *United States Code*

The *United States Code* is organized into titles, which are divided into chapters, which are further subdivided into sections. For example, [Title 17, “Copyrights,”](#) is subdivided into 14 chapters. Chapter 1 of Title 17, “Subject Matter and Scope of Copyright,” is subdivided into Sections 101 through 122. Each section contains statutory text addressing a distinct issue. For instance, Section 107 addresses “fair use,” and Section 108 addresses reproduction by libraries and archives.”

References to the *United States Code* in legal documents, called citations, commonly take the form of [Title] U.S.C. [Section]. Thus, a citation to the fair use section of the Copyright Act would be cited as 17 U.S.C. § 107. (The year of the code volume is often provided in parentheses after the section number.) See Chapter 2: Legal Citations for more information.

B. *Illinois Compiled Statutes*

The *Illinois Compiled Statutes* are organized into chapters that are grouped according to subject matter. For instance, Chapters 805, 810, 815, and 820 consist of laws on the topic of business. Chapters are divided into acts (*e.g.*, Act 5 of Chapter 805 is the [Business Corporation Act of 1983](#)), acts further divided into articles (*e.g.*, Article 2 of Act 5 of Chapter 805 is titled “[Formation of Corporations](#)”), and sections delineated by decimal places after the article number. Each section consists of statutory text on a given issue. For example, the statutory language dealing with Articles of Incorporation is found in Section 2.10 of Chapter 805, Act 5, Article 2 of the *Illinois Compiled Statutes*.

Citations to the *Illinois Compiled Statutes* take a similar form to *United States Code* citations: [Chapter] ILCS [Act/Section]. So, a citation to the section dealing with Articles of Incorporation would take the form of 805 ILCS 5/2.10. As with the *United States Code*, the year of the code volume is often given in parentheses after the section number.

C. Annotated Codes

Commercial legal publishers produce annotated versions of codes for most jurisdictions, including the United States and Illinois. Such publications are distinguished by their annotations, which supply information on the legislative history of the law (*e.g.*, citations to prior laws, Public Act or Public Law numbers for the initial enactment and amendments, etc.), lists of law review, journal, legal encyclopedia and treatise entries discussing the law, and notes of judicial decisions

interpreting the law. Such information can help provide additional insight into the meaning of a particular law, particularly when the text itself is vague.

West and LexisNexis are the two major publishers of annotated codes. Applicable publications include:

- *United States Code Annotated* (West)
- *United States Code Service* (LexisNexis)
- *West's Smith-Hurd Illinois Compiled Statutes Annotated* (West)
- *Illinois Compiled Statutes Annotated* (LexisNexis)

Where Are Statutes Found?

The annotated codes listed above are published in multi-volume print sets. Many public libraries and law libraries carry them. When using print resources, make sure you are using the most recently published edition and always check for either a “pocket part” in the back of the hardbound volume or a stand-alone softcover supplement. Such supplements contain amendments and updates to the law.

Over the last 20 years, online legal research has grown significantly in popularity. Most practicing attorneys have access to one of the two major online legal research platforms: Westlaw and Lexis. Both contain annotated versions of the *United States Code* and *Illinois Compiled Statutes* and can be searched using a full-text search engine as well as browsed by title, chapter and section. A major advantage of the established commercial platforms is that they can generally be relied upon to provide the latest version of a given law and to notify the researcher of any repeal or other action that affects a law's validity. Newer commercial competitors of Westlaw and Lexis, such as Bloomberg Law and Fastcase, also provide access to these statutes.

Free versions of the *United States Code* and *Illinois Compiled Statutes* are now available online from governmental and other websites:

- Legal Information Institute (at Cornell University Law School): [United States Code](#)
- U.S. House of Representatives: [United States Code](#)
- Illinois General Assembly: [Illinois Compiled Statutes](#)

Free websites are a very helpful, cost effective place to begin researching statutes but should not be relied upon to provide the most current text of the law. See [Chapter 9: Free and Low-Cost Legal Research Resources](#) for more information.

Chapter 4 Cases

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Introduction to the U.S. Court System

Our sources of law include statutes, court opinions, and administrative regulations and decisions. Legislatures draft statutes to apply broadly across contexts and situations. Courts adjudicate disputes between two specific parties. In civil cases, courts resolve disputes between individuals or businesses (*e.g.*, *Smith v. Johnson*). In criminal cases, the dispute is between an individual and the government responsible for enforcing the criminal laws (*e.g.*, *People v. Jones*).

Courts interpret and apply statutes. Courts also interpret and apply what is known as common law, or the body of law that is made up of judicial decisions. If there is no statute or code on an issue, judges will refer to prior cases and follow what earlier courts decided on that issue. Prior cases are known as precedent and following these earlier cases is known as *stare decisis* (“to stand by things decided”). This means once courts have decided on a rule of law, they will generally follow that rule in similar cases in the future. The rationale for *stare decisis* is it creates a system where the laws are applied uniformly and rulings can be predicted.

However, judges don’t have to abide by the earlier decision of just any random court. Courts are limited in which earlier decisions they must follow through a system known as mandatory and persuasive authority. Mandatory authority, also known as binding authority, refers to authority a court must follow. Persuasive authority, or nonbinding authority, refers to laws a court may look to for guidance and choose to follow, but it is not required to do so. There are two aspects to determining whether a rule of law is mandatory or persuasive authority: jurisdiction and level of court.

Jurisdiction

Jurisdiction describes a court’s authority to hear a case and is generally based on geographic area or subject matter. In the United States, there is a state court system and a federal court system.

The Illinois state court system hears both criminal and civil cases that take place between individuals, businesses, state, or local governments in which all parties reside in Illinois.

Federal courts hear disputes that involve a *federal question*, meaning a dispute involving the U.S. Constitution, a federal law or statute, or a treaty to which the United States is a party. Federal courts also hear cases involving *diversity jurisdiction*, or disputes between individuals from

Finding Illinois Law

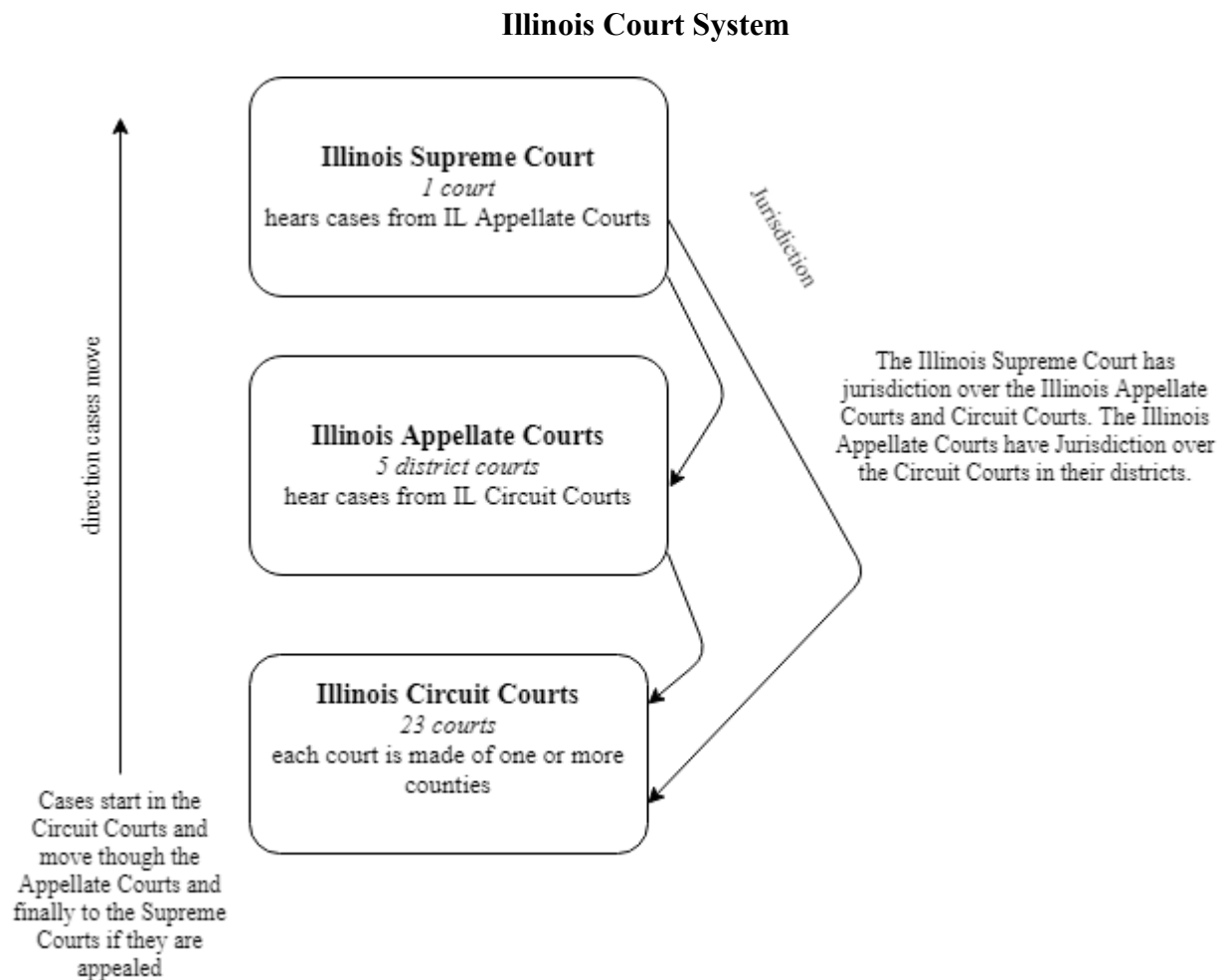
different states. For example, if you are an Illinois resident and you have a dispute with an Indiana resident, you can file your lawsuit in federal court. The rationale for diversity jurisdiction is an Illinois state court may treat an Illinois resident more favorably. A federal court provides a neutral location to adjudicate the dispute.

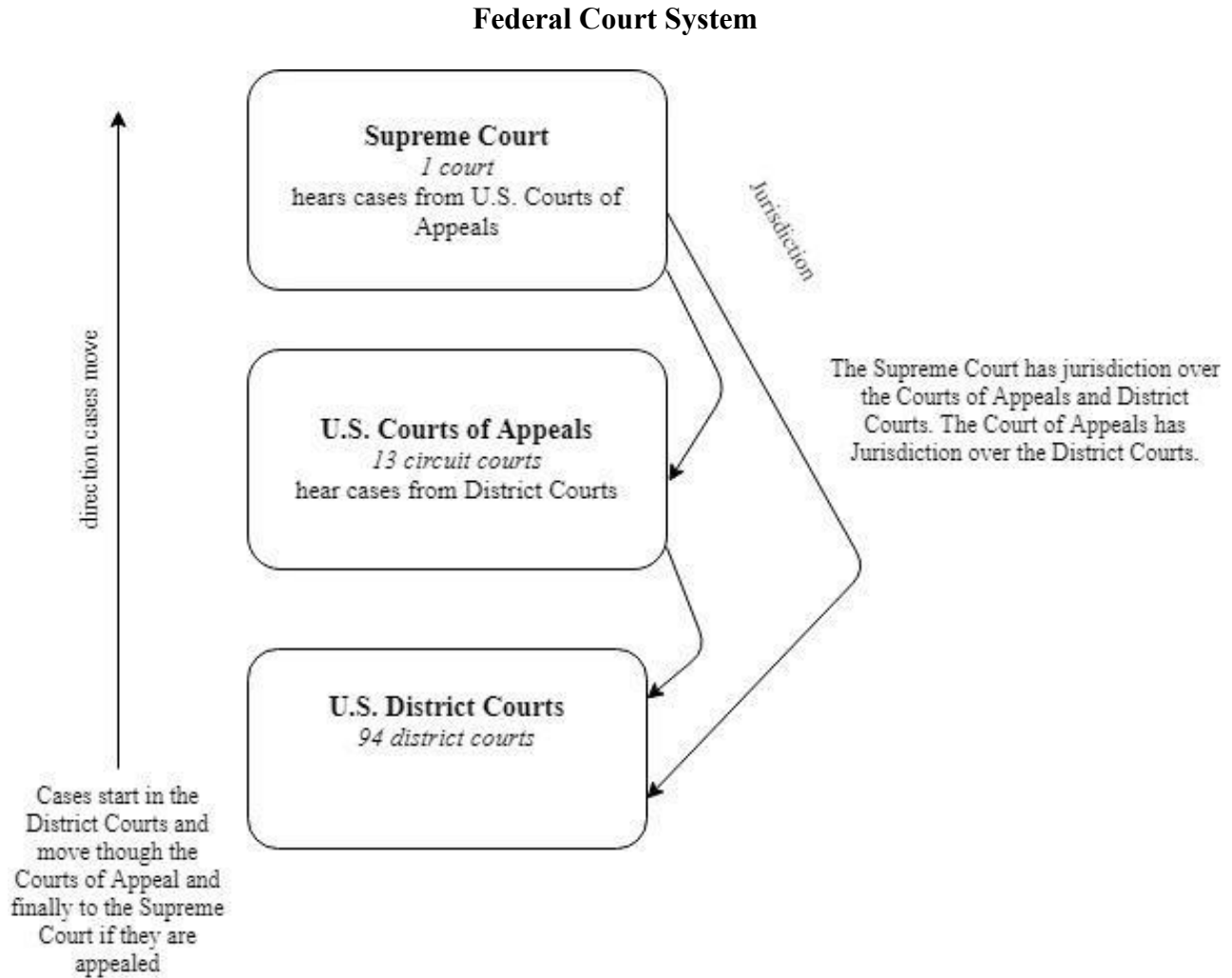
Jurisdiction matters because courts must follow earlier decisions from courts within their same jurisdiction.

Level of Court

The federal and state court systems are both divided into multiple levels. For the federal court and most states, including Illinois, the lowest courts are the trial courts. In the federal court system, these are known as district courts. In Illinois, they are called [circuit courts](#). Both court systems then have intermediate appellate courts and a final appellate court, usually known as the supreme court.

In general, a court must follow an earlier court's opinion from courts within their jurisdiction and from their level or higher. The opinion of a lowest level trial court is never binding (mandatory) on another court.





For example, the opinion of an Indiana court is not mandatory authority to an Illinois court, regardless of what level of court it comes from, because it is from a different jurisdiction. The Illinois Supreme Court does not have to follow the opinion from any of the Illinois Appellate courts, because they are lower courts, although the Illinois Supreme Court may look at that opinion as persuasive authority and choose to follow it or not.

To provide an example from the federal court system, an opinion from the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals, an intermediate appellate court, is not considered mandatory authority to the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals because the 9th Circuit is considered a different jurisdiction from the 7th Circuit. The 7th Circuit Court of Appeals also never has to follow an opinion from a lower district court, but the opinions of the U.S. Supreme Court are considered mandatory authority because it is a higher court.

Locating Court Opinions

Cases or court opinions have traditionally been published in print reporters, a collection of cases from a jurisdiction arranged in chronological order. For example, the reporter *United States*

Finding Illinois Law

Reports contains the official text of opinions from the United States Supreme Court in the order in which they were decided. *Illinois Appellate Reports* contains the text of opinions from all the Illinois Appellate courts, though the print reporter ceased publication in 2011, so the official versions of opinions from the Illinois Appellate courts are now available online.

Nowadays, the easiest way to find cases is online:

- [Google Scholar](#) provides access to federal and state court opinions. Google Scholar includes state appellate and Supreme Court cases since 1950, U.S. federal district and appellate court cases since 1923, and U.S. Supreme Court cases since 1791.
- The [U.S. Supreme Court](#) website provides access to the Court's [opinions](#) from 1988 to present.
- The [Illinois Supreme Court](#) website houses all Illinois Supreme and Appellate cases from 1996 to present.
- Because the opinions of the lowest (trial) courts are never considered mandatory authority, they are not published in Illinois. If you are trying to determine the outcome of a case heard before a circuit court in Illinois, you should [contact the clerk of that court](#)—usually the County Circuit Court.
- The [Public Library of Law](#) includes cases from the U.S. Supreme Court and Courts of Appeals and cases from all 50 states back to 1997.
- [Free Law Project](#) is a free non-profit organization that provides free access to court materials on its website.
 - [Court Listener](#) – a free legal research website with millions of legal opinions from federal and state courts.
 - [RECAP Archive](#) – provides access to documents and dockets from federal courts. RECAP is a crowd-sourced archive of documents from PACER, a fee-based government system. Not everything from PACER will be found here, but the archive does include every free PACER opinion and converts PDFs to text.

Lexis and Westlaw are fee-based commercial databases. The text of court opinions found in these services is identical to those found on free sites. These are expensive databases, but they provide commentary, research tools, links, and advanced search functions.

Below are lower-priced, fee-based databases:

- [Casetext](#)
- [Fastcase](#)
- [Casemaker](#)

See [Chapter 9: Free and Low-Cost Legal Research Resources](#) for additional information about both free and fee-based sources of legal information.

Chapter 5

Administrative Law

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When Congress or state legislatures enact statutes, frequently more details are needed to carry out the provisions of those statutes. Rules made by government agencies that give more specificity to a statute are one example of administrative law. Rules—or regulations, as they are sometimes called—fill in the details of a statute. And, just as statutes are law, so are administrative rules.

For example, Illinois has a statute that provides for a graduated license for teenage drivers ([625 ILCS 5/6-107](#)). The Illinois Department of Transportation made rules, which are authorized by the driving license statute, that describe the specific offenses that would cause a graduated license to be revoked and procedures and criteria for putting that revocation into effect. Those rules are found in Chapter 92 of the Illinois Administrative Code. The citation to the relevant Illinois Administrative Code section looks like this: [92 Ill. Adm. Code 1040.28](#).

Federal and state statutes often have associated rules that must be considered by someone who needs to know the full requirements of a law. In addition to creating these rules, federal and state agencies usually have general legal authority to make rules about the functions the agency controls. Many state and federal agencies conduct hearings—for example, about benefits, tax assessments, and licensing appeals—and these procedures are controlled by administrative laws and agency rules as well as by statutes.

Usually, the best way to start searching for help with an administrative law question is to locate the agency that governs the issue. Often, a good starting place will be a [State of Illinois](#) agency. Sometimes a federal agency will be the best place to start. For example, if the problem involves immigration or Social Security, you may want to start with [U.S. Customs and Immigration Services](#) or the [Social Security Administration](#), respectively. This chapter gives sources and suggestions for researching Illinois state agencies and administrative rules as well as for the federal government. Information about county and municipal administrative agencies is found in [Chapter 6: Municipal Law](#) of this guide.

Illinois Administrative Law Resources

A simple way to begin administrative law research online in Illinois is to look at the website for the [executive branch of government](#). The page has a link to the [Illinois Handbook of Government](#), which describes the structure of state government and has extensive background and contact information for the executive branch, including state agencies.

Finding Illinois Law

The Illinois state government website also links to the homepage for [Illinois state agencies, boards, and commissions](#). From here, you can locate an agency and go to its website. Most agency websites have information about the statutes that empower the agency, details about what the agency does, consumer information, links to agency rules, case decisions, forms, publications, and contact information. If an agency conducts hearings and does not publish its decisions in full text online, it may provide lists of decisions and will give contact information for locating copies of the full decisions.

Here are some examples of Illinois agencies with rulemaking and decision-making authority:

- [Illinois Commerce Commission](#)
- [Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services](#)
- [Illinois Department of Insurance](#)
- [Illinois Department of Human Rights](#)
- [Illinois Department of Revenue](#)
- [Illinois Department of Labor](#)

The main page for the [Illinois government website](#) has links to state agencies page, the executive branch page, and other helpful features like “How Do I?” links for consumers, which provides explanations of how to accomplish things that are governed by executive agencies.

Finding Illinois Administrative Rules

Illinois regulations are available online. A free version of the [Illinois Administrative Code](#) is available at the Illinois General Assembly website, [ilga.gov](#).⁷ The code is published by the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules (JCAR) and allows browsing by title or searching by keyword. Updates to the Illinois Administrative Code are published weekly in the [Illinois Register](#).

Here is a list of free online resources for finding and updating Illinois administrative regulations:

[Illinois Administrative Code](#)

The current version is available online. Older versions are not online and may be difficult to find in print. The Illinois Administrative Code was printed and updated irregularly in the past. If you need an older regulation, the best source is the relevant agency. If necessary, you can make a [Freedom of Information Act \(FOIA\) request](#).

[Illinois Register](#)

This is a compilation of Illinois administrative law documents. The state website includes archived issues from 2002 to the present in PDF. The *Register* publishes notices of proposed rulemaking, emergency rules, notices of comment periods and hearings on proposed rulemaking, and other information about rulemaking in progress. Final rules are published in the *Register* with the date they will become effective. The online *Register* is an unofficial version, though the Secretary of State’s office strives for accuracy and reliability in this format. The official, print version of the

⁷ While this website is unofficial, it is the most reliable way to access the Code. Official copies of rules can be requested from the Illinois Secretary of State’s Index Department.

Chapter 5: Administrative Law

Register can be found in law libraries, university libraries, and larger public libraries. Coverage of older issues varies depending on the institution.

[The Flinn Report](#)

This weekly current awareness publication reports current Illinois rulemaking and gives citations to issues of the *Illinois Register*.

[JCAR](#)

The Joint Committee on Administrative Rules (JCAR) is the bipartisan legislative committee that oversees administrative rulemaking in Illinois. The JCAR website contains several helpful links, including a PDF document, "[How Rules Are Made in Illinois](#)," that presents a straightforward explanation of the regulatory process in Illinois and the importance of public participation.

[Illinois Administrative Procedure Act](#)

The Illinois Administrative Procedure Act (IAPA), 5 ILCS 100, is the state statute that controls many procedural requirements for rulemaking and agency hearings. It is always a good idea to check the agency website for additional information about other statutes or rules that apply.

Many agencies are governed by specific statutes beyond the IAPA.

[The Governor](#)

The Governor of Illinois, as the chief executive of the state, can issue orders that have the effect of law. [Executive Orders and Administrative Orders](#) issued by Governors from 1999 to the present can be found online at the Governor's website. They can be browsed in full text but cannot be searched.

[The Attorney General](#)

Another variety of executive authority comes from the Office of the Attorney General of Illinois. The Attorney General (AG) is a constitutionally established officer and is essentially the lawyer for the state. Although AG opinions are not law, they are viewed as highly authoritative sources of guidance. They are issued on questions of law that have not yet been settled by the courts or by statute. While not binding, administrative agencies routinely abide by AG opinions, and courts often follow them. [Official opinions](#) are available on the state website from 1971 on and are keyword searchable. The AG also renders informal opinion letters, but they are not published and are more difficult to find.

Federal Administrative Law Resources

Agencies of the federal government work in much the same way as the state model does. The executive branch of government has authority, based in constitutional and statutory law, to carry out the functions of government, give detail to federal statutes via rules, create procedures for disputed cases, hold hearings, call witnesses, issue decisions, and more. And, like the states, federal agencies' actions can be challenged in court. The federal administrative structure is larger than individual state structures, but researching federal administrative law often can be easier because sources are better organized and more available electronically.

Like with Illinois, starting your federal research with agency webpages is often the best way to determine what agency controls the issue. Federal agency pages are increasingly prioritized around

the Freedom of Information Act and open government mandates. Most agency pages direct the researcher to underlying statutory authority, relevant regulations, cross-agency issues, and contact information, and they are growing increasingly user-friendly over time. Several websites assist citizens' participation in the rulemaking process via electronic comment submission and much greater access to data the agencies collect in the process of rulemaking.

Finding Federal Regulations

The Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) contains final regulations. Like the Illinois Administrative Code, it is arranged by subject into titles (Illinois has chapters). Currently there are 50 C.F.R. titles. The C.F.R. is available in print, which is updated annually on a rotating schedule, and online. The official online version for the current year, and all years back to 1996, is found at govinfo.gov, the federal government's official website for government information. The C.F.R. can be updated unofficially by using the unofficial eCFR, which is current within a few days. Although the website is unofficial, it is a government source, and the updated regulations can be confirmed in the *Federal Register*.

The *Federal Register* is published every business day by the U.S. Government Printing Office. It is also available online. Like the *Illinois Register*, the *Federal Register* publishes documents throughout the rulemaking process: proposed regulations, notices of hearings, studies and reports, final regulations as soon as they are available, and more. Preambles to final regulations are published in the *Federal Register*, not in the C.F.R., and trace the regulatory history of a newly finalized rule. Preambles often contain valuable information about the intent of the agency, and the President if relevant, regarding the purpose and details of a rule. If regulations are challenged in court, preamble information can be important. For searching the *Federal Register* starting in 1994, the best option is federalregister.gov. The *Federal Register* is also found at govinfo.gov, which has the entire digitized run back to its creation in 1936. Old issues can also be found at many large public and university libraries, but the easiest way to search the *Federal Register* is with online sources.

For tracking or commenting on a rulemaking procedure, or researching a closed one, try regulations.gov. This website allows comments by the public on proposed regulations as well as the opportunity to read comments submitted by others, reports, and other evidence submitted in the rulemaking process. Many closed rulemaking dockets are also on the website. You may need to check specific agency websites for this information, since some agencies do not submit to regulations.gov. It is not mandatory for all agencies to post rulemaking files there.

Agency decisions and other agency documents can be found at the federal agency websites. Agencies have varying practices regarding whether and how many decisions or guidance documents they post. Freedom of Information requests can be made for particular decisions or documents you may be seeking. Search the agency pages, contact agency personnel, and read the FOIA procedures for the agency. Many agency pages also provide links to the federal administrative procedure statutes.

Websites to Help Locate Federal Agencies

[A-Z Index of United States Government Departments and Agencies](#)

[The University of Virginia School of Law Library list of federal agency decisions](#)

The [United States Government Manual](#) is the official handbook of the federal government. It provides details about agency functions and structure.

Presidential Materials

Executive Orders and other documents are available for the current administration on whitehouse.gov. Executive Orders are also available in the [Federal Register](#). Executive Orders from previous administrations are available from the [National Archives](#).

United States Attorney General

[Official opinions of the U.S. Attorney General](#) from 1977 on are available through the U.S. Department of Justice. The [U.S. Office of Legal Counsel's electronic reading room](#) has other materials, including legal opinions, which have not been selected for official publication. These selected documents “have been released as a matter of discretion and posted publicly because they are the subject of repeated requests or may be of significant public or historical interest.”

Secondary Sources

There are many secondary sources available that can help you navigate federal and Illinois administrative law. Here are a few suggestions:

- The Law Librarians' Society of Washington, D.C.'s *Legislative Source Book*, available online at llsdc.org/sourcebook, contains an [excellent research guide for the Code of Federal Regulations and the Federal Register](#).
- William A. Price, editor, *Handbook of Illinois Administrative Law* (2d. ed., Illinois State Bar Association, 2008).
- Mark E. Wojcik, *Illinois Legal Research* (2d. ed., Carolina Academic Press, 2009).

Chapter 6

Municipal Law: Cook County and the City of Chicago

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Municipal law is generally considered to be the body of ordinances, codes, and rules that a local government, such as a town, city, or county has created. These local laws only apply within the jurisdiction of that local governmental body. For example, the City of Chicago's Building Codes do not apply in the city of Rockford, IL. However, a single area will likely have multiple sets of municipal laws that apply to it. For example, both the City of Chicago's Municipal Code and the Cook County Code of Ordinances apply in Chicago.

Local Government

The first step in finding municipal law is identifying the levels of local government that have authority in the area. Depending on the size of the municipality, it may have home rule status, which means the local government has the power to act more autonomously. Non-home rule municipalities must first demonstrate they have the power to act. Home rule status could come from the state's statutes or constitution, as is the case in Illinois: [Article VII, Section 6 of the Illinois State Constitution, Powers of Home Rule Units](#). Municipalities with home rule status are more likely to produce larger amounts of local laws at different levels (e.g., town, city, and county), while non-home rule municipalities will be limited in what they can legislate. See ["Purpose of Home Rule" by the Illinois Municipal League](#) for more information about home rule authority.

The Illinois Secretary of State maintains a [Name Index to Illinois Local Governments](#). Search by the name of the local government, form of government (*i.e.*, township, village, city, etc.), or county to explore, understand, and narrow in on the pertinent levels of local government in Illinois.

Finding Ordinances

The second step is locating the ordinances themselves. The local legislative body that is creating the ordinances must also publish them. This duty will likely fall to the municipality's clerk's office, which has the responsibility of maintaining copies of past and present ordinances. They may also maintain copies of agendas, meeting minutes, proposed ordinances, proposed amendments, and other materials created in the process of passing an ordinance, which can be very insightful documents when researching why an ordinance was needed. It is more and more common that these materials will be available online.

The Illinois Municipal League has a webpage called [All Online Codes](#) that lists the names of Illinois villages, towns, cities and counties with links to their codes. If the code is unavailable

Chapter 6: Municipal Law

online or through one of the platforms described in the next section, it is necessary to contact the office that is maintaining the ordinances directly to ask about getting copies.

There are several free databases that provide electronic access to ordinances for the local governments in Illinois. They include [Municode](#), [American Legal Publishing](#), [General Code's eCode360](#), and [Sterling Codifiers](#). These databases include sophisticated browsing and searching capabilities. Each one features an interactive table of contents for navigating within the ordinances themselves and may have an index for finding ordinances on a particular subject. There will be a statement with the date of when the latest updates were added; this will often be found in the very beginning by the title page. It is important to note how current the ordinances are in case recent updates have not yet been added to the database. In that instance, there may be an advanced legislative service listing new ordinances that have not yet been added to the code (e.g., [Chicago Municipal Code – Advance Legislative Service](#)), or it may be necessary to go back to the governmental body for a copy of the newest ordinances. Another research issue is that one platform may not have all the ordinances for an area with more than one level of rule-making government. For example, the [City of Chicago Ordinances](#) can be found in American Legal Publishing, but [Cook County Ordinances](#) are in Municode.

For a deeper understanding of where municipal law comes from, let's take a look at both Cook County and the City of Chicago.

Cook County

Cook County contains 128 municipalities in its region, the most well-known being the City of Chicago. It is a home rule county governed by a 17-member [Board of Commissioners](#) who are elected from single-member districts. The Commissioners and a [County Board President](#) are elected to four-year terms by the citizens of the county. The City of Chicago and the suburban municipalities account for approximately 85% of the County's 946 square miles, while unincorporated areas make up the remaining 15%. The unincorporated areas of the County are under the jurisdiction of the Cook County Board of Commissioners.

The Cook County Board of Commissioners is the county's legislative body of government, and the President is the Board's Chief Executive Officer. The Cook County Board has the authority to set policy, and pass ordinances and resolutions related to the responsibilities of county government, such as approving certain county purchases, levying taxes and adopting the Annual Appropriation Bill that creates the annual budget for the entire county government. The Board of Commissioners conducts its business at regularly held bi-monthly Board meetings as well as through its standing legislative committees and subcommittee. The County Board also passes and enforces all regulatory ordinances for unincorporated areas of the county on issues such as public health and safety and building and zoning.

All records on final actions of the Cook County Board are housed with the [Cook County Clerk of the Board](#) (note: specific date search only). The Clerk of the Board records the activity of the Cook County Board of Commissioners by preparing bi-weekly agendas and post-meeting reports and maintaining county board records.

The [Cook County Board of Commissioners' website has a robust full-text database](#) that provides access to past, present, and pending county legislation, proposed amendments, committee agendas and minutes, and even video of committee meetings. The search is highly customizable and can be restricted by date, type of document, sponsor, file/enactment number, and more. Clicking to the "County Board" tab across the top will bring up recent activities that can be sorted by body (e.g., Board of Ethics, Building Ordinance Commission, etc.) and further sub-sorted by file number, name of document, type of action, status, file created date, final action date, and full descriptive title. This is an exemplary way to present municipal law and county governmental information; it searches and sorts the materials that committees generated while recommending ordinances as well as the ordinances themselves.

City of Chicago

The City of Chicago is a home rule unit of government under the Illinois Constitution and thereby authorized to perform certain functions pertaining to its government and affairs. The government of the City of Chicago is divided into the executive and legislative branches. The mayor is the chief executive while the City Council, elected from 50 wards, is the legislative body. Government priorities and activities are established in a budget ordinance usually adopted in November of each year. The city takes official action through the passage of ordinances and resolutions.

Mayor

The [Mayor](#) is the chief executive of the city and responsible for the administration and management of various city departments. The Mayor submits proposals and recommendations to the City Council and is active in the enforcement of the city's ordinances. The Mayor also submits the city's annual budget and appoints city officers, department commissioners or directors, and members of city boards and commissions, including Commissioner of the Chicago Fire Department and Superintendent of the Chicago Police Department.

City Council

The [City Council](#) is the legislative branch of government of the City of Chicago. In accordance with Illinois law ([65 ILCS 5/3.1-40-5](#)), it consists of the Mayor and aldermen elected from each of the fifty wards to serve four-year terms. The legislative powers of the City Council are granted by the state legislature and by the home rule provisions of the Illinois constitution. Within specified limits, the City Council has the general right to exercise any power and perform any function pertaining to its government and affairs including, but not limited to, the power to regulate for the protection of the public health, safety, morals and welfare; to license; to tax; and to incur debt (Article VII, Section 6 of the Illinois State Constitution, Powers of Home Rule Units).

Chicago City Clerk's Legislative Information Center

The [Legislative Information Center](#) is a comprehensive online database of City of Chicago legal information, including:

- [Legislation](#). Includes proposed mayoral ordinances, ordinances, resolutions, orders, and claims. Legislative records contain detailed information including sponsors, actions taken and related dates, and passage status, as well as PDF copies of the actual legislative text.

Chapter 6: Municipal Law

Legislative records prior to December 1, 2010 can be found in the [Chicago City Council Journals of Proceedings](#). The Journals of the Proceedings serves as the official record of City Council meetings and reflects all legislative actions. Included in the official record is a synopsis of Mayoral and Aldermanic introductions referred to committees, committee reports, complete text of adopted legislation, roll call votes, motions and parliamentary actions, notifications of filings with and legislative publications by the City Clerk, approval of City Council Journal, and other actions taken on the Council Floor.

- [City Council Meetings](#). Includes both full City Council meetings as well as Committee meetings. A meeting record will contain the date/time/location of the meeting, a list of all considered legislation, the notice, the agenda and the recorded minutes. City Council videos will be available for viewing on the [City Council News Central](#).
- [City Council Committees](#). Records include meeting history, membership, jurisdiction, and pending legislation.
- [Alderman](#). Aldermanic pages contain office contact information (including website links and social media links), committee membership, and sponsored legislation.

Public Law Libraries

Cook County Law Library

The [Cook County Law Library \(CCLL\)](#) opened on September 6, 1966, and is the first free, public law library for the legal profession and citizens of Cook County. The main office is on the 29th floor of the Daley Center, 50 West Washington Street, Chicago, IL 60602. Their phone number is (312) 603-5423. The CCLL provides professional library services at five branch locations at outlying courthouses: Criminal Courts, Bridgeview, Maywood, Markham, and Skokie. CCLL offers one of the largest and broadest collections of law books in the nation, including statutes, case law and digests for all fifty states, as well as numerous Illinois practice manuals. The library has an extensive collection of superseded state and federal statutes. In addition to print materials, CCLL provides access to premium legal research databases such as Westlaw, Lexis, HeinOnline, EBSCO Legal Information Reference Center, LegalTrac, Foreign Law Guide, LLMC Digital, and National Consumer Law Center (NCLC) – Consumer Law on the Web. The library also collects foreign legal materials (primary and secondary) especially in the area of commercial and business law, litigation, and family law.

Chicago Public Library Municipal Reference Collection

Chicago Public Library is an official repository for City of Chicago documents. The Municipal Reference Collection are documents from other local taxing bodies in Chicago. The historical collection is extensive, with information on almost every aspect of municipal life in Chicago. They have most city documents published since the mid-1800s. Other materials include an extensive local newspaper clipping file and historical ordinances including [Chicago Municipal Code](#), (1837 to date) including the [Building Code](#), [Chicago Zoning Ordinance](#), (1923 to date), and [Journal of the City Council](#) (1858 to date). Harold Washington Library Center, Fifth Floor South, 400 South State Street Chicago, IL 60605. Their reference desk phone number is (312) 747-4526.

Illinois Supreme Court Library

The [Illinois Supreme Court Library](#) is located in the Supreme Court Building, 200 E. Capitol, Springfield, IL 62701. Their phone number is (217) 782-2424. The Library of the Supreme Court of Illinois dates back to 1842. Since 1908, the library has been located in the Supreme Court Building in Springfield. The library primarily serves the Judicial branch of the State of Illinois; however, the library is also available to state, federal, and local governments, the bar, and the general public.

Other Public Law Libraries

Additional public law libraries in the Chicago area and other parts of Illinois are also open to the general public. See [Chapter 11: Where to Seek Additional Help](#) for a list of county law libraries in Illinois.

Chapter 7

Researching Outside of Illinois: The Laws of Indiana and Wisconsin

By Heidi Frostestad Kuehl
Circuit Librarian
U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit

Beginning State-Specific Legal Research in Indiana or Wisconsin

The first step of any type of legal research is finding background materials and sources for jurisdictional legal research. Legal researchers rely upon secondary sources, such as legal encyclopedias, American Law Reports, treatises, Nutshells, Continuing Legal Education publications series (“CLEs”), or other types of books about legal topics to begin their research in topics of the law or particular jurisdictions of law. Like with topical research or federal research, it is wise to begin state law research with a legal encyclopedia (if the state has one) to decipher the terminology of particular state law research topics and collect citations to primary law that are found in the footnotes of a secondary source. For a national scope and treatment of states, researchers may choose to consult one or both of the two prominent legal encyclopedias: *American Jurisprudence 2d* (*Am. Jur. 2d*) or *Corpus Juris Secundum* (*C.J.S.*). Both of these national legal encyclopedias are available in print at court or public libraries or are also available online on Westlaw or Lexis. Academic law libraries are increasingly canceling print legal encyclopedias, so they will not typically be in print in academic law libraries.

In addition to national legal encyclopedias, there are also state-specific legal encyclopedias that provide great overviews and analysis for state-specific legal topics. For the laws of Indiana, researchers rely on West’s *Indiana Law Encyclopedia* to begin topical areas of legal research. In Wisconsin, legal researchers begin their research in other types of secondary sources, such as the *Wisconsin Practice* series or one of the national legal encyclopedias (*Am. Jur. 2d* or *C.J.S.*), because there is not a state-specific legal encyclopedia. If you are researching in large state jurisdictions, there is likely a legal encyclopedia to help you begin your research on any topic and save time. For example, in New York, there is *New York Jurisprudence*, and, similarly, in California, there is *California Jurisprudence*.

Another wonderful place to begin legal research for specific states, especially online legal research, is at the Law Library of Congress’s [Guide to Law Online website](#). This portal provides helpful links for online state research and also useful research guides. It also points researchers toward the best executive, legislative, judicial, and administrative law websites for state [legal research in Indiana](#) and [legal research in Wisconsin](#). The [Law Library of Congress’s portal](#) is an excellent place to begin cost-effective and free research for state law research, federal law research, and even foreign and international legal research.

The Harvard Law Library has also digitized many judicial decisions throughout the nation in its [Caselaw Access Project](#).

Consulting Background Materials: State Legal Research Books or Research Guides

Another very helpful research tool for state-specific research, such as legal research in Indiana or Wisconsin, is a state-specific legal research text or a state-specific research guide that lays out all of the primary sources for that jurisdiction and also cites helpful texts and treatises for interpretation of state laws. The following books are extremely helpful when beginning to identify legal sources for Wisconsin or other state law research:

- *Wisconsin Legal Research* by Patricia Cervenka and Leslie Behroozi (Carolina Academic Press 2011).
- Other [Carolina Academic Press Legal Research](#) publications.
- *Principles of Legal Research* by Olson, Kirschenfeld & Mattson (West 3rd edition 2020).
- *Legal Research in a Nutshell* by Morris L. Cohen and Kent C. Olson (West 13th ed. 2018).
- *Fundamentals of Legal Research* by Steven M. Barkan, Barbara Bintliff, and Mary Whisner (Foundation Press 10th ed. 2015).

In addition to these foundational texts on legal research, researchers should also consult any state law library research guides. Academic law libraries or court and legislative libraries often produce research guides to the laws of their state. Some of the following websites are excellent selected examples for Indiana, Wisconsin, and the laws of other states:

- [Indiana University Maurer School of Law Library](#)
- [Library of Congress Guide to Law Online – U.S. \(Indiana\)](#)
- [Notre Dame Law Library](#)
- [Marquette Law Library](#)
- [University of Wisconsin Law Library](#)
- Wisconsin State Law Library: [Guides to Wisconsin Law](#) and [Other States' Law](#)

Finally, it is often helpful to begin legal research on a topic by consulting basic secondary sources, such as law review articles and state bar journals. In Indiana, articles from the [Indiana Lawyer](#) may be helpful for nuanced legal issues for practice. Similarly, in Wisconsin, the [Wisconsin Law Journal](#) or the [Wisconsin Lawyer](#) would be useful for researching current issues in Wisconsin law and specific topics of state practice. Most academic law libraries, court libraries, and law firm libraries also have subscriptions to [HeinOnline](#) or possibly [LegalTrac](#), which are very helpful for beginning broad searches of law review archives and legal journals. When searching in these online databases, it is important to ask a law librarian for help and carefully think of search terms for your research issue.

Primary Legal Materials for Indiana, Wisconsin, and Other States

All states have their own state constitutions, state session laws and codes, state reporters, state digests for case-finding, state administrative codes, state registers, and state administrative decisions. The state publications (codes, cases, and administrative law publications) mimic the federal structure, but the state structures of the publications and names of the publications vary.

Online archiving of these state materials is also tricky and varies from state-to-state based on governmental funding and the importance placed on public access to these state governmental

materials, but most states now have materials going back to the mid-1980s to early 1990s. Westlaw, Lexis, Bloomberg Law, and HeinOnline also have state primary materials.

Indiana Primary Materials

The Indiana Constitution is printed in the Official *Indiana Code*, *Burns Indiana Statutes Annotated*, and *West's Annotated Indiana Code*. It is also freely available online at the [Indiana General Assembly website](#).

The chronological arrangement of Indiana laws, or session laws for Indiana, are called the *Indiana Acts*. Most law libraries in Indiana have the complete set of historical *Indiana Acts* or you can access them online in HeinOnline through the [State Session Laws Library](#). The codified version of the Indiana state laws or subject arrangement, which is the best version for finding laws by subject, is called the *Indiana Code*. The [official Indiana Code](#) is available on the Indiana General Assembly's website. Unofficial, annotated versions of the Indiana Code are published by Lexis and Westlaw and are available on Westlaw (*West's Annotated Indiana Code*) and Lexis (*Burns Indiana Statutes Annotated*).

The best way to research state laws, such as the laws of Indiana, is through the unofficial, annotated versions of the state codes. Each set of annotated codes has a General Index at the end of the set for topical research and also a "Popular Name Table" for Popular Acts at the state level. These are very useful tools for finding the appropriate statutory section for state law research topics. The finding aids (Statutes Index and Popular Name Table) are replicated online in Westlaw and Lexis.

For case finding, there are two main reporters for Indiana Supreme Court decisions: the *Indiana Reports (Ind.)* or *North Eastern Reporter* (regional reporter – N.E., N.E.2d, N.E.3d). For Indiana Court of Appeals decisions, researchers should find all decisions in the *North Eastern Reporter* (N.E., N.E.2d, N.E.3d) or *Indiana Court of Appeals Reports (Ind. App.)*.

Traditionally, attorneys used state digests (e.g., *West's Indiana Digest*) to locate Indiana decisions by topic and uncover citations to the best cases. Now, lawyers increasingly rely on searching case law online in Westlaw and Lexis and the digitized digests and headnote classification systems found therein. Courts also have free access to selected decisions on their court websites, so it is important to also check for recent decisions there. For example, [Indiana Supreme Court decisions and Court of Appeals decisions](#) are available on the Court's website.

Indiana administrative law is available in the *Indiana Administrative Code* and the *Indiana Register* in print. Like with case law and codes, most Indiana academic law libraries and court libraries will have access to a historical print record for these primary sources. However, the Indiana Administrative Code and regulations released in the *Illinois Register* may also be researched online. The codified version of the Indiana regulations is available online in the [Indiana Administrative Code](#). In the same way, the initial release of the regulations in the chronological [Illinois Register](#) is available for free from the Indiana General Assembly (2000–present).

Wisconsin Primary Materials

The [official Wisconsin Constitution](#) is published in the *Wisconsin Statutes* or is also available online through the [Wisconsin Legislative Reference Bureau's website](#).

The chronological arrangement for Wisconsin laws, or session laws for Wisconsin, is called the *Laws of Wisconsin*. Most law libraries in Wisconsin have the complete set of historical *Laws of Wisconsin* or you can access them online in HeinOnline through the [State Session Laws Library](#). The codified version of the Wisconsin state laws or subject arrangement, which is the best version for finding laws by subject, is called the *Wisconsin Statutes*. The official code, [Wisconsin Statutes](#), is also available on the [Wisconsin Legislative Reference Bureau's website](#). Unofficial, annotated versions of the Wisconsin statutes are published by West and are available on Westlaw (*West's Wisconsin Statutes Annotated*).

The best way to research state laws like the laws of Wisconsin is through the unofficial, annotated versions of the state codes. Similar to the federal code, each set of state annotated codes has a General Index at the end of the set for topical research and also a "Popular Name Table" for Popular Acts at the state level. These are very useful tools for finding the appropriate statutory section for state law research topics. The finding aids (Statutes Index and Popular Name Table) are replicated online in Westlaw and Lexis. For case finding, there are two main reporters for Wisconsin decisions: the *Wisconsin Reports* (Wis., Wis. 2d) or *North Western Reporter* (regional reporter – N.W., N.W.2d, N.W.3d). For Wisconsin Court of Appeals decisions, researchers will also find all decisions in the *North Western Reporter* (N.W., N.W.2d, N.W.3d) or *Wisconsin Reports* (Wis. 2d.).

Traditionally, attorneys used state digests (e.g., *West's Wisconsin Digest* or *Callaghan's Wisconsin Digest*) to locate Wisconsin decisions by topic and uncover citations to the best cases. Now, lawyers increasingly rely on searching case law online in Westlaw and Lexis and using the digitized digests and headnote classification systems found within those databases. Courts also have free access to selected decisions on their court websites, so it is important to also check for recent decisions there. For instance, [Wisconsin Supreme Court opinions and Court of Appeals opinions](#) are available on the Court's website and [searchable](#).

Wisconsin administrative law is available in the *Wisconsin Administrative Code* and the *Wisconsin Administrative Register* in print. Like with state case law and code publications, most Wisconsin academic law libraries and court libraries will have collected a historical print record for these primary sources. However, the *Wisconsin Administrative Code* and regulations released in the *Administrative Register* may also be researched online. The codified version of the Wisconsin regulations is available online in the [Wisconsin Administrative Code](#). The initial release of the regulations in the chronological [Wisconsin Administrative Register](#) is also available for free online from 1956 to present.

For other states' primary law (other than Indiana or Wisconsin), it is best to initially consult the available online sources available through the Law Library of Congress's [Guide to Law Online](#) or consult a state research guide from the academic library or court/legislative law library in that state.

Practice Materials for Indiana, Wisconsin, and Other States

Many states publish highly regarded practice materials, such as Continuing Legal Education publications or “Practice Series” publications, for attorneys to rely on in practice. These sources often contain forms for practice, explain procedural rules, and also provide analyses or provide illustrations for difficult legal issues in practice for that state. In Indiana, the most important practice sets are the [Indiana Practice Series \(West\)](#) and the [Indiana Continuing Legal Education Forum \(I.C.L.E.F.\)](#) series. These traditional practice sets walk attorneys through procedural rules for practice and also have cross-references to very important primary and secondary sources for their practice (such as legal forms). In Wisconsin, the most vital practice materials for attorneys are the [Wisconsin Practice Series \(West\)](#) and the *Wisconsin CLE Publications* available through the [State Bar of Wisconsin](#). Wisconsin attorneys also often rely on a set called [Wisconsin Judicial Benchbooks](#) for research on particular topics. Overall, many states have similarly important practice materials for the nuances of state law research and often these practice materials are CLE publications or have “Practice Series” in the title. It is often helpful to consult with a reference law librarian to locate the most authoritative practice material set(s) for other states.

Topic-Specific Secondary Materials (“Legal Treatises”)

With difficult topical issues, attorneys often turn to sophisticated legal treatises, which are written by experts on a particular subject, to assist with detailed analysis and understanding for highly regulated topics. National authoritative treatises include citations to state primary law and often discuss legal trends in particular states. Georgetown’s law library has a very good [list of authoritative national treatises](#) for particular legal topics. Most academic law libraries have print copies of these national treatises, and researchers can search the individual library catalogs to locate the call numbers of these titles. In addition, the topic-specific treatises are available in online databases like Westlaw and Lexis depending on who publishes the particular treatise. [Bloomberg Law](#) also has topical treatises (*e.g.*, published by BNA) with a subscription to their database. Lastly, there are often state-specific topical treatises and those titles vary by state. For example, there are often sophisticated texts (practice materials or handbooks) for larger legal topics in each state for tax law, family law, estate planning, or property and real estate law. These texts are increasingly digitized and available online on Westlaw or Lexis depending on the publisher and are also sometimes available in print in academic law libraries, court law libraries, or law firm libraries.

Updating Your Research

Like all types of federal or state legal research, it is critical to update your research for primary law and check the dates of currency for secondary source materials. Print materials might not be as current as online digitized sources, but it is important to check the date(s) of the last update. In addition, it is crucial to check a reliable legal citator (Shepard’s on Lexis or KeyCite on Westlaw) to make sure that your state cases, statutes, and regulations are still good law. If you are confused about the updating procedure for legal research, be sure to seek the assistance of a knowledgeable reference librarian to walk you through the process. Academic and court law libraries often have public terminals for Keyciting or Shepardizing your state case law or statutory research.

Finding Illinois Law

An online legal research manual in Wisconsin through the Law Librarians Association of Wisconsin (LLAW) provides a great overview of legal citators in its [Introduction to Legal Materials](#). Descriptions of the [Shepard's service \(Lexis\)](#) and [KeyCite service \(Westlaw\)](#) are also available online. Overall, Shepardizing and KeyCiting primary sources is always the last step of conducting state law research and checking dates of currency on websites is an essential final step for state law research on the Internet.

Chapter 8 Illinois Legislative History

By Jean M. Wenger
Director of the Law Library/Senior Lecturer
Chicago-Kent College of Law Library

What Is Legislative History?

Legislative history encompasses those documents created by the legislature during the process of a bill's passage. Legislative history can assist a researcher seeking to understand the meaning of a statute. A researcher examining these documents can gain insight into the legislature's intent in passing the law. This chapter will describe the process of compiling a legislative history for Illinois statutes using the [Illinois General Assembly website](http://ilga.gov) [ilga.gov]. (See Figure 1.)

This chapter will describe the steps for compiling a legislative history using an Illinois law passed in 2007. Legislative documents available on the ILGA website differ depending on the year. For some years, the researcher may need to consult additional resources not available on the ILGA website.

The image shows a screenshot of the Illinois General Assembly website. At the top left is the state seal and the text "Illinois General Assembly". A navigation bar contains links for Home, Legislation & Laws, Senate, House, My Legislation, and Site Map. On the left side, there is a "SESSION SCHEDULE" section with "SENATE Not In Today" and "HOUSE Not In Today". Below this is a search area with "By Number" and "By Keyword" options, each with a "Go" button and a "Search Tips" link. At the bottom left are logos for "ILLINOIS AMBER ALERT" and "NATIONAL CENTER FOR MISSING & EXPLOITED CHILDREN". The main content area is divided into three columns. The first column, "Legislation & Laws", includes "Bills & Resolutions", "Public Acts", "Senate" (with sub-links for Members, Schedules, Committees, Journals, Transcripts, Rules, Audio/Video, FOIA Information, Media Guidelines, and Testimony submitted for Senate's May Session), "Reports & Inquiry" (with sub-links for Legislative Reports, Special Reports, My Legislation, FTP Site, and GA Dashboard), and "Previous General Assemblies" (with a sub-link for Legislator Lookup). The second column, "Current General Assembly", is a central box with arrows pointing to the "Senate" and "House" sections. The third column, "House", includes "Illinois Compiled Statutes", "Illinois Constitution", "House" (with sub-links for Members, Schedules, Committees, Journals, Transcripts, Rules, Audio/Video, FOIA Information, House Employment Opportunities, and Submit testimony for House's May Session), and "Additional Resources" (with sub-links for Legislative Support Services, Legislative Ethics Training, Discrimination & Harassment Information, Legislative Inspector General Inquiries, and Joint Commission on Ethics and Lobbying Reform). Red annotations include a box around "Current General Assembly", a box around "Previous General Assemblies", and arrows pointing from the "Current General Assembly" box to "Bills & Resolutions" and "Senate", and from "Previous General Assemblies" to "GA Dashboard". A small box labeled "Figure 1" is in the top right corner.

The Documents of an Illinois Legislative History

In Illinois, the important documents for legislative history are the floor debates in the Senate and the House of Representatives (House) and the texts of bill amendments and Governor’s message as found in the House and Senate Journals. The 1970 Illinois Constitution states, “Each house shall keep a journal of its proceedings and a transcript of its debates. The journal shall be published and the transcript shall be available to the public.” (Article IV, Section 7(b)) When Illinois courts interpret a statute, they will look first to the language of the statute and other relevant court decisions. If additional interpretation is necessary, the courts may look to the legislative history of the statute as an extrinsic aid to interpretation. Illinois courts are not required to consider legislative history, but if they do, the courts look to the published transcripts of the floor debates of the House and the Senate and the Journals as described in the Constitution. According to the Illinois Constitution, the General Assembly (G.A.) website provides transcripts of House and Senate floor debates starting from October 1971 in the 77th G.A. (1971-1972).

Compiling a Legislative History

Identify the Public Act

The Illinois Compiled Statutes (ILCS) are a cumulative organization of Illinois statutes, known as Public Acts, grouped according to the subject matter. A statute, passed by the Illinois General Assembly, is a Public Act. A researcher, seeking to compile a legislative history of a statute section in the ILCS, needs to identify the Public Act that created or amended the statute. These Public Act numbers appear at the end of the ILCS statute section. The example used in this chapter is P.A. 95-580, which added a new act concerning education, the College Campus Press Act. The first two digits after the P.A. indicate the General Assembly number and the second number is the chronological order of the law’s passage. Knowing the correct General Assembly is critical for legislative history research. Every General Assembly lasts for two years.

Select the General Assembly

Documents for the current General Assembly are available via links on the main page of the ILGA website. For a Public Act from the current General Assembly, select the Public Acts link under Legislation & Laws on the ILGA homepage. The Public Act will provide the bill number. (See Figure 2.)



Chapter 8: Illinois Legislative History

To find the bill numbers for earlier years, select the link for Previous General Assemblies from the lower left on the ILGA homepage. (See Figure 3.) Previous General Assemblies have floor debates back to October 1971 in the 77th G.A. (1971-1972).

Figure 3

[Previous General Assemblies](#) ←
[Legislator Lookup](#)
[Capitol Complex Phone Numbers](#)

After selecting the link for previous General Assemblies, use the pull-down menu to choose the 95th G.A. for P.A. 95-580 and hit the “Go” button. (See Figure 4.)

Figure 4

Home Legislation & Laws Senate House My Legislation Site Map

[Previous General Assemblies](#)

Previous General Assemblies

Please select a General Assembly:

95 (2007-2008) Go!

100 (2017-2018)
99 (2015-2016)
98 (2013-2014)
97 (2011-2012)
96 (2009-2010)
95 (2007-2008)
94 (2005-2006)
93 (2003-2004)
92 (2001-2002)
91 (1999-2000)
90 (1997-1998)
89 (1995-1996)
88 (1993-1994)

Explanation of Content

The content available for previous General Assemblies is limited. The less information that is available in a user's browser, the less information that is available in a user's browser. If a GA is selected, a menu will be presented showing the content available for that particular GA. Types of content available include:

- Legislation - Bill Status and Full Text of Bills
- Votes (Senate) / Roll Calls (House)
- Public Acts

Identify the Bill Number for the Public Act

Every Public Act begins as either a House or Senate bill in the General Assembly. During the legislative process, the proposed law is a bill, not a Public Act. Bills originate in either the House or the Senate. A bill receives the designation of its originating chamber and retains that designation (Senate Bill – S.B. or House Bill – H.B.) throughout the legislative process.

The pages for each Previous General Assembly provide tables or links to find the Public Act’s corresponding bill number. The 77th to the 93rd G.A. provides a link for the “Public Act to Bill Number Conversion Table.” (See Figure 5.)

Finding Illinois Law


Previous General Assemblies Figure 5

View a different General Assembly:

87th General Assembly (1991-1992)

Senate		
Transcripts	Listing	Search
House		
Transcripts	Listing	Search

Summary Reports for 87th General Assembly

- [Senate Sponsor's bills](#)
- [House Sponsor's bills](#)
- [Public Act to Bill Number Conversion Table](#) 

To find bill numbers corresponding to a Public Act starting with the 90th G.A., select Public Act – Listing. Groups of links to Public Acts will appear. Find the Public Act sought and click on it. The bill number will then appear.


After selecting the 95th G.A. from the Previous General Assemblies, select Public Act – Listing. (See Figure 6.)

Previous General Assemblies Figure 6

View a different General Assembly:

95th General Assembly (2007-2008)

*Note: All information from the 95th General Assembly is available through [My Legislati](#) the desired General Assembly when building a query. If you need assistance with My Legis contact LIS at 217-782-3944.

Legislation, Public Acts		
Legislation & Laws	Listing	Search
Public Acts	 Listing	Search

Next, scroll down to find P.A. 95-580. S.B. (Senate Bill) 729 is the corresponding bill number. Use the bill number when searching for the bill status and House and Senate floor debates. (See Figure 7.)


Chapter 8: Illinois Legislative History

95th General Assembly - Public Acts 0501 thru 0600

Search Public Acts

- [Public Act 095-0501](#) [SB 1350](#) [MEDICAID-MEDI CAR SRVC PAYMENT](#)
- [Public Act 095-0502](#) [SB 1358](#) [FIRE MARSHAL-SPECIAL AGENT](#)
- [Public Act 095-0503](#) [SB 1375](#) [DRUG NUISANCE-INJUNCTN NOTICE](#)
- [Public Act 095-0504](#) [SB 1380](#) [PEN CD-SURS-SERVICE CRED](#)
- [Public Act 095-0505](#) [SB 1385](#) [ST FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS FUND](#)

Figure 7

- [Public Act 095-0573](#) [HB 1429](#) [ELEVATOR SAFETY-REMOVE DESIGN](#)
- [Public Act 095-0574](#) [HB 1491](#) [VEH CD-ALTER SPEED LIMIT-LOCAL](#)
- [Public Act 095-0575](#) [HB 1499](#) [VEH CD-ATV ON HIGHWAY](#)
- [Public Act 095-0576](#) [SB 0008](#) [VETERANS-TECH](#)
- [Public Act 095-0577](#) [SB 0574](#) [DHS-CILA-NURSING SERVICES](#)
- [Public Act 095-0578](#) [SB 0607](#) [VEH CD-DUI & FORFEITURE](#)
- [Public Act 095-0579](#) [SB 0697](#) [CRIMINAL LAW-TECH](#)
- [Public Act 095-0580](#) [SB 0729](#) [COLLEGE CAMPUS PRESS ACT](#) 
- [Public Act 095-0581](#) [SB 1094](#) [FIREARMS-TECH](#)
- [Public Act 095-0582](#) [SB 1261](#) [PROP TX-COLLECTOR-VACANCIES](#)

Remember, S.B. 729 retains its designation as a Senate bill when it moves to the House.

Locate the Bill Status

The bill status is a chronological listing of legislative actions on a bill in both chambers, detailing information about sponsors, amendments, floor debates, and any actions by the Governor, such as a veto. The bill status provides the dates for all actions in both chambers of the General Assembly. Researchers often find it is helpful to have the bill status available, as a point of reference, when they read the floor debates.

For the current G.A., return to the ILGA homepage. Use the Public Acts link to find the bill number, or select the Bills & Resolutions link if it is known. (See Figure 8.)

Illinois General Assembly

[Legislation & Laws](#) [Senate](#) [House](#) [My Legislation](#) [Site Map](#)

Figure 8

[Legislation & Laws](#)

[Bills & Resolutions](#)

[Public Acts](#)

The General Assembly website provides the bill statuses back to the 90th G.A. (1985-1986). Using the example, after selecting the Previous General Assemblies link, scroll to the 95th G.A., and find P.A. 95-580. Refer back to Figure 7. Click the link that shows S.B. 729. The next page on the ILGA website provides the text of P.A. 95-580 with a bill status link at the top of the page. (See Figure 9.)

Finding Illinois Law

Public Act 095-0580

Figure 9

[Bill Status](#) [Printer-Friendly Version](#) [PDF](#)

Public Act 095-0580

SB0729 Enrolled

LRB095 10231 NHT 30445 b

AN ACT concerning education.

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois, represented in the General Assembly:

Section 1. Short title. This Act may be cited as the College Campus Press Act.

Section 5. Definitions. For purposes of this Act: "campus media" means any matter that is prepared

Below is the bill status for S.B. 729 (P.A. 95-580). The arrows mark actions that contain debates. Debates can occur during the second and third readings, and during the concurrence or conference committee, if applicable. The researcher will confirm these dates using the Master Index or the transcript search feature. (See Figure 10.)

Bill Status of SB0729 95th General Assembly

[Full Text](#) [Votes](#) [Witness Slips](#) [View All Actions](#) [Printer-Friendly Version](#)

Short Description: COLLEGE CAMPUS PRESS ACT

Senate Sponsors
Sen. [Susan Garrett](#) - [Dale A. Righter](#) - [Dan Kotowski](#) and [Bill Brady](#)

House Sponsors
(Rep. [Naomi D. Jakobsson](#) - [Dan Brady](#) - [Kevin A. McCarthy](#) - [Robert W. Pritchard](#) - [Caren M. Gordon](#) and [Lisa M. Dugan](#))

Last Action

Date	Chamber	Action
8/31/2007	Senate	Public Act 95-0580

Statutes Amended In Order of Appearance
New Act

Synopsis As Introduced
Creates the College Campus Press Act. Provides that all campus media produced primarily by students at a State-sponsored institution of higher learning is a public forum for expression by student journalists and editors at the particular institution. Provides that campus media, whether campus-sponsored or noncampus-sponsored, is not subject to prior review by public officials institutions. Provides that collegiate student editors of campus media are responsible for the news, opinions, feature content, and advertising content of campus media. Provides for an exception for teaching professional standards of grammar and journalism. Prohibits a college media adviser from being terminated, transferred, removed, otherwise disciplined, or retaliated against for refusing to suppress protected free expression rights of collegiate student journalists of collegiate student editors. Allows a collegiate student or collegiate media advisor to commence civil action to obtain appropriate injunctive and declaratory relief, provides for the awarding of attorney's fees. Distinguishes campus policy and declaratory relief. Allows for discipline for unprotected speech. Co-severability clause. Effective immediately.

House Floor Amendment No. 1
Makes a technical change in the Section concerning a public forum. Provides that expression by a collegiate student journalist, collegiate student editor, or other contributor in campus media speech attributable to a State-sponsored institution of higher learning. Provides that nothing in this Act prohibits the imposition of discipline for speech that is not constitutionally protected, is obscene or inciteful. Provides that a State-sponsored institution of higher learning shall be immune from any lawsuit arising from expression actually made in campus media, with the exception of the institution's own expression. Removes the immediate effective date.

Actions

Date	Chamber	Action
2/8/2007	Senate	Filed with Secretary by Sen. Susan Garrett
2/8/2007	Senate	First Reading
2/8/2007	Senate	Referred to Rules
2/21/2007	Senate	Assigned to Higher Education
3/2/2007	Senate	Postponed - Higher Education
3/2/2007	Senate	Added as Chief Co-Sponsor Sen. Dale A. Righter

Figure 10

3/2/2007	Senate	Added as Co-Sponsor Sen. Bill Brady
3/8/2007	Senate	Do Pass Higher Education : 008-000-000
3/8/2007	Senate	Placed on Calendar Order of 2nd Reading March 13, 2007
3/14/2007	Senate	Second Reading
3/14/2007	Senate	Placed on Calendar Order of 3rd Reading March 15, 2007
3/15/2007	Senate	Added as Chief Co-Sponsor Sen. Dan Kotowski
3/15/2007	Senate	Third Reading - Passed: 057-000-000
3/15/2007	House	Arrived in House
3/15/2007	House	Placed on Calendar Order of First Reading
3/15/2007	House	Chief House Sponsor Rep. Naomi D. Jakobsson
3/15/2007	House	First Reading
3/15/2007	House	Referred to Rules Committee
3/21/2007	House	Added Alternate Chief Co-Sponsor Rep. Dan Brady
4/30/2007	House	Assigned to Higher Education Committee
5/8/2007	House	Added Alternate Chief Co-Sponsor Rep. Kevin A. McCarthy
5/9/2007	House	Added Alternate Chief Co-Sponsor Rep. Robert W. Pritchard
5/16/2007	House	Do Pass / Short Debate Higher Education Committee : 010-002-000
5/17/2007	House	Placed on Calendar 2nd Reading - Short Debate
5/17/2007	House	Added Alternate Chief Co-Sponsor Rep. Caren M. Gordon
5/17/2007	House	Added Alternate Co-Sponsor Rep. Lisa M. Dugan
5/24/2007	House	Second Reading - Short Debate
5/24/2007	House	Placed on Calendar Order of 3rd Reading - Short Debate
5/30/2007	House	House Floor Amendment No. 1 Filed with Clerk by Rep. Naomi D. Jakobsson
5/30/2007	House	House Floor Amendment No. 1 Referred to Rules Committee
5/31/2007	House	House Floor Amendment No. 1 Recommends Be Adopted Rules Committee : 003-000-000
5/31/2007	House	Recalled to Second Reading - Short Debate
5/31/2007	House	House Floor Amendment No. 1 Adopted by Voice Vote
5/31/2007	House	Placed on Calendar Order of 3rd Reading - Short Debate
5/31/2007	House	Third Reading - Short Debate - Passed 112-002-000
5/31/2007	Senate	Secretary's Desk - Concurrence House Amendment(s) 01
5/31/2007	Senate	Placed on Calendar Order of Concurrence House Amendment(s) 01 - June 1, 2007
5/31/2007	Senate	House Floor Amendment No. 1 Motion to Concur Filed with Secretary Sen. Susan Garrett
5/31/2007	Senate	House Floor Amendment No. 1 Motion to Concur Referred to Rules
6/5/2007	Senate	House Floor Amendment No. 1 Motion to Concur Rules Referred to Higher Education
6/6/2007	Senate	House Floor Amendment No. 1 Motion To Concur Recommended Do Adopt Higher Education : 007-000-000
6/6/2007	Senate	House Floor Amendment No. 1 Senate Concurs 053-000-000
6/6/2007	Senate	Passed Both Houses
7/5/2007	Senate	Sent to the Governor
8/31/2007	Senate	Governor Approved
8/31/2007	Senate	Effective Date June 1, 2008
8/31/2007	Senate	Public Act 95-0580

Chapter 8: Illinois Legislative History

Legislative Synopsis and Digest

The Legislative Reference Bureau, the General Assembly's bill drafting agency, publishes the Legislative Synopsis and Digest. The Legislative Synopsis and Digest contains summaries of the bills and all actions taken concerning them. The Legislative Synopsis and Digest is the resource to use to find a bill status from before the 90th G.A. Digitized versions of the Final Legislative Synopsis and Digest are available at the [Legislative Reference Bureau website from 2001 to 2018](#) and the [University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign from 1985 to 2005](#). Earlier editions are available in print at many law libraries and some public libraries. (See Figure 11.)

Figure 11

LEGISLATIVE SYNOPSIS AND DIGEST

Current Issue(s)

[Legislative Synopsis and Digest - 101st General Assembly No. 5](#) (includes action through 3/6/2020)

The current issue is updated on this web site only after a bound issue goes to press (about 15 times a year).

Final Legislative Synopsis and Digest

[Final Legislative Synopsis and Digest - 100th General Assembly](#)
[Final Legislative Synopsis and Digest - 99th General Assembly](#)
[Final Legislative Synopsis and Digest - 98th General Assembly](#)
[Final Legislative Synopsis and Digest - 97th General Assembly](#)
[Final Legislative Synopsis and Digest - 96th General Assembly](#)
[Final Legislative Synopsis and Digest - 95th General Assembly](#)
[Final Legislative Synopsis and Digest - 94th General Assembly](#)
[Final Legislative Synopsis and Digest - 93rd General Assembly](#)
[Final Legislative Synopsis and Digest - 92nd General Assembly](#)

[Final Legislative Synopsis and Digest 1985-2005 \(from University of Illinois\)](#)

Identify Dates of Floor Debates

As previously mentioned, the primary component of legislative history that courts consider are floor debates. According to the 1970 Illinois Constitution, “[A] bill shall be read by title on three different days in each house.” (Art. IV, Sec. 8(d)) Every bill has three readings in each chamber. The first reading introduces the bill to the chamber but does not include floor debate. After being introduced to the House or Senate during the first reading, a bill is assigned to a committee. The committee holds hearings on the bill. Committee hearings do not have the same stature as floor debates for purposes of legislative history. Since 1975, the House recorded committee hearings. Recordings are available from the Office of the Clerk of the House. Contact the office at (217) 782-8100. The Senate does not record their committee hearings.

When the bill leaves the originating chamber, it is known as an engrossed bill. An engrossed bill incorporates amendments adopted in its originating chamber as it moves to the second (other) chamber. If the second chamber makes amendments to the bill and passes a version with different language, the bill returns to the originating chamber for the legislators in that chamber to concur in these amendments. If the originating chamber does not concur in the changes, a conference committee is appointed to discuss and resolve the differences, so a singular bill that both chambers

agree to can be sent to the Governor. Both the House and Senate must agree to the same language before the bill goes to the Governor for signature. The version of the bill that goes to the Governor is known as the enrolled bill, incorporating amendments adopted by both chambers.

Legislators' decisions to add or remove language from a bill through amendments can indicate legislative intent. In addition to the House and Senate Journals discussed later, starting with the 93rd G.A., the bill status provides links to the texts of bill amendments and amendatory veto messages of the Governor.

Locate Floor Debates in the Transcripts

Several methods are available to locate floor debates – the Master Index, selecting dates from the bill status (see Figure 10), and searching transcripts. Depending on the legislative resources available on the ILGA website, not every method will work for all General Assemblies. For P.A. 95-508, the researcher will need to use the Master Index to find Senate floor debates and the transcript search method to find House floor debates. (See Figure 12.)

Previous General Assemblies Figure 12

View a different General Assembly:

95th General Assembly (2007-2008)

*Note: All information from the 95th General Assembly is available through [My Legislat](#) the desired General Assembly when building a query. If you need assistance with My Legislat contact LIS at 217-782-3944.

Legislation, Public Acts		
Legislation & Laws	Listing	Search
Public Acts	Listing	Search
Senate		
Members	Listing	-
Committees	Listing	-
Journals	Listing	Search
Transcripts	Listing ←	Search
House		
Members	Listing	-
Committees	Listing	-
Journals	Listing	Search
Transcripts	Listing	Search ←

The Master Index

The Master Index provides the dates, legislative action, and page numbers for transcripts of both Senate and House bills. The 77th - 90th General Assemblies have Master Indexes available for both the House and Senate. For the 91st - 97th General Assemblies, only the Senate has a Master Index. For example, the Master Index for the Senate will contain dates of debates for both the Senate and House bills that arrive in the Senate. Remember that a bill keeps the designation of the originating chamber.

As noted earlier, S.B. 729 is the corresponding bill number for P.A. 95-580. To find the Master Index for the Senate, select Transcripts – Listing in the 95th G.A. (See Figure 13.)

Chapter 8: Illinois Legislative History

Senate			
Members		Listing	-
Committees	Figure 13	Listing	-
Journals		Listing	Search
Transcripts		Listing	Search

The next page is the Senate's Transcript page. Select Transcript Master Index link near the bottom of the page. (See Figure 14.)

Available Senate Transcripts Figure 14
95th General Assembly

Choose a transcript from the list below:

Regular Session:

Special Session:

[Transcript Master index](#) ←

Scroll through the Master Index to find the bill number. The Index provides the action date, the page number in the transcript where the debate about the bill begins, and the specific action. Remember that the first reading does not contain any discussion.

Floor debates can occur during the following actions: second and third readings, recalls to readings, concurrence (or non-concurrence), conference committees, any date that debate is mentioned (except for committee debates), and response(s) to Governor's veto. Bills that became Public Acts will have second and third readings at a minimum. S.B. 729 has a concurrence in the Senate, meaning that the House amended S.B. 729, and it needed to return to the Senate so the Senators could agree to the House's changes. (See Figure 15.)

Figure 15

STATE OF ILLINOIS
 95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
 MASTER INDEX - SENATE

SB-727	2/8/2007	25	First Reading
SB-728	2/8/2007	25	First Reading
SB-729	2/8/2007	25	First Reading
SB-729	3/14/2007	4	Second Reading
SB-729	3/15/2007	82	Third Reading
SB-729	6/6/2007	36	Concurrence

Read the transcripts for these dates. Page number listed is first page of debate.

Finding Illinois Law

Note the dates and pages from the Master Index. Return to the Available Senate Transcripts page from Figure 14 and use the pull-down menu to find the dates for all actions except the first reading. (See Figure 16.)

Available Senate Transcripts 95th General Assembly

Figure 16

Choose a transcript from the list below:

Regular Session:

Available Transcripts

- 24th Legislative Day, 03/28/2007, Regular Session
- 23rd Legislative Day, 03/27/2007, Regular Session
- 22nd Legislative Day, 03/22/2007, Regular Session
- 21st Legislative Day, 03/21/2007, Regular Session
- 20th Legislative Day, 03/20/2007, Regular Session
- 19th Legislative Day, 03/15/2007, Regular Session
- 18th Legislative Day, 03/14/2007, Regular Session
- 17th Legislative Day, 03/13/2007, Regular Session
- 16th Legislative Day, 03/08/2007, Regular Session
- 15th Legislative Day, 03/07/2007, Regular Session
- 14th Legislative Day, 03/06/2007, Regular Session

3/15/2007 is date of 3rd Reading in Senate.

The Master Index shows that the Senate held the third reading of S.B. 729 on 3/15/2007. To find the debates for the 3rd reading, select 3/15/2007 from the pull-down menu. Scroll to page 82 in the transcript. Continue reading until the legislators take a vote on the bill or begin a discussion on another bill. Do the same process for other dates, excluding first reading, listed in the Master Index. (See Figure 17.)

Senator Garrett, on 729. Madam Secretary, read the bill.

SECRETARY SHIPLEY:

Senate Bill 729.

Using Master Index, debate for 3rd Reading of S.B. 729 in Senate starts on p. 82.

Figure 17

82

STATE OF ILLINOIS
95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
REGULAR SESSION
SENATE TRANSCRIPT

19th Legislative Day

3/15/2007

(Secretary reads title of bill)

3rd Reading of the bill.

PRESIDING OFFICER: (SENATOR HALVORSON)

Senator Garrett.

SENATOR GARRETT:

Can you just wait a second? I was thinking we were going to do something else instead. Okay. Senate Bill 729 creates the Chicago {sic} (College) Campus Press Act, which provides that all

Search Transcripts

Without a Master Index for the House floor debates for the 95th G.A., the researcher can use the search function on the Transcripts page to find dates of House floor debates. Return to the main page for the 95th G.A. and select House – Transcripts – Search. (See Figure 18.)



In the search box, enter the chamber and bill number contained in quotes. In the example below: “Senate Bill 729.” Click Go. (See Figure 19.)

Search 95th General Assembly - House Transcripts

Read the [Search Tips](#) for important information about searching this database. Doing so may help you get more meaningful results.

Search By Keyword(s):

[Advanced Search](#)

[Search](#)

Figure 19

The search results provide legislative dates that include the bill number, Senate Bill 729. The results list the legislative day for each debate. A legislative day refers to a day in which the House or the Senate is in session. Click on the links in the results list for the floor debates for that day. The results are not in chronological order, so a bill status can serve as a point of reference and assist with understanding the bill’s progress as it moves through the General Assembly. (See Figure 20.)

Results for ""Senate Bill 729"" within 95th GA House Transcripts. [New Search](#)
Results 1 - 5 of about 5. [Advanced Search](#) [Search Tips](#)

Figure 20

1. [65th Legislative Day, 95th General Assembly](#)

Terms found: senate bill 729 (5)

... Senate Bill 697, Amendment #2 to Senate Bill 715, Amendment #1 to **Senate Bill 729**, Amendment #2 to Senate Bill 1487, Amendment #2 to Senate Bill 1568. ...

2. [63rd Legislative Day, 95th General Assembly](#)

Terms found: senate bill 729 (3) senate bill 729 (1)

... Representative Jakobsson has **Senate Bill 729**. Read the Bill, Mr. Clerk." Clerk Bolin: "**Senate Bill 729**, a Bill for an Act concerning education. ...

3. [60th Legislative Day, 95th General Assembly](#)

Terms found: senate bill 729 (2)

... Representative Jakobsson on **Senate Bill 729**. Shall we read the Bill? Read the Bill, Mr. Clerk." Clerk Mahoney: "**Senate Bill 729**, a Bill for an Act concerning education. ...

4. [27th Legislative Day, 95th General Assembly](#)

Terms found: senate bill 729 (1)

... by Representative Tracy, a Bill for an Act concerning education. **Senate Bill 729**, offered by STATE OF ILLINOIS 95th GENERAL ASSEMBLY HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ...

5. [55th Legislative Day, 95th General Assembly](#)

Terms found: senate bill 729 (1)

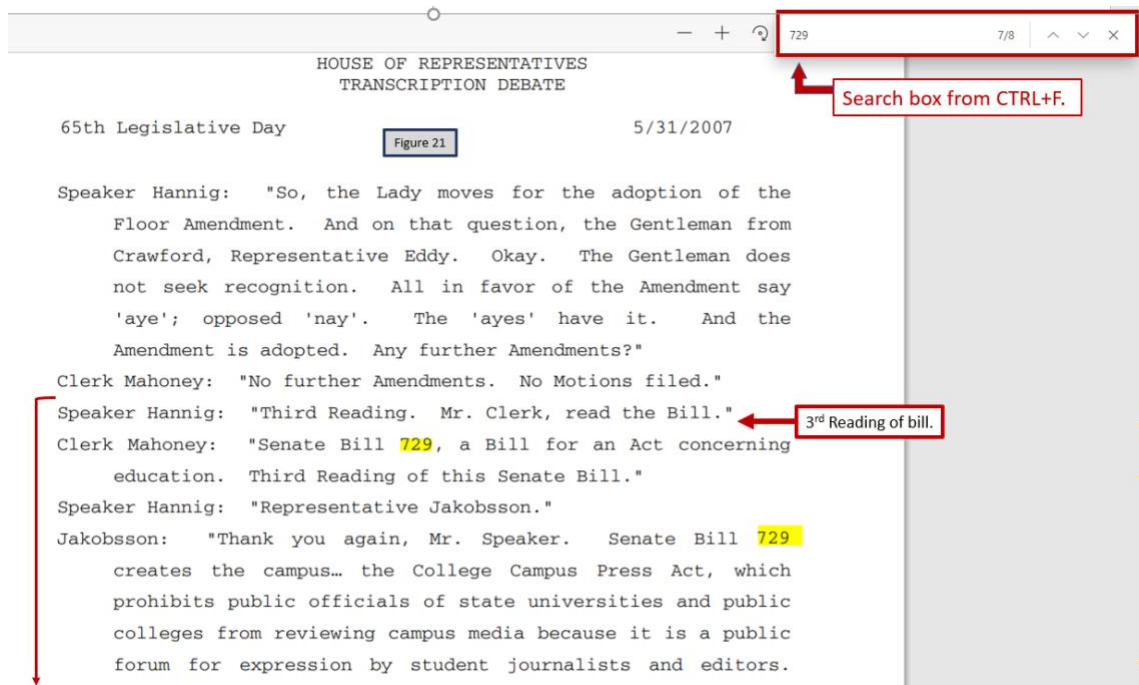
... Bill 313, Senate Bill 387, Senate Bill 401, Senate Bill 402 and **Senate Bill 729**. Representative Will Davis, Chairperson from the Committee on Health ...

Finding Illinois Law

Transcripts of debates are in PDF format. As the results do not indicate the page number where the debate begins, the researcher will need to search the PDFs of the transcripts for the bill number. A recommendation is to use the function, Ctrl+F. (Press the Ctrl button and the F key on the keyboard at the same time.) A search box will appear.

Enter the numeric portion of the bill in the search box that appears. (For example, for S.B. 729, enter 729.) Although this search is broad and may result in some unneeded bill numbers such as "1729", it will capture all instances of "729."

Read each page that mentions the bill. Continue reading until the legislators take a vote on the bill or begin a discussion on another bill. (See Figure 21.)



On occasion, there may be little to no floor debate for the readings and other actions in the House and the Senate. Members of the House and Senate may vote on a bill without floor debate. Also, the available discussion may not be relevant to the researcher's issues.

Governor's Actions

The Governor can sign an enrolled bill, take no action, or use the amendatory veto to seek changes to the enrolled bill. House and Senate Journals contain veto documents. These actions, along with the relevant dates, are found in the bill status. Starting with the 93rd G.A., the ILGA website also provides links to amendatory veto texts in the bill status.

Journals

The House and Senate Journals contain the voting records, texts of amendments, motions, roll calls, the text of conference committee reports, and messages from the Governor. For clarification,

Chapter 8: Illinois Legislative History

a conference committee report does not contain the analysis of the bill. Instead, it includes the text agreed upon by both chambers resolving the differences in language. The conference committee report becomes the engrossed version of the bill sent to the Governor.

Digital copies of the Journals are available via the ILGA website from the 91st G.A. to present. To find information about a bill in a Journal, select the appropriate General Assembly and select Journals – Search. (See Figure 22.)

95th General Assembly (2007-2008) Figure 22

*Note: All information from the 95th General Assembly is available through [My Legislation](#). Choose the desired General Assembly when building a query. If you need assistance with My Legislation, please contact LIS at 217-782-3944.

Legislation, Public Acts		
Legislation & Laws	Listing	Search
Public Acts	Listing	Search
Senate		
Members	Listing	-
Committees	Listing	-
Journals	Listing	Search
Transcripts	Listing	Search
House		
Members	Listing	-
Committees	Listing	-
Journals	Listing	Search
Transcripts	Listing	Search

Search Journals for bill number.

In the search box, enter the chamber and bill number with quotes. In the example below: “Senate Bill 729.” Click Go. Search the Journals for the House and the Senate. (See Figure 23.)

Search 95th General Assembly - Senate Journals Figure 23

Read the [Search Tips](#) for important information about searching this database. Doing so may help you get more meaningful results.

Search By Keyword(s):

[Advanced](#)

[Search](#)

Find Print Legislative Materials

The [Chicago Public Library](#) and public law libraries, such as the [Cook County Law Library](#) in the Daley Center, maintain print copies of Illinois laws, Legislative Synopsis and Digests, and House and Senate Journals. Consult a law librarian or government documents librarian with questions about locating and using print or online legislative resources.

Additional Guide for Illinois Legislative History

[Researching Legislative History](#)

Illinois Legislative Reference Bureau (updated September 2017)

Chapter 9

Free and Low-Cost Legal Research Resources

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I. Some Helpful Background on Using the Internet (Free Resources) for Legal Research

A. Introduction

One of the first principles of legal research is that legal information is a commodity. Legal professionals rely heavily on commercial services like LexisNexis and Westlaw for their research. The advantages of these services are obvious: breadth of information, quality of editorial enhancements, speed, and ease of use. But these services can be very expensive. Today law firms absorb most of these costs as overhead. That wasn't the case twenty years ago. Thus, it has become incumbent upon attorneys—even those in firms with ample research budget—to practice cost-effective legal research.

The good news for both legal professionals and for laypersons who need to perform legal research is that over the course of the past twenty years access to free and low-cost legal research resources has expanded greatly. The internet has become an essential tool for the cost-effective legal researcher. But using free and low-cost sources for legal research presents its own set of difficulties. As a researcher, you will need to know when *and how* to use the internet as a legal research tool. That's why this chapter is important. In this chapter, we will explore how and when to use the internet for legal research and how to use the internet as part of a cost-effective legal research strategy.

B. Using Free and Low-Cost Resources as Part of an Overall Legal Research Strategy

One of the first questions a researcher should ask you when pursuing a legal research task is this: Where exactly am I in the search process? Generally speaking, there are two different types of legal searches: the “learning” search and the “homing-in” search. One performs a “learning search” when little is known about a topic. A learning search starts with background materials that may provide basic answers like: ‘What is the jurisdiction?’, ‘Is there a statute on point?’, or ‘Are there important cases that I can use as starting points for further research?’. These questions might be answered by blog posts, legal articles or even by freely available encyclopedias like Wikipedia. This preliminary analysis provides both background information on the legal topic and (hopefully) clues for more in depth searching. Only once a researcher reaches the point that she or he understands the general concepts in the area related to the research question, and how they apply to specific facts, will he or she be able to home in on an answer to a particular legal question.

The dichotomy between a learning search and a homing-in search is what I call the 80/20 rule of legal research. Until a researcher becomes an expert in any particular area, she will spend a significant percentage of time just becoming familiar with sources and understanding the general concepts in an area of law. This is the 80%. And, it's one of the important points here: *free*

resources, like those available via a basic internet search, can often serve as an excellent starting point for legal research if you are just “learning” or looking for background information without too much concern for accuracy or timeliness. One can use various resources available for free to gather definitions, recent cases, or legal news and articles. In fact, the internet is often used best when it is used to execute a broad search in pursuit of one or two starting points instead of combing through a list of mediocre results looking for an (immediate) “answer.”

One strong caveat is necessary here: it is generally not sufficient for a legal researcher to rely solely on free and low-cost legal resources. Legal research must be accurate, thorough, and up to date. That’s the last 20%. The great value of commercial services is that they include editorial enhancements like citators that alert a researcher when a case that looks authoritative has in fact been overturned or when a statute has been recently amended. Another reason to be wary of Google and other free resources as an ending point for your legal research is that internet searching and freely available sources via the internet are fraught with their own difficulties. This chapter will provide links to and basic descriptions of many of the best free and low-cost legal research resources that one should be aware of. But, before we get there, let’s take a step back and talk about some of the limitations on relying on internet search and freely available websites for legal research.

C. Some Often-Overlooked Limitations to Using the Internet for Legal Research

So, you have decided that you are going to use the internet for legal research. One thing to be aware of is what you might *not* find and why you might not find it. One of the keys to understanding legal research sources is to understand their weaknesses as well as their strengths. Many beginning searchers understand the internet’s strengths—speed, size, ease of search. Yes, there is an almost incalculable amount of information available on the internet. That would seem to be a promising starting point. However, one statistic that has remained fairly constant is that internet search engines like Google only access about 20% of that information. There are many reasons for that and some techniques for getting around that limitation. Here are the basic reasons why internet search engines miss important information that is, otherwise, freely available:

1. Information in Databases or Catalogs

One of the limitations of general-purpose search engines like Google is that they cannot extract information from inside databases or catalogs. If a user needs to perform some type of operation to access information like filling out a form or making a specific request, internet search engines will not display those results. For example, Google search results will not include case results of cases that reside inside a court’s freely-available database of cases—of which there are many—because a search engine will not be able to fill out the search form.

2. Marketing Walls

Similarly, there is a wealth of freely available information that search engines can’t access because the information lies behind some sort of informational wall, like a registration form. Information providers often require that those seeking information from a website “register” or provide some sort of contact information in order to access information

because they can then sell that information to advertisers or marketers. Remember, legal information is a commodity.

3. Pre-Internet (World Wide Web) Information

Internet search results often lack “older” information. There are two parts to the problem with older information: first, as a general rule, few websites contain information that predates the existence of the World Wide Web, about 1995. That’s a very general blanket statement. One exception to this is basic government information. The federal government and many state governments have made a concerted effort to push information online because it is cheaper to deal with and, in theory, more accessible. The second part of this problem is that many websites have a limited capacity to store information and make it available. So, it’s very often the case that a website that has helpful information like current articles will only have that information for a limited period say, for example, the last two years. After that, the information disappears. There are a handful of websites dedicated to preserving and archiving internet content. One such tool is the [Wayback Machine](#) via the [Internet Archive](#). If one is looking for content that has been removed from a website, one can use the Wayback Machine to look at an archived version of the website.

4. Poorly Organized Websites

Very often, even if information exists on a website and is freely available, the website itself is so poorly organized or poorly maintained that search engines simply can’t index that information. Think of folders within folders within folders. In these cases, the information is for all intents and purposes invisible. This phenomenon is particularly true of not-for-profit organization websites and government agencies. There are techniques for combatting this issue and they will be discussed in the section below on “Using Advanced Search Features.”

5. Paid Links and Search Engine Optimization

One final limitation worth noting here is the effect of paid links and optimized search results. As a matter of fact, very few people read past the first page of search results. This very poor research habit has spawned an entire industry that is devoted to ensuring that search results (“hits”) appear on the first page; anything after that is, for all intents and purposes, invisible. By way of background, when you review a list of hits from a search engine, they are ranked based on “relevance.” Relevance is determined by factors such as how many times the words appear in a document, how close they are to each other and how close to the front of the document they are. SEO (search engine optimization) professionals make money by optimizing the relevancy ranking for a client. Likewise, many companies pay for placement so that when certain terms are searched, that company’s website appears first, or higher up on the list than it would have appeared based solely on relevancy rankings. The net effect of search optimization and paid links is that it tends to push search results from academic, not-for-profit and government websites down the list. This phenomenon leads to a simple rule: *if you are using the internet for legal research (or anything else important), don’t stop after the first page of results.*

D. Assessing Website Credibility, Currency, and Authenticity

Probably the single most important consideration in determining whether to use information gathered from a free website is the credibility of the information contained. We've all heard stories about reporters who got duped by relying on information on the Web that turned out to be false. The truth of the matter is that anyone can post information on the internet. But there is no guarantee that that information is accurate or up to date. So, when a researcher locates information on the internet it is always important to consider these questions when deciding whether to rely on free online information:

1. Authority – Who wrote this?
2. Objectivity – Does that person (or organization) have a bias on this subject?
3. Accuracy – Does this information fit with what I already know of the subject?
4. Coverage – What is the scope of the information given here?
5. Timeliness – When was this written and when was it last updated?

For more complete information on each factor, see "[Evaluating and Rating Websites and Other Information Resources](#)," by Diane Murley of the SIU Law Library.

II. Using General-Purpose Search Engines for Legal Research

So, you've decided to go ahead and search the internet for legal information. Chances are, if you are like most people, you will rely on an *all-purpose* search engine for this task. Examples of all-purpose or general-purpose search engines include Google, Yahoo, and Bing. There are the ones most people are familiar with. There is also a myriad of specialized search engines that help people search for specific things like plane fares or images; we're not discussing those. What we will discuss, however, are the ins and outs of all-purpose search engines, how to best utilize them, and tips for overcoming their deficiencies.

A. Background on Using General Purpose Search Engines

By way of more intermittent background, a search engine is a program that uses spiders or crawlers to locate internet files or web pages and index them. When you search a search engine, you are in fact matching your keywords up against the index that the search engine has created. You are not searching the live internet. As mentioned above in previous intermittent background, results are generally ranked by relevance which is determined by factors such as how many times your terms appear, how close they are to each other, and whether or not they appear in heavily weighted areas like the title. Every search engine has different ranking systems so different search engines will produce different results.

As you might imagine, Google is (at least as of spring 2020) far and away the top search engines in terms of traffic, Bing was next, Yahoo was third, and Ask.com was fourth. For what it's worth, Google offers a [six-unit class on searching Google](#). Knowing the difference between using Google for basic searching and advanced searching is like knowing the difference between using Microsoft Word for typing as opposed to using Word as a document creation and management tool. Today, general-purpose search engines are morphing toward being devices for newsfeeds and shopping tools. The latest craze in search engine design is to personalize search

results. Personalized search results are based more on a searcher's history and the likelihood that a searcher will be interested in certain ads or products and not in others. This trend is particularly confounding to legal researchers because it means that two searchers, sitting next to each other, executing the same search, can arrive at radically different results based on how the search engine has tracked each of them.

B. Using Search Engines Effectively: Advanced Features and Alternatives

Using a general-purpose search engine for legal research often yields information overload. One technique already mentioned for limiting information overload is to just look at the first page of results. This technique is not particularly effective when searching for legal information because results from academic and government websites often get pushed off the first page. In this section we'll discuss a handful of useful techniques to focus one's search in order to overcome some of the problems inherent in using the internet for legal research.

1. Using Advanced Search Features

Sometimes you'd like to focus or restrict your search results. By way of example, there are a number of ways you can restrict your search using [Google Advanced](#). See the useful book "Google for Lawyers" for additional details on using Google effectively as a research tool. Each general-purpose search engine offers its own advanced search features, so what follows are just examples of ways that you can use Google's advanced search features.

As noted, not-for-profit and government websites are notoriously hard to search. One technique for overcoming that problem is to use the advanced search feature to search for information *within* a website. So, for example, if I were looking for a document that I knew was produced by the Securities and Exchange Commission and I couldn't locate it using a general purpose search engine, I might try entering the site information for the [SEC](#) (sec.gov) in the site or domain field on Google Advanced Search and then search specifically within that website. This two-step technique—locate website then locate information within the website—is a very handy technique for overcoming the problem of good information being buried in bad websites. Google used to have a subject-specific search engine called Uncle Sam that allowed a researcher to search just for government information. Today, one can replicate Uncle Sam by simply entering the domain ".gov" in the Advanced Search domain field and then executing an appropriate word search.

Another way to use this technique is to use the internet as a secondary source or to locate secondary sources. So, for example, if my boss gives me a bankruptcy project and I have never researched bankruptcy law, it would be helpful to find a bankruptcy law research guide as a starting point. One way to do this is to use the keyword fields and phrase fields to search for bankruptcy law research guides, but then restrict domain to ".edu" so you just get the ones that law librarians have put together.

Finally, the advanced search feature in Google is one of the best ways to use the internet to locate background information. For example, if you were looking for background information on the Patent Reform Act of 2011, you could enter the words "patent reform act 2011" and then below in the "one or more of these words" field enter "background or

summary or overview.” This search will retrieve hits that provide a background, overview, or summary of the Act, a handy dandy starting point.

2. Using Meta-Search Engines

A searcher should also be aware that searching different search engines yields different search results, and sometimes wildly different results. *Thus, one of the techniques a researcher can use for thoroughness is to employ multiple search engines and look at the first page or two of each.* Another technique that can employ is to use a metasearch engine like [Dogpile](#). A metasearch engine is a search engine that searches another search engine. The point of a metasearch engine is this: why just search one of many search engines when you can search them all at the same time and have the results filtered for you? Metasearch engines are particularly helpful, or at least reassuring, for “needle in the haystack” type searches—those searches when one isn’t seeing any relevant hits but wants to be certain that no stone is being left unturned.

Just as there are a myriad of general-purpose search engines, so too there are a number of metasearch engines. [Dogpile](#) allows one to search Google, Yahoo, Bing, and Ask.com simultaneously. It then parses the results and removes the duplicates. Another example of a meta search engine is [Yippy](#). This metasearch engine sorts results into folders based on keywords and phrases. Clustering can help one organize and sift through voluminous results rather than just reviewing on a page-by-page basis.

III. Free Websites Dedicated to Law and Legal Research

There are too many free legal websites to mention them all here. What follows is a snapshot of the types and categories of free websites that are available and a little bit about the important information that each contains. When it comes to legal research, simply using an internet search engine is not enough. For example, if one seeks state legislative information, one might do well to visit that state’s legislature’s website. The user is reminded that not all websites are created equal. Some are easier to use than others. Some are more difficult to navigate simply by virtue of the amount and the complexity of the legal information contained therein. Again, one is reminded that Google offers a six-week course on using Google. It may be as easy as it looks, but that’s only the surface.

A. Legal Portals

The following websites are legal “portals.” A portal is a website that serves as a starting point to other destinations or activities on the Web. In short, it’s a website that collects and organizes other websites. Legal portals are a great starting point for legal research because they bring together so much related legal information. There are a multitude of different legal portals, both academic and commercial. If you happen to find a legal portal that you like, stick with it. Here, we’ll mention only a few of the more popular legal portals; there are many more.

1. [Justia](#)

Justia is one of the best and most popular free legal research sites on the web. Justia’s mission is to “advance the availability of legal resources for the benefit of society.” It provides internet users with free case law, codes, regulations, legal articles, and legal blog and Twitter databases, as well as additional community resources. One of the advantages of Justia’s legal portal is its clean interface. Justia offers a researcher the ability to search by practice area or legal topic, by type of law, or by jurisdiction.

2. [Public Library of Law \(PLoL\)](#)

PLoL bills itself as “the world’s largest online database of free law.” It is sponsored by Fastcase, an internet legal research provider that will be discussed in the section on “tier-two” legal research services, ante. PLoL provides free access to all U.S. Supreme Court cases, federal circuit court cases back to 1950, the United States Code, and Code of Federal Regulations. In addition, PLoL provides state court cases back to 1997 as well as access to the statutes, court rules, and constitutions from all 50 states.

3. [Cornell Legal Information Institute \(LII\)](#)

Cornell Legal Information Institute is an academic legal portal. Because it’s an academic site it tends to focus more on research materials and less on practice materials like experts, consultants, and legal forms. Like most portals, it has a well-organized homepage and an excellent current legal news section. In addition, it has probably the best collection of federal codes and a dictionary/encyclopedia of law called [Wex](#). This is often a great starting point for learning about an unfamiliar subject.

B. Federal Government Websites

Since the inception of the World Wide Web in the early 1990s, the federal government has endeavored to move as much “printed” material as possible to the Web and limit the cost of actually printing. One can find a valuable website for nearly every organ of federal and state government—courts, agencies, etc. What follows are representative websites with brief descriptions of the kind of legal information that make them worth knowing about. There are additional useful federal websites listed in [Chapter 12: Recommended Publishers & Resources](#).

1. [Govinfo.gov](#)

Govinfo.gov is the newest iteration of the federal government’s information portal and replaces FDsys. It provides free public access to hundreds of thousands of official publications from all three branches of government including bills and statutes, congressional committee materials, presidential, and regulatory materials. Think of it as one-stop shopping for federal

government information.

2. [Congress.gov](#)

Congress.gov is the official website for U.S. federal legislative information. Its scope of data collections and system functionality have continued to expand since its predecessor website, THOMAS, was launched in January 1995. Congress.gov provides information on current and past federal legislation, records of debates on the floors of Congress, and information on members of congress and congressional committees. Congress.gov is a great example of a website where those responsible for the content have made a concerted effort to add information that pre-dates the World Wide Web. It's an important site because those doing federal research can use Congress.gov, for example, to track the status of a bill for free. One can also do the better part of a federal legislative history for free. There's much more there worth exploring.

3. [U.S. Code Search](#)

This site allows a researcher to search and browse the U.S. Code as well as retrieve sections by citation. It's not perfect, but it's a vast improvement over its predecessor. Be careful, though; there is a disclaimer that says, "While every effort has been made to ensure that the Code on the website is accurate, those using it for legal research should verify their results against the printed version of the United States Code available through the Government Printing Office." One can update a code section by looking at the classification table for the ensuing years and update using Congress.gov. Is this an acceptable alternative to commercial publications of the code? It depends on one's purpose.

4. [Electronic Code of Federal Regulations \(eCFR\)](#)

Very few offices have an up-to-date print set of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). Fortunately, the federal government provides a pretty reliable online version through eCFR. One advantage of the eCFR is that one can easily update a section by checking against the Federal Register. Be careful, though; as it notes, this site is not an official source.

5. [Federal Judiciary Homepage](#)

The U.S. Courts Federal Judiciary Homepage is an important page to know about because it provides a gateway to all federal court websites. What might a researcher find on a court's website? A researcher will find important information like opinions, dockets, information on court calls, and local rules and forms. Anyone who is involved in litigation should review the information on a court and judge's website to make sure that all court procedures are followed.

6. [Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals](#)

The Seventh Circuit is a stickler on filing briefs. If you look at the website, you'll see a whole array of links to guides intended to assist litigants in preparing winning briefs. This *free* information does not exist elsewhere.

7. [PACER](#)

PACER is the Public Access to Court Electronic Records website of the U.S. government. It provides 24/7 access to a listing of all parties and participants in a federal lawsuit including judges and attorneys, a compilation of all case information like the cause of action, nature of the suit, dollar demand, and docket information. In addition, it provides images of many pleadings and briefs that can be retrieved and printed. PACER is not free, but it only costs ten cents per page to print and a document is capped at three dollars per document. If a researcher does not exceed thirty dollars for a quarter, the charges are dropped. Seventy-five percent of users never incur a charge. One can use PACER to track similar cases or to retrieve and review briefs. It's a great tool to know about.

C. Illinois Websites

The availability of “primary” legal information like cases and statutes varies widely from state to state. According to a [state-by-state study done by the AALL Access to Electronic Information Committee](#), “The vast majority of state online primary legal resources are not sufficiently trustworthy.” There is presently an effort under foot to require states to provide authentic, credible information. The name of the proposed law is the Uniform Electronic Legal Material Act. It was first proposed in 2012. As of 2020, twenty states and the District of Columbia have signed on. What follows are a few important Illinois websites; there are many more that are beyond the scope of this chapter. There are additional useful Illinois websites listed in [Chapter 12: Recommended Publishers & Resources](#).

1. [Illinois General Assembly](#)

The Illinois General Assembly (ILGA) website is a must-have for Illinois practitioners. It's the only place you will find the Illinois Administrative Code for free online and there is no longer an official print version. This site is where you need to go to perform an Illinois legislative history. And, it's where you MAY go to find a free version of the Illinois Compiled Statutes. But be aware that the statutes (code) available via the ILGA website are not official and there is a large disclaimer noting that fact. This is very typical of primary legislative and administrative materials online. A researcher is hopefully okay to read and understand a law from the website, but if one were presenting an argument before a judge based on a statute or section of Code, one would do well to verify and update using a commercial source.

2. [Illinois Courts: Opinions](#)

The Illinois Courts website provides a host of important information sources for Illinois practitioners. As of July 1, 2011, there is no longer an official print version of Illinois cases. The official version resides here. In addition, the citation format for these cases has changed. See the amended [Supreme Court Rule 6](#). This site provides a wealth of state court information including court rules, and beginning recently, jury instructions. There is a search function, but the cases only go back to 1996 and the search engine is very rudimentary.

IV. Fee-Based (But Free to Use) Resources

A “tier-two” legal research product is one whose breadth and capabilities lie somewhere between full service commercial research systems like LexisNexis and Westlaw and the hit-or-miss world of free internet legal research. These ‘low-cost’ resources are included here because many county law libraries, academic law libraries open to the public, and even local public libraries provide access to these databases.

A. Caselaw Databases

These sites provide access to caselaw information across the country but do not have the editorial enhancements that one might find using LexisNexis or Westlaw. There are several different competing products. The two most prominent are [Casemaker](#) and [Fastcase](#). In fact, according to a [2017 legal research survey](#), Fastcase was almost tied with LexisNexis and Westlaw in terms of popularity. One reason for this is that many state bar associations provide free access to Fastcase as a member benefit. Here are a few things to remember about tier-two products in comparison to their fully priced competitors.

1. Coverage

- a) Cases: generally speaking, tier-two products do not have complete coverage of cases. For example, Fastcase provides state cases back to 1950 and federal cases back to 1924.
- b) Statutes: As far as statutes go, Fastcase links to state legislative websites which saves the researcher the time of locating these websites, but free state websites often lack the indicia of credibility needed to be trustworthy, so this is not the best place to do statutory research.

2. Ease of Use

One of the main advantages of the tier-two systems is ease of use. Anyone familiar with Lexis and Westlaw ought to be able to use the interfaces without an issue. The learning curve is not steep and since there are no search charges, mistakes like misspelling do not have major consequences.

3. Caveats

The two main downsides of using tier-two systems are first, as noted before, coverage is not complete. Second, these systems lack the editorial enhancements like headnotes and citators that are part and parcel of Lexis and Westlaw.

B. Articles and Historical Information (HeinOnline)

HeinOnline is worth mentioning here because although it is a subscription service, it is often a free service provided to patrons in public and academic law libraries. HeinOnline began as a PDF archive of law journal articles. Since then, it has grown into hundreds of separate collections of documents including historical copies of statutes, cases, and agency materials. If you're looking for something legal that's older, think about HeinOnline.

C. Other Business and Scholarship Databases (Local Libraries)

A great place to start is a great place to end and that is your local public library. Do you need scholarly articles from JSTOR or HeinOnline? Do you need company information from a database like Mergent or Morningstar? The best place to start is your local public library. Even the smallest community has access to a library, and that library is probably part of a consortium of libraries that purchases access to important (fee-based) databases and provides free access to library card holders. One can access most of these from home.

Chapter 10

Avoiding the Unauthorized Practice of Law

By Tom Gaylord
Faculty Services & Scholarly Communications Librarian
Northwestern Pritzker School of Law, Pritzker Legal Research Center (2012)

Updated by Ariel Scotese
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As librarians, when we receive a reference question, we often try our best to be as helpful to the patrons as possible, which includes looking for the “right” answer. However, when a reference question concerns legal concepts, a response to a reference question can sometimes lead to what is called the “unauthorized practice of law,” which Illinois generally prohibits. This chapter will discuss what the unauthorized practice of law is and how reference librarians can avoid it.

The Law

In every state, the practice of law is regulated. Every state regulates who can practice law and prohibits the unauthorized practice of law. While the definition of the practice of law is “established by law and varies from one jurisdiction to another,” the goal of prohibiting the unauthorized practice of law is to protect the public from receiving legal services from unqualified persons.⁸

In Illinois, the laws that govern the admission of attorneys to the Illinois state bar and the practice of law in Illinois are the [Attorney Act, 705 Ill. Comp. Stat. § 205/0.01 et seq.](#),⁹ and the [Illinois Supreme Court Rules, Article VII, Rules on Admission & Discipline of Attorneys](#).¹⁰ Section 1 of the Attorney Act states: “No person shall be permitted to practice as an attorney or counselor at law within [Illinois] without having previously obtained a license for that purpose from the Supreme Court of this State.”¹¹ Neither the Attorney Act nor the Illinois Supreme Court Rules define the phrase “unauthorized practice of law,” and the Illinois Supreme Court has not provided an exhaustive list of activities that constitute the practice of law. When the court determines whether an action constitutes the practice of law, it looks to the character of the action itself.¹² The crux of the issue is “whether the activity in question required legal knowledge and skill in order to apply legal principles and precedent.”¹³ This means that the practice of law is not limited to appearing in

⁸ American Bar Association, Model Rules of Professional Conduct, Rule 5.5 Comment 2. For more information about the unauthorized practice of law geared toward members of the public, see Illinois State Bar Association, “ISBA and the Unauthorized Practice of Law – What the Public Needs to Know,” available at <https://www.isba.org/sites/default/files/committees/upl/uplfaq.pdf> (last visited on July 10, 2020).

⁹ The Attorney Act (705 ILCS 205/0.01 *et seq.*) is available at <https://ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/ilcs3.asp?ActID=1853&ChapterID=50>.

¹⁰ The Illinois Supreme Court Rules of Professional Conduct are available at http://www.illinoiscourts.gov/SupremeCourt/Rules/Art_VII/default.asp.

¹¹ 705 Ill. Comp. Stat. § 205/1.

¹² Illinois State Bar Association Advisory Opinion on Professional Conduct, No. 95-07 (citing [Chicago Bar Association v. Quinlan & Tyson, Inc.](#), 214 N.E.2d 771 (Ill. 1966)).

¹³ [In re Discipio](#), 645 N.E.2d 906, 910 (Ill. 1994).

court and preparing pleadings—it involves using knowledge of the law. However, if the action requires using common knowledge, such as filling in factual information on a standard form, it is not considered practicing law.

Additionally, the prohibition of the unauthorized practice of law does not infringe upon a person's right to represent themselves either in a criminal case¹⁴ or a civil case.¹⁵

What Does This Mean for Reference Librarians?

Reference librarians can provide research assistance, but the scope of the assistance must be limited. The threshold question is whether responding to the research inquiry requires using legal knowledge and skill.¹⁶ In essence, when answering a reference inquiry, the goal is to provide information without providing an interpretation of the law.

For instance, if a patron comes to the reference desk to ask where they can find information about the Americans with Disabilities Act, the law librarian can respond by informing the patron about any treatises involving disability law, which would discuss the Americans with Disabilities Act. The reference librarian can also demonstrate for the patron how to search for bills by their popular name in certain databases and find the underlying statute. The reference librarian could also demonstrate how to search for case law and regulations using various databases.

However, the reference librarian could not provide advice that would require an interpretation of the law or the use of legal knowledge. For instance, the reference librarian could not tell the patron about seminal cases concerning the Americans with Disabilities Act. The reference librarian also could not tell the patron which cases were still good case law or Shepardize case law for the patron. The reference librarian also could not advise the patron on whether they have completed their research of the issue. The reference librarian also could not help the patron draft a complaint claiming a violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act. All of these actions could be the unauthorized practice of law because performing them requires interpreting the law and utilizing legal knowledge.

Another example is if a patron comes to the reference desk with a form and asks for the reference librarian's assistance. If the patron asks the reference librarian to help them fill in the form, and if filling in the form requires understanding and interpreting legal concepts as opposed to merely entering in factual data, then the reference librarian would be practicing law if they assisted. Conversely, if the patron does not have a form and asks for help finding one, the reference librarian could direct the patron to secondary sources that contain forms, such as *Causes of Action* or a self-help book. However, the reference librarian could not advise the patron on which form would be best suited for their purpose because that would require interpreting the law and utilizing some legal knowledge.

¹⁴ The Sixth Amendment right to represent oneself in criminal cases was established in Faretta v. California, 422 U.S. 806 (1975).

¹⁵ "Plaintiffs shall have the liberty of prosecuting, and defendants of defending in their proper persons." 705 Ill. Comp. Stat. § 205/11.

¹⁶ See *supra* note 5.

Conclusion

As the keepers of legal information, the line between unauthorized practice of law and good librarianship can seem difficult to navigate. Because we know how confusing and unintuitive the legal landscape can be, it is only natural to want to provide as much assistance as possible to library patrons. What is important to remember is that if addressing a reference inquiry requires any legal analysis or use of knowledge about the law, the best course of action is to refer the patron to an attorney. The [Chicago Bar Association](#)¹⁷ and the [Illinois State Bar Association](#)¹⁸ both have services that can help connect patrons to affordable legal representation. [Illinois Legal Aid Online](#)¹⁹ is another excellent resource for connecting patrons with legal assistance. It is also important to remember that the assistance reference librarians can provide (*e.g.*, referral to these organizations, access to secondary sources, and information about how to use databases for research) is still useful for the uninitiated.

¹⁷ Information about the Chicago Bar Association's Lawyer Referral Service is available at <https://lrs.chicagobar.org/>. The Lawyer Referral Service connects people in Chicago with lawyers, including free and low-cost representation, with different backgrounds. This service is free.

¹⁸ Information about the Illinois State Bar Association's Lawyer Illinois Lawyer Finder service is available at <https://www.isba.org/public/illinoislawyerfinder>. This is another free service that connects Illinoisans with legal representation. The webpage also provides information about obtaining free and low-cost legal service in Illinois.

¹⁹ Information about Illinois Legal Aid Online is available at <https://www.illinoislegalaid.org/>. Illinois Legal Aid Online is a reputable resource that provides self-help tools on Illinois law, including forms that can be used to create complaints and petitions as well as guidance on different aspects of the law such as landlord-tenant law.

Chapter 11

Where to Seek Additional Help

By Victor Salas
Reference Librarian
Louis L. Biro Law Library, The UIC John Marshall Law School

Legal Service Providers or Referrals

Organization	Description of Services Offered
<p>Access Living</p> <p>115 West Chicago Avenue Chicago, IL 60654 Tel: 312-640-2100</p> <p>https://www.accessliving.org/our-services/legal-services/</p>	<p>Represents people with disabilities who have been denied access to housing, government benefits, or service at businesses that are open to the public.</p>
<p>ABA Military Pro Bono Project</p> <p>321 North Clark Street Chicago, IL 60654 Tel: 312-988-5783</p> <p>https://www.militaryprobono.org/newcases/item.3217-Military_Pro_Bono_Project_Information</p>	<p>The ABA Military Pro Bono Project connects eligible, active-duty service members with pro bono attorneys to assist with the resolution of civil legal issues.</p>
<p>Administer Justice</p> <p>1750 Grandstand Place, #15 Elgin, IL 60123 Tel: 847-844-1100</p> <p>https://www.administerjustice.org/locations/</p>	<p>Legal assistance consists of appointments to assist individuals with forms, educating clients of their rights, and when necessary, providing pro bono representation for those who meet income and geographic guidelines.</p> <p>Financial counseling includes conducting a low-income taxpayer clinic to help inform individuals of their rights under the tax code, particularly those who are Spanish-speaking, and providing budget counseling to understand and avoid some of the common legal and relational problems that result from money issues.</p> <p>The Low Income Taxpayer Clinic also provides assistance for those individuals of lower income who have a dispute with the IRS.</p>

Chapter 11: Where to Seek Additional Help

	<p>Conflict resolution services include mediation and arbitration of disputes.</p>
<p>Cabrini Green Legal Aid</p> <p>6 S Clark St., Suite 200 Chicago, IL 60603 Tel: 312-738-2452</p> <p>Richard J. Daley Center 50 West Washington 10th Floor, Room 1006 Chicago, IL 60602</p> <p>Markham Courthouse 16501 Kedzie Parkway, Room 102J Markham, IL 60428</p> <p>Juvenile Court 1100 S. Hamilton Ave. Chicago, IL 60612</p> <p>https://www.cgla.net/</p>	<p>Offers legal representation to impoverished individuals, at no cost, in areas of housing law, family law, and criminal law.</p> <p>Staff help desks at courthouses to assist qualifying individuals, including at the Daley Center Expungement Desk where attorneys help to complete expungement or sealing forms. Individuals who do not qualify for this relief are informed about the executive clemency option.</p>
<p>Catholic Charities Legal Assistance</p> <p>721 N. LaSalle St Chicago, IL 60654 Tel: 312-948-6821</p> <p>https://www.catholiccharities.net/GetHelp/OurServices/LegalServices.aspx</p>	<p>Provides legal advice, educational outreach, self-help materials, access to a network of pro bono attorneys and referrals to other legal aid organizations. Assists clients with immigration issues.</p> <p>Spanish speaking staff available.</p>
<p>Center for Conflict Resolution</p> <p>11 East Adams Street Suite 500 Chicago, IL 60603 Tel: 312-922-6464</p> <p>https://www.ccrchicago.org/</p>	<p>Pro bono cases are referred to CCR by anyone who is involved in a dispute, by counsel, or by judge. CCR also offers pro bono mediation services through programs developed in the Circuit Court of Cook County including the Daley Center, Maywood, Markham, Bridgeview, and Rolling Meadows courthouses, misdemeanor branch courts, and Juvenile Court. Mediations conducted at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), through the Residential Alternatives for Dispute Resolution (RADR) program, the Community Consensus Project, Chancery Court cases, and matrimonial fee dispute cases.</p>

Finding Illinois Law

	<p>The majority of cases mediated by CCR are civil in nature. Mediations may involve tenants and landlords, families, neighborhoods, juvenile offenders, the workplace, corporate, employment, construction, real estate, environmental, health care, personal injury, intellectual property, church, and community disputes. It is not necessary for cases to have legal issues and/or lawsuits pending.</p>
<p>Center on Halsted Legal Program</p> <p>3656 North Halsted Street Chicago, IL 60613 Tel: 773-472-6469</p> <p>http://www.centeronhalsted.org/programs.htm ↓</p>	<p>Provides members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community with referrals to attorneys specializing in areas such as discrimination, adoption, custody, personal injury, criminal cases, harassment, contracts, wills, and bankruptcy. Referrals are made to attorneys who are sensitive to and experienced in matters related to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender issues. Clients can speak with a volunteer lawyer one-on-one about specific, immediate needs for specific situations and receive appropriate referrals.</p>
<p>Chicago Bar Association</p> <p>312 S. Plymouth Court Chicago, IL 60604-3113 Tel: 312-554-2001</p> <p>http://www.chicagobar.org</p>	<p>Provides attorney referrals.</p>
<p>Chicago Coalition for the Homeless Law Project</p> <p>70 East Lake Street Suite 700 Chicago, IL 60601 Tel: 800-940-1119</p> <p>https://www.chicagohomeless.org/programs-campaigns/legal-aid/law-project/</p>	<p>Provides legal assistance to homeless students, unaccompanied youth, and homeless adults.</p>
<p>Chicago Volunteer Legal Services Foundation</p> <p>33 North Dearborn Street, Suite 400 Chicago, IL 60602 Tel: 312-332-1624</p>	<p>CVLS volunteer attorneys provide legal services to low or no-income clients. CVLS handles divorce, adult and minor guardianships, adoption, tort defense, collection defense, bankruptcy, immigration, wills and advance directive, landlord-tenant,</p>

Chapter 11: Where to Seek Additional Help

<p>https://www.cvls.org/</p>	<p>and other cases. CVLS has provided legal services for over 50 years.</p> <p>CVLS does not represent individuals with fee-generating cases.</p>
<p>Chicago-Kent College of Law</p> <p>C-K Law Group Tel: 312-906-5050</p> <p>https://www.kentlaw.iit.edu/seeking-legal-help/client-legal-services</p> <p>Tax Clinic 565 W. Adams St. Suite 600 Chicago, IL 60661-3691 Tel: 312-906-5053</p> <p>https://www.kentlaw.iit.edu/seeking-legal-help/client-legal-services/tax-clinic/about-the-tax-clinic</p> <p>Entrepreneurial Law Clinic Tel: 312-906-5038</p> <p>https://www.kentlaw.iit.edu/seeking-legal-help/client-legal-services/entrepreneurial-law</p> <p>Immigration Law Clinic Tel: 312-906-5050</p> <p>https://www.kentlaw.iit.edu/seeking-legal-help/immigration-law</p>	<p>Provide guidance and representation to clients with matters before the Internal Revenue Service. The clinic charges modest fees on a mostly flat fee sliding scale basis. It also litigates tax cases before the U.S. Tax Court and other courts.</p> <p>The Entrepreneurial Law Clinic represents entrepreneurs in transactional matters common to early-stage and small companies, including but not limited to: choice of entity and entity formation, contract review and drafting, corporate governance issues, review of leases, researching legal issues as appropriate, and trademark searches and filing.</p> <p>The immigration clinic represents individuals and families with family-based, humanitarian relief, and removal defense throughout the United States with concern to U.S. immigration and nationality law. The Immigration Clinic's consultations are \$50.00 per case. At the consultation, the attorney will determine if we can provide representation with services offered below-market at a flat-fee rate.</p> <p>Chicago Kent clinics also may accept criminal law, family law, and cases involving open government such as FOIA and the Open Meetings Act.</p>
<p>Coordinated Advice and Referral Program for Legal Services (CARPLS)</p> <p>17 North State Street Suite 1850 Chicago, IL 60602 Tel: 312-738-9200</p> <p>https://www.carpls.org/</p>	<p>The CARPLS Legal Aid Hotline answers questions about everyday legal problems including housing, employment, education, consumer debt, divorce, guardianships, estates, injuries to person or property, public benefits, health care and more.</p> <p>Attorneys do not represent clients in court. If in-court representation is required, the CARPLS attorneys will assist with a referral</p>

Finding Illinois Law

	to an appropriate full-service legal aid agency if one is available.
<p>DePaul College of Law Legal Clinics</p> <p>25 E. Jackson Blvd. Chicago, IL 60604 DePaulLegalClinic@depaul.edu</p> <p>https://law.depaul.edu/academics/experiential-learning/legal-clinics/Pages/prospective-client.aspx</p>	<p>Provides services to clients that have been referred by other legal aid agencies, partner organizations, or the courts. Services include asylum and refugee protection.</p> <p>Sometimes does accept direct representation of business clients through the business clinic. Responds to email inquiries only.</p>
<p>DuPage County Bar Association</p> <p>Lawyer Referral Service 126 S County Farm Road Wheaton, IL 60187-4597 Tel: 630-653-9109</p> <p>https://www.dcba.org/page/FindLawyer</p>	<p>Provides attorney referrals.</p>
<p>Equip for Equality</p> <p>20 N. Michigan Avenue Suite 300 Chicago, IL 60602 Tel: 800-537-2632</p> <p>https://www.equipforequality.org</p>	<p>Provides legal and self-advocacy services for people with disabilities. Examples include cases involving abuse, accommodations and access, community integration, employment discrimination, housing, right to self-determination, special education, and transportation.</p>
<p>Family Defense Center</p> <p>70 East Lake Street Suite 1100 Chicago, IL 60601 Tel: 312-251-9800</p> <p>https://www.familydefensecenter.net/fdc-programs/legal-services/</p>	<p>The FDC is counsel in major litigation and represents many individual family members who are dealing with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and/or the Juvenile court.</p>
<p>Farmworker and Landscaper Advocacy Project (FLAP)</p> <p>33 N. LaSalle Street Suite 900 Chicago, IL 60602 Tel: 815-909-0362</p> <p>https://www.flapillinois.org/</p>	<p>Provides legal representation to the thousands of migrant and seasonal farmworkers who work planting and harvesting crops, detasseling corn, and cultivating nursery products. The vast majority of these migrants are Spanish speakers who migrate to Illinois from Texas or Mexico for 6-9 months. The primary focus is on migrants living in Northern Illinois. The FLAP represents farmworkers and landscapers, regardless of</p>

Chapter 11: Where to Seek Additional Help

	<p>their immigration status, in disputes over wages and working conditions.</p>
<p>First Defense Legal Aid</p> <p>5100 West Harrison Street Chicago, IL 60644 Tel: 800-529-7374</p> <p>https://first-defense.org/</p>	<p>FDLA provides a free, reliable, and experienced lawyer to individuals who are arrested in the city of Chicago. The FDLA attorney is available at the initial and most critical stage of the criminal justice process: from the time of arrest until the court system assigns a Public Defender. At the police station, the attorney helps the client understand and assert his rights, gathers information about arrest and detainment, documents evidence of police brutality, advocates for medical treatment, and informs the family and friends of the detainee throughout the process.</p> <p>Assistance is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.</p>
<p>Greater Chicago Legal Clinic</p> <p>211 W. Wacker Drive Suite 750 Chicago, IL 60606 Tel: 773-731-1762</p> <p>https://www.gclclaw.org/</p>	<p>The Clinic provides low-cost legal services (sliding fee scale) to disadvantaged individuals in the Chicago area from its four neighborhood offices (South Chicago, Austin, Downtown, and Pilsen) and its several programs.</p> <p>Representation is provided in many areas of law including family law (divorce, adoption, visitation, paternity, assistance to victims of domestic violence), guardianships of disabled adults, social security disability claims, real estate closings, debt counseling, immigration, expungements of criminal records, and environmental law.</p> <p>There are no income eligibility restrictions; fees are charged on a sliding scale based on household income.</p> <p>Assist with all types of cases; also staff the Municipal Advice Desk, Chancery Advice Desk, and Foreclosure Desk at the Cook County Daley Center.</p>
<p>Illinois Guardianship and Advocacy Commission - Legal Advocacy Service</p> <p>(regional offices statewide)</p>	<p>LAS attorneys provide statewide needed assistance to persons with disabilities in a variety of settings: mental health facilities, residential programs, community placements,</p>

Finding Illinois Law

<p>Tel: 866-274-8023</p> <p>https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/gac/LAS/Pages/las-Service.aspx</p>	<p>and nursing homes. Issues addressed include, but are not limited to: admission and discharge from hospitalization, adequate treatment, refusal of unwanted services, and confidentiality of mental health records.</p> <p>Assistance takes the form of information, referral, and legal representation in court hearings and administrative proceedings.</p>
<p>Illinois Legal Aid Online</p> <p>120 S LaSalle St Suite 900 Chicago, IL 60603-3425 Tel: 312-977-9047</p> <p>https://www.illinoislegalaid.org/get-legal-help</p>	<p>Provides those who cannot afford an attorney with user friendly legal information, educational materials, interactive forms, instructions for self-representation, multimedia training, and online referrals to free legal services.</p>
<p>Illinois State Bar Association</p> <p>Illinois Lawyer Finder 424 S. 2nd St. Springfield, IL 62701 Tel: 217-525-4297</p> <p>http://www.illinoislawyerfinder.com</p>	<p>Provides attorney referrals.</p>
<p>Kane County Bar Association</p> <p>555 S. Randall Road, Suite 205 St. Charles, IL 60174 Tel: 630-762-1900</p> <p>http://www.kanecountybar.org/find-a-lawyer</p>	<p>Provides attorney referrals.</p>
<p>Ladder Up (Center for Economic Progress - Tax Clinic)</p> <p>350 N. Orleans Suite C2-100 Chicago, IL 60654 Tel: 312-409-1555</p> <p>https://www.goladderup.org/our-services/tax-assistance/</p>	<p>Provides free tax and financial services to improve the bottom line of Illinois' families. Through a tax clinic, Ladder Up provides free professional legal services to low-income families facing an IRS controversy. Also provide year-round financial counseling and tools that support and empower the community residents.</p>
<p>Lambda Legal Midwest Regional Office</p> <p>105 W. Adams, 26th Floor Chicago, IL 60603-6208 Tel: 312-663-4413</p>	<p>Lambda Legal's docket consists of test cases in a wide range of areas, including federal and state constitutional law. It has taken cases implicating first amendment and equal protection challenges; discrimination in employment rights, benefits, housing,</p>

Chapter 11: Where to Seek Additional Help

<p>https://www.lambdalegal.org/about-us/contact-us</p>	<p>insurance, schools, and other areas; prevention of anti-gay harassment and violence; anti-gay ballot initiatives; access to healthcare and AIDS-related treatments; child custody, visitation and adoption; and sodomy law reform.</p>
<p>Legal Aid Chicago (formerly LAF)</p> <p>120 S. LaSalle Street Suite 900 Chicago, IL 60603 Tel: 312-341-1070</p> <p>https://www.legalaidchicago.org</p>	<p>Free civil legal services to residents of Chicago and suburban Cook County unable to afford legal counsel.</p> <p>Approximately 84 attorneys provide legal assistance.</p> <p><i>Personal safety and financial stability issues</i> Orders of Protection and No Contact Orders for victims of domestic or sexual violence and elder abuse, custody and divorce (but not simple, uncontested divorce), DCFS investigations of parents and caregivers, and special education and school discipline.</p> <p><i>Housing issues</i> Preventing eviction or termination from subsidized housing and the Housing Choice Voucher Program, housing discrimination, foreclosures defense, restoring utility services, and transfer on death instruments.</p> <p><i>Protection of income and assets from unfair collections and fraud</i> Bankruptcy, student loans, car title and payday loans, unfair debt collection, consumer fraud, driver’s license restoration for debt-related suspension, financial exploitation of older adults, and power of attorney for property/financial.</p> <p><i>Work and employment rights</i> Unemployment Insurance, wage claims, employment discrimination, expungement and sealing of criminal records, protecting rights of migrant workers, and services to victims of human trafficking.</p> <p><i>Health, disability, and basic needs</i> Assisting clients obtain and protect benefits such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance</p>

Finding Illinois Law

	<p>Program (SNAP), Medicare and Medicaid, SSI and Social Security, VA benefits, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and crime victim’s compensation. Protecting rights of long-term care residents in suburban Cook and Lake counties. Assist in drafting healthcare power of attorney and living wills.</p> <p><i>Immigration cases where clients are victims of crime</i> Assist clients obtain protected status via U-visa, VAWA, and T visas.</p>
<p>Legal Council for Health Justice (formerly AIDS Legal Council of Chicago)</p> <p>17 N. State St., Suite 900 Chicago IL 60602 Tel: 312-427-8990</p> <p>https://legalcouncil.org/</p>	<p>Provides legal assistance so that clients and their families can access public benefits, receive a free and appropriate education, and stay healthy. Legal needs include problems accessing health insurance, Medicaid, children’s SSI, Early Intervention (EI), and special education.</p> <p>Provide legal assistance where HIV status is the cause of legal problems. Assist clients with a vast range of issues including but not limited to discrimination, insurance disputes, return-to-work questions, confidentiality, and assistance with applying for public benefits.</p> <p>Provide legal assistance to homeless clients with mental health conditions by helping them obtain Social Security disability benefits (SSI and SSDI) and health services.</p>
<p>Lake County Bar Association Lawyer Referral Service</p> <p>300-A Grand Avenue Waukegan, IL 60085 Tel: 847-244-3140</p> <p>https://lakecountylawyer.info/</p>	<p>Provides attorney referrals.</p>
<p>Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance Foundation - Central and Southern Illinois</p> <p>Dorothy O. Cook Community Law Center 8787 State Street, Suite 201</p>	<p>Provides free, civil legal assistance to low-income persons and senior citizens in 65 counties in central and southern Illinois through five regional offices, three satellite offices, and a centralized telephone intake, advice and referral center (Legal Advice and Referral Center or LARC). LARC provides</p>

Chapter 11: Where to Seek Additional Help

<p>East St. Louis, IL 62203-2026 Tel: 618-398-0574</p> <p>https://lincolnlegal.org/</p>	<p>callers with general information on how to use the legal system; offers free legal advice and self-help materials to low-income callers; and refers qualified low-income callers to LOLLAF branch offices for extended legal services.</p> <p>Matters and topics covered include: Consumers Law, Family Law, Education Law, Elder Law & Disability Rights, Health and Economics Security, and Housing Law.</p>
<p>Lawyers' Committee for Better Housing</p> <p>33 North LaSalle, Suite 900 Chicago, IL 60602 Tel: 312-347-7600</p> <p>https://www.lcbh.org/</p>	<p>Provides assistance to renters dealing with issues involving eviction, building foreclosure, unsafe apartment conditions, such as bed bugs, mold or lead paint, unresponsive landlords, utility shut-off by landlords, and issues with landlords requiring the help of an attorney.</p>
<p>Lawyers for the Creative Arts</p> <p>161 North Clark Street Suite 4300 Chicago, Illinois 60601 Tel: 312-649-4111</p> <p>https://law-arts.org/legal-services</p>	<p>Lawyers for the Creative Arts (LCA) provides pro bono legal services to qualifying individuals and organizations in all areas of the arts: visual, performing, entertainment, and literary. Clients are musicians, dancers, filmmakers, artists, photographers, graphic artists, actors, writers, arts educators, theaters, and many other kinds of organizations. LCA's volunteer attorneys work in the areas of contracts, business planning and organization, intellectual property, licensing, employment, dispute resolution, and more. LCA also provides not-for-profit and tax exemption consulting.</p>
<p>Legal Aid Society of Metropolitan Family Services</p> <p>1 North Dearborn Street 10th Floor Chicago, IL 60602 Tel: 312-986-4200</p> <p>https://www.metrofamily.org/legal-aid-society/practice-groups-2/</p>	<p>The Legal Aid Society supports victims of domestic violence by assisting with orders of protection, dissolution of marriage, child support, visitation for married and unmarried parents, and reversal of parental kidnapping.</p> <p>The Society also devotes resources to elder clients. It helps with orders of protection, guardianships, custody and safe visitation for grandparents, powers of attorney (health care and financial), and living wills.</p> <p>In addition, the Society provides advice and representation on consumer issues such as eviction defense, protection and retention of</p>

Finding Illinois Law

	subsidized housing vouchers, and protection against creditor's unfair practices.
<p>Life Span Center for Legal Services & Advocacy</p> <p>Center for Legal Services & Advocacy 70 E. Lake Street Suite 600 Chicago, IL 60601 Tel: 312-408-1210</p> <p>https://life-span.org/legal-services-and-advocacy/</p>	Provides legal assistance and immigration assistance to victims of domestic violence in Cook County.
<p>Loyola University Law Clinics</p> <p>25 East Pearson Street, Suite 1005 Chicago, IL 60611 Tel: 312-915-7830</p> <p>https://www.luc.edu/law/academics/clinical-programs/index.cfm/communitylawcenterclinic/</p>	<p>Through a number of programs, the Loyola College of Law provides legal services. The programs include:</p> <p>Community Law Center, which takes guardianship, visitation, landlord-tenant, and some simple divorce cases.</p> <p>Civitas Childlaw Clinic, which represents children in settings such as child protection, high conflict custody disputes, immigration, delinquency, and education.</p> <p>Federal Tax Clinic, which represents clients before the IRS and U.S. Tax Court.</p> <p>Business Law Clinic, which provides transactional-related services to small business entrepreneurs.</p> <p>Health Justice Project, which advocates for clients trying to overcome barriers to receiving health care services.</p>
<p>Metropolitan Tenants Organization</p> <p>1727 S. Indiana Ave, Ste. 3G Chicago, IL 60616 Tel: 773-292-4980</p> <p>https://www.tenants-rights.org/</p>	Provide assistance to tenants facing eviction or who live in poor housing conditions.
<p>National Immigrant Justice Center</p> <p>224 S. Michigan Ave., Suite 600 Chicago, IL 60604 Tel: 312-660-1370</p>	Comprehensive immigration legal services to low-income immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers.

Chapter 11: Where to Seek Additional Help

<p>https://www.immigrantjustice.org/</p>	
<p>North Suburban Bar Association</p> <p>400 E Randolph St Suite 2305 Chicago, IL 60601 Tel: 847-759-8700</p> <p>http://www.ilnsba.org</p>	<p>Provides attorney referrals.</p>
<p>Northwest Suburban Bar Association Attorney Referral Service</p> <p>2340 S. Arlington Heights Road Arlington Heights, IL 60005 Tel: 224-404-4845</p> <p>https://www.nwsba.org/page/Community</p>	<p>Provides attorney referrals.</p>
<p>Northern Illinois University College of Law - Legal Clinics</p> <p>Zeke Giorgi Legal Clinic 401 W. State Street, Suite 600 Rockford, IL 61101 Tel: 815-962-9980</p> <p>https://www.niu.edu/law/academics/experiential-learning/clinical/index.shtml</p>	<p>NIU College of Law supports three main clinics providing legal services.</p> <p>The Civil Justice Clinic represents vulnerable residents of Winnebago County, Illinois. The clinic prioritizes the needs of low-income senior citizens and survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. The clinic performs legal work such as drafting estate planning documents and representing clients in civil matters involving orders of protection, domestic violence related family law, small claims, and probate issues.</p> <p>The Criminal Defense Clinic represents adults facing criminal charges such as misdemeanor offenses or major traffic offenses. In addition, the clinic represents individuals in petitioning for removal from the sex offender registry as a result of juvenile sex offense adjudications.</p> <p>The Health Advocacy Clinic addresses legal issues impeding good health, specifically assisting clients with accessing public benefits such as Social Security, Medicaid, Medicare, and food stamps.</p>
<p>Northwestern Bluhm Legal Clinic</p>	<p>The Bluhm Clinic represents clients in adult criminal cases in Cook County on a case-by-case basis. Among these cases are those</p>

Finding Illinois Law

<p>375 East Chicago Avenue Chicago, IL 60611-3069</p> <p>Tel: 312-503-8576</p> <p>https://www.law.northwestern.edu/legalclinic/</p>	<p>involving wrongful conviction claims. The clinic also takes juvenile delinquency, juvenile record expungement, removal of names from the sexual offender registry for juveniles, and immigration cases for women and children fleeing violence.</p>
<p>Peoria County Bar Association</p> <p>110 SW Jefferson Avenue, Suite 520 Peoria, IL 61602 Tel: 217-525-5297</p> <p>http://www.peoriabar.org/</p>	<p>Provides attorney referrals.</p>
<p>Prairie State Legal Services</p> <p>Northern Illinois Various Offices 303 N. Main Street, Suite 600 Rockford, IL 61101 Tel: 815-965-2902</p> <p>https://www.pslegal.org/psls-apply-online.asp</p>	<p>Prairie State Legal Services, Inc. provides free legal services in civil legal matters for persons with a household income below 125% of the federal poverty level and senior citizens age 60 and older regardless of income. Does not take criminal, personal injury, malpractice, or workman’s compensation cases.</p>
<p>Southern Illinois University Domestic Violence Clinic</p> <p>Jackson, Williamson and Union Counties 1150 Douglas Dr. Carbondale, IL 62901 Tel: 618-536-4423</p> <p>https://law.siu.edu/academics/clinics/domestic-clinic/public-programs.html</p>	<p>The Domestic Violence Clinic provides representation to victims of domestic violence in obtaining Orders of Protection. These orders, issued by the court, prohibit someone from harassing or abusing a victim again. The orders can also make an abuser move out of a shared house and can make arrangements for child custody and visitation. If an abuser hurts or harasses the victim again after being ordered not to, the abuser can be charged with the crime of Violation of an Order of Protection.</p>
<p>Southern Illinois University Legal Services to Older Persons Program</p> <p>1150 Douglas Dr. Carbondale, IL 62901 Tel: 800-673-6130</p> <p>https://law.siu.edu/academics/clinics/civil-practice-clinic/public-programs.html</p>	<p>The program provides a full range of civil legal services to those 60 and over. These services include the drafting of simple wills and powers of attorney, assistance with securing public benefits and entitlements including Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and Veteran's benefits. In addition, the clinic handles family law (divorce, etc.) matters, consumer problems, and public utilities problems.</p>
<p>UIC John Marshall Law Community Legal Clinics</p>	<p><i>Fair Housing Legal Support Center & Clinic</i> Represents clients in the Chicago metropolitan area who have been denied</p>

Chapter 11: Where to Seek Additional Help

<p>300 S. State Street Chicago, IL 60604 Tel: 312-427-2737</p> <p>https://jmls.uic.edu/clinics/</p>	<p>housing because of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, familial status, marital status, age, source of income or sexual orientation.</p> <p><i>Community Enterprise & Solidarity Economy Clinic</i> Provides pro-bono services to low or moderate income entrepreneurs and non-profits.</p> <p><i>Veterans Legal Clinic</i> Assists in filing VA benefit claims, appeals, and related veteran’s matters through statewide network of pro bono attorneys.</p> <p><i>International Human Right Clinic</i> Represents victims of human rights violations in domestic and international forums.</p> <p><i>IP Patent Clinic & IP Trademark Clinic</i> Provide legal assistance to inventors and mark owners.</p> <p><i>Pro Bono Litigation Clinic</i> Represents clients in various practice areas.</p>
<p>University of Chicago Law School Clinics</p> <p>6020 South University Avenue Chicago, IL 60637 Tel: 773-702-9494</p> <p>https://www.law.uchicago.edu/clinics</p>	<p>The University of Chicago Law School operates a number of autonomous clinics providing legal services. They include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Abrams Environmental Law Clinic ▪ Civil Rights and Police Accountability Project ▪ Criminal and Juvenile Justice Project Clinic ▪ Employment Law Clinic ▪ Federal Criminal Justice Clinic ▪ Housing Initiative Transactional Clinic ▪ Immigrants’ Rights Clinic ▪ International Human Rights Clinic ▪ Exoneration Project Clinic ▪ Innovation Clinic ▪ Institute for Justice Clinic on Entrepreneurship ▪ Jenner & Block Supreme Court and Appellate Clinic ▪ Kirkland & Ellis Corporate Lab Clinic

Finding Illinois Law

<p>Uptown People’s Law Center 4413 North Sheridan Road Chicago, IL 60640 Tel: 773-769-1411</p> <p>https://www.uplcchicago.org/</p>	<p>Represents poor and working people living in Uptown and other similar communities. The Law Center’s biggest areas of practice are landlord-tenant, Social Security disability, and public benefits. In addition, the Law Center represents prisoners seeking to challenge the way they are treated in prison.</p>
<p>Will County Bar Association Attorney Referral Program</p> <p>167 N. Ottawa St., Suite 200 Joliet, IL 60432 Tel: 815-726-0383</p> <p>https://willcountybar.net/attorney-referral-program/</p>	<p>Provides attorney referrals.</p>
<p>Winnebago County Bar Association Lawyer Referral Service</p> <p>321 West State Street, Suite 300 Rockford, IL 61101 Tel: 815- 964-5152</p> <p>https://wcbrockford.org/all-members/</p>	<p>Provides attorney referrals.</p>

County Law Libraries

<p>Cook County Law Library Daley Center - 50 W Washington St., 29th Fl Chicago, IL 60602 Tel: 312-603-5423</p> <p>https://www.cookcountyil.gov/agency/law-library</p>	<p>Champaign County Law Library 101 E. Main St. Urbana, IL 61801 Tel: 217- 384-0154</p> <p>http://www.co.champaign.il.us/CircuitCourt/LawLibrary.php</p>
<p>DuPage County Law Library 505 N. County Farm Rd, Rm 2015 Wheaton, IL 60187 Tel: 630-407-8811</p> <p>https://www.dupageco.org/lawlibrary/</p>	<p>Kane County Law Library and Self Help Legal Center Kane County Judicial Center, 2nd Fl 37W777 IL Route 38 St. Charles, IL 60175 Tel: 630-406-7126</p> <p>http://www.kclawlibrary.org/</p>
<p>Lake County Law Library 18 N County Street Waukegan, IL 60085 Tel: 847-377-2800</p>	<p>Macon County Law Library County Building 253 E. Wood St., Rm 303 Decatur, IL 62523 Tel: 217-424-1372</p>

Chapter 11: Where to Seek Additional Help

https://www.19thcircuitcourt.state.il.us/1259/Law-Library	
<p>Madison County Law Library 155 N. Main St. Edwardsville, IL 62025 Tel: 618-296-5291</p> <p>https://www.co.madison.il.us/departments/circuit_court/law_library/index.php</p>	<p>McHenry County Law Library McHenry County Government Center, 3rd Fl 2200 North Seminary Ave. Woodstock, IL 60098 Tel: 815-334-4000</p> <p>https://www.mchenrycountyil.gov/county-government/courts/22nd-judicial-circuit/law-library</p>
<p>Peoria County Law Library 324 Main Street Peoria, IL 61602 Tel: 309- 672-6084</p> <p>https://10thcircuitcourtil.org/174/Law-Library</p>	<p>Sangamon County Law Library Sangamon County Complex 200 South Ninth Street, 6th Fl Springfield, IL 62701 Tel: 217-753-6816</p> <p>https://www.co.sangamon.il.us/departments/s-z/seventh-judicial-circuit-court/law-library</p>
<p>Will County Law Library Will County Courthouse 14 W. Jefferson St. Joliet, IL 60432 Tel: 815-727-8400</p> <p>https://www.willcountycourts.com/Law-Library-Main</p>	<p>Winnebago County Law Library 400 W. State St. Rockford, IL 61101 Tel: 815-319-4500</p> <p>http://www.illinois17th.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=292&Itemid=195</p>

Chapter 12

Recommended Publishers & Resources

By Joe Mitzenmacher
Reference and Electronic Services Librarian
Loyola University Chicago Law School (2012)

Updated by Sarah Walangitan
Librarian
Supreme Court of Illinois Library (2021)

This chapter of the guide will focus on “how-to” resources and other legal research sources which are especially helpful for non-lawyers and for other legal researchers who lack access to expensive subscription databases. It is not intended to be an exhaustive list, nor is it designed to be a subject-by-subject breakdown of all available resources. Rather, it is meant to highlight recommended publishers of legal information for non-lawyers and to focus on selected high-quality individual print and online resources.

Many of the listed print resources can be found in public libraries as well as in law libraries, and all of the listed online resources are available for free. Please be advised that when using any “how-to” resource, you must make sure that the information it contains conforms to the laws of your jurisdiction and is up-to-date with current law. Also, you must be aware that these resources may only provide you with a starting point for your legal research, and that in some cases it may still be necessary to contact an attorney for assistance with your legal issue.

Individual Print Titles

These stand-alone books will give you a good starting place for conducting legal research or learning about the law.

The Cybersleuth’s Guide to the Internet: Conducting Effective Free Investigative & Legal Research on the Web (Internet for Lawyers, 2018)

This reference book lists and reviews free and low-cost legal research and investigative research websites. However, it’s more than just a listing of links; the Guide also offers assistance on the most effective way to use those sites, including screenshots to illustrate the step-by-step directions. The Guide also demonstrates how to use several often-overlooked features of Web browsers and provides examples based on real world research scenarios.

Illinois Legal Research (Carolina Academic Press, 2009)

This detailed, yet practical book outlines all of the major sources of Illinois law and how to best use them. Some topics are the same as those covered by this guide, such as administrative law or statutes, but the book also delves into the Constitution, court rules, jury instructions, and secondary sources. Most useful to the non-lawyer may be the instructions on how to use specialized legal resources that are not common in other specialties and how to ensure a law is current.

Law 101: Everything You Need to Know about American Law (Oxford University Press, 2018)

Law 101 is not a “how-to” manual; instead, it provides readers with a basic overview of every aspect of the U.S. legal system. The author covers the topics a student would encounter during the first year of law school along with the civil and criminal litigation process, and refers to significant and interesting cases ranging from *Roe v. Wade* to the McDonald’s hot coffee case as illustrative examples.

A Layperson’s Guide to Legal Research and Self-Help Law Books (New England Law Press, 2019)

There are many topical self-help books that provide information about handling legal problems without an attorney. It can be difficult to wade through the available materials to find what is relevant and reliable. *A Layperson’s Guide* reviews these books and groups them by subject area, allowing readers to narrow down what books or websites will help with their own particular legal issue. Additionally, the book includes a chapter on deciding between self-representation or hiring a lawyer.

Nolo’s Plain-English Law Dictionary (Nolo, 2009)

Legal professionals will frequently turn to legal dictionaries to understand the meaning of words and phrases they encounter. Nolo’s dictionary contains 3,800 terms and is written specifically to explain legal terms to people who are not lawyers. Many legal terms are in Latin, and the Dictionary provides simple translations for those.

Print Series

Books published by the following publishers or organizations can be considered an authoritative and accurate source of the law. Titles from these publishers will often be available in public law libraries.

American Bar Association

The American Bar Association (ABA) is a national organization for lawyers and its mission includes serving the public. Different divisions within the ABA publish self-help books which are designed to give practical legal advice to non-lawyers. These books often include easy-to-understand information, sidebars with tips, additional resources, and checklists. Look for books with “Guide” in the title, such as *Ripped Off! A Servicemember’s Guide to Common Scams, Frauds, and Bad Deals* and *You and Your Aging Parents: The American Bar Association Guide to Legal, Financial, and Health Care Issues*.

Illinois State Bar Association

The Illinois State Bar Association (ISBA) is the largest legal association in Illinois. Its mission includes “proposing and shaping legislation, educating the public, and supporting the courts and the rule of law.” Books published by the ISBA will apply to law specifically in the state of Illinois.

Illinois Institute for Continuing Legal Education

The Illinois Institute for Continuing Legal Education (IICLE) provides educational trainings for attorneys in Illinois. The organization strives to meet the needs of its constituency through “the publication of comprehensive practice handbooks designed by and for Illinois attorneys.” Despite this goal, many non-lawyers find these books a useful resource because they explain the basics of

law and include forms and filing checklists. They address wide-ranging topics with titles on family law, civil procedure, real estate, insurance law, and [more](#).

Nolo

Nolo (formerly known as “Nolo Press”) is a leading publisher of “do-it-yourself” law books aimed at non-lawyers. Check Nolo’s [website](#) for a full listing of titles, including subject-specific form books and titles on topics ranging from accidents and injuries to wills and trusts.

Sample publications:

- *Legal Research: How to Find & Understand the Law* – guides non-lawyers through the entire legal research process and provides instruction on topics such as: the basics of the legal system; how to frame a legal issue to make your research as efficient as possible; how to find the primary and secondary sources which are needed to answer a legal question; and how to organize and use the results of a legal research project.
- *Nolo’s Encyclopedia of Everyday Law: Answers to Your Most Frequently Asked Legal Questions* – written by Nolo’s team of attorneys; this title provides concise, easy-to-understand answers on a wide range of legal questions, including assistance with debt and bankruptcy matters, divorce and child custody issues, estate planning, and landlord-tenant law.
- *Represent Yourself in Court* – provides guidance on filing court papers, preparing evidence and witnesses, and handling depositions and interrogatories.

West’s Nutshell Series

Nutshells are short paperback volumes which are generally used by students as study aids, but they can also help give non-lawyers a general overview of an area of law. Over 150 titles are available in the Nutshell series. These titles range in complexity from basic topics such as *Family Law* and *Wills and Estates* to more complex topics such as *Coastal and Ocean Management Law*. There are also Nutshells that cover the topics of legal research and legal writing. Check West Academic’s [website](#) for a full listing of titles.

Online Resources: Illinois

The following resources are all freely available on the internet and are specific to Illinois law. See [Chapter 9: Free and Low-Cost Legal Research Resources](#) for where to find primary sources of Illinois law like court opinions and statutes.

[Appellate Lawyers Association Guide to Illinois Civil Appellate Procedure](#)

In publication since 1989, this guide has been continually updated in order to help self-represented litigants making appeals in the Illinois Courts. The guide explicitly states that it will not help with writing briefs or making oral arguments, but it provides many details to guide users through the complexities of appeal procedures.

[Cook County Clerk of the Circuit Court Self Represented \(Pro Se\) Resources](#)

A portal to information and public resources designed for people representing themselves in Cook County Courts. The site is organized by topic (e.g., “Going to Court” or “Small Claims”), and under each topic are relevant forms and how-to guides. “[Self Help Resources in and around the](#)

[Daley Center](#)” lists contact information for different legal aid organizations and advice desks that can assist with legal questions.

[Illinois.gov](#)

A portal to information from the Illinois government. The homepage offers a search function that searches and sorts all services, agencies, and news. There are links for all state [government agencies](#), such as the Secretary of State or Illinois Department of Human Services. Popular services are highlighted, including information on unemployment benefits, professional licenses, and programs for firearm owners.

[Illinois Legal Aid Online](#)

ILAO aims to simplify the law so that people can resolve their problems. This organization provides articles that explain the law in plain English, access to free fillable forms, and attorney referrals:

- [Resources](#) – a library of articles containing simplified explanations of the law and court procedures, sorted into categories such as “Family & Safety,” “House & Apartment,” and “Courts & Hearings.” Most articles include comments sections where users can have questions answered, as well as links to related articles and forms.
- [Get Legal Help](#) – a form invites users to give information about their legal problem, location, and income. ILAO will offer referrals or other resources based on the submitted forms.
- [Glossary](#) – a dictionary of commonly used legal terms and their plain English definitions.

[Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Access to Justice](#)

The ATJ commission is charged with promoting equal access to the civil court system. They “focus on improvements, resources, and programs within the judicial system that help self-represented litigants and limited English proficient litigants access [the] courts, assist legal aid and pro bono attorneys in representing their clients, and support the judiciary and other court staff in ensuring justice for all.”

- [Statewide Forms](#) – fillable, ADA accessible forms that are accepted in all Illinois courts.
- [E-filing Information](#) – instructions on electronic filing in Illinois, including written instructions, screenshots, and audio-visual guides.
- [Language Access Programs](#) – includes a Court Interpreter Registry that lists “certified, registered, and qualified spoken language interpreters and sign language interpreters.”
- Resources for self-represented litigants to [start a case](#) or [respond to a case](#) – for individuals representing themselves in court, this page provides forms and information about the areas of law where self-representation is most common, including eviction, family law, and small claims.
- [Resources for Self-Represented Litigants in Civil Appeals](#) – for individuals representing themselves in civil appeals, this page provides instructions on how to conduct legal research, write an appellate brief, and electronically file court documents.. The ATJ also offers instructions on submitting questions specifically about civil appeals to the [Illinois Free Legal Answers for Civil Appeals](#) program.

[Illinois State Bar Association: For the Public](#)

The ISBA provides legal information for the public as well as a portal for finding lawyers:

Finding Illinois Law

- [Illinois Lawyer Finder](#) – offers two ways to find a lawyer: an online directory and a phone number for a referral to a lawyer’s office for a low-cost 30-minute consultation.
- [Legal Information](#) – links to resource guides for a number of legal issues, including vehicles, healthcare, and your personal rights.

Online Resources: Federal & Other Jurisdictions

The following resources are freely available on the internet and apply to more general U.S. law or states other than Illinois. See [Chapter 9: Free and Low-Cost Legal Research Resources](#) for primary sources of federal law. See [Chapter 7: Researching Outside of Illinois: The Laws of Indiana and Wisconsin](#) for more information on the laws of other states.

AALL How to Research a Legal Problem: A Guide for Non-Lawyers

Created by the American Association of Law Libraries, this Guide is “intended to help a person with a legal problem find legal rules that can resolve or prevent conflict.” The Guide includes start-to-finish instructions, including when to stop researching, and links to helpful free resources. Additionally, the publication has recommendations on making sure cases and statutes are still valid.

American Bar Association Legal Resources for the Public

The ABA’s public legal resources include information on consumer legal issues, educational materials, practical law guides, a virtual advice clinic, and general publications about the law and the legal system. Linked resources include:

- [ABA Free Legal Answers](#) – users may post questions about civil legal matters. Lawyers will answer questions for free, but they will not represent users long-term. This is a resource for getting free basic legal advice.
- [Law Issues for Consumers](#) – links to practical law guides on topics of real estate, auto and vehicle, personal finance, technology law, and more.
- [Estate Planning FAQs](#) – answers to questions about wills, trusts, power of attorney, the probate process, asset planning, and more.
- [Real Estate FAQs](#) – answers to common questions regarding residential and commercial real estate. Also includes a glossary of real estate terms and home buying resources.
- [ABA Home Front](#) – resources specifically for military families. Includes a directory of programs tailored specifically to military families and legal issue guides, such as child custody and the Service Members Civil Relief Act.

FindLaw

FindLaw is a free online portal site which is maintained by West Publishing, a major legal publisher. Resources available in FindLaw include:

- [Find a Lawyer](#) – a directory of attorneys which is searchable by city, state, or legal issue.
- [Learn About the Law](#) – guidance on legal issues related to topics such as will preparation, family issues, small businesses, workplace rights, and others.
- [State Laws](#) – state-by-state listing of where to find laws online, as well as guidance on statutes related to specific areas of law such as education, taxes, or civil rights.
- [Blogs](#) – links to numerous blogs for the most up-to-date legal news. Blogs are categorized by general interest, legal news, business of law, and legal practice.

Free Law Project

The goal of this non-profit is “to make the legal world more fair and efficient.” The website includes details on a number of projects, including:

- [Court Listener](#) – a free legal research website with millions of legal opinions from federal and state courts.
- [RECAP Archive](#) – access to documents and dockets from federal courts. RECAP is a crowd-sourced archive of documents from PACER, a fee-based government system. Not everything from PACER will be found here, but the archive does include every free PACER opinion and converts PDFs to text.

Georgetown Law Library: Research Guides, Treatise Finders, & Tutorials

Georgetown Law Library provides an extensive list of research guides based on geography and legal topic. There is a guide for each U.S. state with sections such as “Statutes & Legislation,” “Regulations & Agencies,” “Cases & Courts,” and “Local Government.” Additional topical guides outline different formats for finding information: books, newsletters, organizations, etc. Additional resources include:

- [Treatise Finders](#) – treatises are books that cover specific legal subjects. Find extensive subject lists sorted by topic from this page.
- [Tutorials](#) – video tutorials on a variety of subjects, including case law research, administrative law, and strategies for legal research.

Indiana Courts Information for the Public

The portal for information related to the Indiana Courts. Locate resources for finding legal assistance, obtaining records, and guides on topics such as child support and orders of protection. Also links to Indiana’s [Self-Service Legal Center](#), which contains court forms and referrals to legal aid agencies.

Legal Information Institute

Hosted by Cornell Law School, the Legal Information Institute (LII) provides users with a wealth of free legal research resources, including the full text of all U.S. Supreme Court opinions issued since 1992 (along with full text of selected older opinions), the United States Code, the Code of Federal Regulations, federal court rules, the Uniform Commercial Code, and links to online state law materials, searchable by state or by topic. In addition, LII also sponsors several useful features:

- [Wex](#) – a collaboratively-created free legal dictionary and encyclopedia which is edited by legal experts.
- [Introduction to Basic Legal Citation](#) – a short guide on how to cite legal resources with accompanying video tutorials.
- [Lawyers](#) – search by state or practice area.

Library of Congress Guide to Law Online

Prepared by the Law Library of Congress Public Services Division, the Guide to Law Online is an annotated guide to online sources of information on government and law. It includes selected links to useful and reliable sites for legal information. Resources are grouped by jurisdiction (International and Multinational, Nations of the World, U.S. Federal, U.S. States and Territories, and Indigenous Law), and the linked material includes some sources which are written for non-lawyers.

[National Consumer Law Center](#)

The National Consumer Law Center is a nonprofit which works “for consumer justice and economic security for low-income and other disadvantaged people, including older adults, in the U.S.” The “For Consumers” tab of their website provides guides, brochures, and fact sheets on issues related to debt, disaster relief, taxes, and credit.

[Nolo](#)

The website of the legal Publisher Nolo (see “Nolo” in the “Print Series” section above) includes free, practical information on a wide variety of topics. Click on the “Legal Articles” tab to find articles on subjects such as bankruptcy, criminal law, real estate law, taxes, and wills and estates. All are written in easy-to-understand language. Explore the other free tools on the website, including:

- [Dictionary](#) – plain-English definitions for legal terms.
- [Calculators](#) – individual calculators for specific topics such as home financing, personal financing investment, retirement, and lease. Each calculator addresses a question, such as “How long will my retirement savings last?” or “How much will my fixed rate mortgage payment be?”
- [Law Firms & Lawyers](#) – search by practice area and state.

[USA.gov](#)

USA.gov is the official gateway to online information from federal and state governments, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories. Many federal and state government agencies (*e.g.*, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the Social Security Administration, and the Occupational Health & Safety Administration) provide basic guidance on legal matters on their websites, and you can find links to those agency sites by searching for them on USA.gov. The [Laws and Legal Issues](#) section provides guidance on reporting crimes, scams and frauds, voting and elections, disability rights, and other topics.

[Wisconsin Court System Self-Help Law Center](#)

This center is “designed to help you find forms, learn about Wisconsin law and court procedures and represent yourself in some court matters.” Some of the informational topics include divorce and family law, restraining orders, and probate. The website also links to the [Wisconsin State Law Library](#) and pathways to seek assistance from reference librarians.

[Online Resources in Other Languages](#)

[Abogado](#)

Attorney referrals and legal resources in Spanish. Topics include family law, immigration, labor law, and more. The video library provides guidance on topics ranging from general guidance on how to prepare for a meeting with a lawyer, to all sorts of specific legal issues such as tax law or foster care.

Illinois Attorney General

The Illinois Attorney General website provides some articles and legal referral information in [Spanish](#). [Select resources](#) are also available in Chinese, Korean, Polish, and Vietnamese.

Illinois Legal Aid Online

All the same resources listed above, in [Polish](#) and [Spanish](#).

Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Access to Justice

The same website as above, in Spanish. The ATJ has also enacted several programs to assist Limited English Proficient individuals:

- [Legal Glossaries](#) – terms are defined in Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Russian, Spanish, Urdu, and Vietnamese.
- [Forms](#) – commonly used forms are available in Spanish Polish, Arabic, Chinese, Russian, and Korean. Availability varies.

USA.gov

All the same resources as listed above, in Spanish.

Wex: Español

The Legal Information Institute's collaboratively created legal dictionary, in Spanish.