



Researching Current Federal Legislation and Regulations: A Guide to Resources for Congressional Staff

Jerry W. Mansfield
Information Research Specialist

August 31, 2012

Congressional Research Service

7-5700

www.crs.gov

RL33895

Summary

This report is designed to introduce congressional staff to selected governmental and nongovernmental sources that are useful in tracking and obtaining information federal legislation and regulations. It includes governmental sources such as the Legislative Information System (LIS), THOMAS, the Government Printing Office's Federal Digital System (FDsys), and U.S. Senate and House websites. Nongovernmental or commercial sources include resources such as HeinOnline and the Congressional Quarterly (CQ) websites. It also highlights classes offered by the Congressional Research Service (CRS) and the Library of Congress Law Library.

This report will be updated as new information is available.

Contents

Introduction.....	1
Researching Current Federal Legislation	1
Governmental Sources.....	1
Nongovernmental Sources.....	5
Researching Current Federal Regulations	7
Governmental Sources.....	7
Nongovernmental Sources.....	9
Media Sources	9
CRS Resources	10
Classes at CRS.....	10
Congressional Dictionary	12
Selected CRS Reports.....	12

Appendixes

Appendix. Comparison of LIS and THOMAS	13
--	----

Contacts

Author Contact Information.....	14
Acknowledgments	14

Introduction

Written for congressional staff, this report identifies and provides website addresses and other contact information for official governmental and nongovernmental sources that are useful in researching current federal legislation and regulations. It also provides information on useful classes offered by the Congressional Research Service (CRS) and the Library of Congress (LOC) Law Library.

Researching Current Federal Legislation

Researching current federal legislation includes identifying action on pending or passed legislation and locating the relevant documents or text. Analysis, discussion, or media coverage of pending or passed legislation also has a role in the legislative research process. These functions may be accomplished by using governmental, congressional, or commercial services.

Governmental Sources

Congressional Record

<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/browse/collection.action?collectionCode=CREC> and available via the Legislative Information System at <http://www.congress.gov>

Action on legislation passed or pending in the current Congress, and its status in the legislative process, is reported in the *Congressional Record*. The *Record* is published each day that one or both chambers are in session, except in instances when two or more consecutive issues are printed together. The *Congressional Record* contains the edited transcript of activities on the floor of the House and Senate. It is the primary source for the text of floor debates and the official source for recorded votes. The *Record's* Daily Digest section summarizes action in each chamber and identifies committee hearings, new public laws, official foreign travel reports, procedural agreements, Senate unanimous consent agreements, treaties and nominations actions, and committee meetings scheduled for the next legislative day. Indexes for the *Congressional Record* are issued twice a month. The Subject Index section can be used to identify bills by topic, and the History of Bills and Resolutions section tracks action on special bills.

Daily Compilation of Presidential Documents

<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/browse/collection.action?collectionCode=CPD>

Published by the Office of the Federal Register, the *Daily Compilation of Presidential Documents* (and its predecessor, the *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*) provides the dates on which the President signed or vetoed legislation. It also contains transcripts of presidential messages to Congress, executive orders, press releases, nominations submitted to the Senate, speeches, and other material released by the White House.

Legislative Information System

<http://www.congress.gov>

The Legislative Information System (LIS) provides Members of Congress and their staff access to legislative information. The legislative information available includes bill summary and status,

bill text, the *Congressional Record*, and committee reports. Basic information about bills, including the sponsor and cosponsors, committees of referral, official or long title, and bill status, appears in the Bill Summary & Status section.¹

Congressional staff may use the LIS Alert Service to obtain e-mail alerts regarding action on bills and amendments for subjects that they identify. Once established, alerts run automatically and generate e-mails Monday through Friday when there is new information. To subscribe, go to LIS Alerts at <http://www.congress.gov/help/about-alert.html>.

A version of a bill or resolution will typically appear in LIS a day or two after it is introduced or has had action on the floor of the House or Senate. The text of bills is prepared by the Government Printing Office (GPO) and sent to the Library of Congress at various times throughout the day.

For an estimate as to when GPO will publish the text, contact the

- GPO Congressional Desk for House bill versions at 202-512-0224 or
- Senate Bill Clerk for Senate bill versions at 202-224-2118.

Note that the bill number may not determine the chamber for the most recent version. For example, H.R. 1792 RS is a Senate version (RS=Reported in Senate) of a House bill.

GPO Federal Digital System

<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys>

The Government Printing Office's Federal Digital System (FDsys) is a website that enables GPO to display and deliver information from all branches of the U.S. government. Materials available on FDsys include the full-text of bills, the *Congressional Record* and the *Congressional Record Index* (which includes the History of Bills and Resolutions section), congressional calendars, public laws, selected congressional reports and documents, the *Daily Compilation of Presidential Documents*, and the *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*, the *Federal Register*, and the *Code of Federal Regulations*. Coverage for each of these publications varies.

THOMAS

<http://thomas.loc.gov>

LOC makes information on federal legislation freely available to the public through THOMAS. Using THOMAS, one can track bills and resolutions, public laws and other activities of Congress, and access the *Congressional Record*. Background information on and links to material concerning the legislative process, specifically the publication "How Our Laws Are Made," prepared by the parliamentarian of the House of Representatives, are available at <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/lawsmade.toc.html#>. (See Error! Reference source not found. for a comparison of THOMAS and LIS.)

¹ LIS is a product of the Congressional Research Service and is only available on Legislative branch computers. The public equivalent of LIS is THOMAS. A new public beta website is scheduled to be released by the Library of Congress in mid-September 2012. This website will replace both LIS and THOMAS no later than October 1, 2014.

House of Representatives Home Page

<http://www.house.gov>

This website has information available from and on the House of Representatives, including the following:

- Congressional calendars
House calendars (104th Congress, 1995-present)
<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/browse/collection.action?collectionCode=CCAL>
- House and committee activities
<http://www.house.gov/committees>
- Legislative schedules
<http://clerk.house.gov/floorsummary/floor.aspx>
- Directories of Representatives by state, district, and name
<http://www.house.gov/representatives>
- The chamber's leadership
<http://www.house.gov/leadership>
- House roll call votes starting with the 101st Congress, second session (1990)
<http://clerk.house.gov/legislative/legvotes.aspx>
- Brief descriptions of floor proceedings when the House is in session
<http://clerk.house.gov/floorsummary/floor.aspx>

House Documents

<http://clerk.house.gov/legislative/housedoc.aspx>

The House documents website provides links to sources for electronic copies of congressional bills, resolutions, and committee reports via the House Library, LOC's THOMAS, and GPO's FDsys. The House documents room, located in B106 of the Cannon House Office Building, can be reached at (202) 226-5200.

A weekly compilation of bills that may be considered on the House floor is available from the Office of the Clerk at <http://docs.house.gov>.

House Legislative Resource Center

http://clerk.house.gov/about/offices_Lrc.aspx

The Legislative Resource Center (LRC), located in B106 of the Cannon House Office Building, provides centralized access to all published documents originated and produced by the House and its committees, the historical records of the House since 1792, and legislative and legal reference resources. Congressional staff can retrieve legislative information and records of the House for congressional offices and the public by calling (202) 226-5200.

Senate Home Page

<http://www.senate.gov>

Materials of legislative interest offered from and on the Senate include the following:

- Congressional calendars
Senate calendars (104th Congress, 1995-present)
<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/browse/collection.action?collectionCode=CCAL>
- Background information on and links to materials on the legislative process, including a “How a Bill Becomes a Law” flowchart
http://www.senate.gov/pagelayout/legislative/d_three_sections_with_teasers/process.htm
- Senate roll call votes starting with the 101st Congress (1989-1990)
http://www.senate.gov/pagelayout/legislative/a_three_sections_with_teasers/votes.htm
- The chamber’s leadership
http://www.senate.gov/pagelayout/senators/a_three_sections_with_teasers/leadership.htm
- Descriptions of the Senate committee system and of individual committees
http://www.senate.gov/pagelayout/committees/d_three_sections_with_teasers/committees_home.htm
- Directories of Senators by name, state, class (term expiration date), and party
http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm
- Glossary of common legislative terms
http://www.senate.gov/pagelayout/reference/b_three_sections_with_teasers/glossary.htm

Senate Printing and Documents Service

http://www.senate.gov/legislative/common/generic/Doc_Room.htm

The Senate documents room provides copies of bills, reports, Senate documents, and laws. Contact information is as follows:

B-04 Hart Senate Building Office
9:00 a.m.-5:30 p.m., Monday-Friday
Phone: (202) 224-7701 (availability inquiries only)
Fax: (202) 228-2815
E-mail: orders@sec.senate.gov

Daily Schedule Information

Both parties in the Senate and the House provide recorded messages about the proceedings on the floor of each chamber every day they are in session. Call the following numbers for cloakroom recordings:

Senate at (202) 224-8541 (Democratic) or (202) 224-8601 (Republican)

House at (202) 225-7400 (Democratic) or (202) 225-7430 (Republican)

Public Laws Update Service

Information on new public law numbers assigned to recently enacted laws can be obtained from a recorded message maintained by the National Archives and Records Administration's Office of the Federal Register at (202) 741-6043 or by subscribing to its Public Laws Electronic Notification Service (PENS). To subscribe, send an e-mail to listserv@www.gsa.gov with the text message "SUBSCRIBE PUBLAWS-L."

White House Executive Clerk's Office

By way of a recorded message, the Office of the Executive Clerk at the White House provides dates for the following information: presidential signings or vetoes of recent legislation, presidential messages, executive orders, and other official presidential action. If the desired information is not in the taped message, callers can stay on the line to speak with a staffer. The recorded message is available at (202) 456-2226.

Nongovernmental Sources

Bloomberg Government

<http://www.bgov.com>

A fee-based subscription database that provides analysis as well as content from news sources worldwide. Services include alerts, transcripts, searchable legislation, congressional, state, and district profiles, and more. Coverage for most historical data begins with the 109th Congress (2005-2006).

CQ.com

<http://www.cq.com>

This fee-based subscription database provides bill texts, summaries, tracking, and analysis. Among its other features are forecasts of major pending bills; versions of bills; links to related bills; roll-call votes; legislative histories; floor and committee schedules; detailed committee coverage; texts of committee reports; transcripts of witnesses' testimony; and publications such as the *CQ Weekly*, *CQ Today*, and the *Congressional Record*. Time spans covered vary by the category of information.

GovTrack

<http://www.govtrack.us>

GovTrack is a free service that can help to determine the status of U.S. federal legislation, voting records for the Senate and the House of Representatives, information on Members of Congress, congressional district maps, and the status of state legislation. State legislative information is a new feature as of June 2012. Federal legislation may be searched and browsed back to the 93rd Congress (1973-1974) and the text of legislation is available as far back as the 106th Congress (1999-2000).

HeinOnline

<http://heinonline.org>

HeinOnline is a searchable digital library of current and historical materials, including some congressional documents back to 1789. The database also includes legal journals, texts, cases, statutes, regulations, presidential materials, treaties, as well as international and foreign legal journals, cases, and materials. Many are full text in the original page-image (PDF) format. HeinOnline is fee-based and available only to subscribers.

National Journal

<http://www.nationaljournal.com/njonline>

The National Journal Group is a source of writings on the current political environment and emerging policy trends. Its information products include *National Journal*, *Congress Daily*, *The Hotline*, *NationalJournal.com*, *The Capitol Source*, *The Almanac of American Politics*, *Convention Daily*, *National Journal On Air*, and *Washington Week with Gwen Ifill*. All House and Senate offices have access to, at no cost, *NationalJournal.com*, *National Journal Daily*, and *National Journal Hotline*, as well as to the print versions of *National Journal Daily* and the weekly *National Journal Magazine*.

ProQuest Congressional

<http://www.web.lexis-nexis.com/congcomp>

This database contains detailed abstracts and links to the full text of many congressional and federal documents, such as the *Congressional Record*, congressional hearing transcripts, committee prints, and legislative histories. Length of coverage varies depending on the category of information. It is the enhanced web-based counterpart of the *CIS/Index to Publications of the United States Congress*. This resource is fee-based and accessible only to subscribers. ProQuest Congressional is available to all House and Senate offices.

Scout - Federal and State Legislative Alert Service

<https://scout.sunlightfoundation.com>

Scout is a legislative and regulatory alerts service from the Sunlight Foundation, which provides updates on federal and state legislation as well as *Congressional Record* speeches and federal regulations. Bill text is provided by GPO, and most other information on bills comes from GovTrack, through THOMAS. Information from THOMAS and GPO is delayed by about one day. Scout's data covers 2009 to the present.

Information on floor votes and committee hearings comes directly from the official House and Senate websites. This information is scheduled to be updated throughout the day and appears in Scout immediately after publication. Notices of when a bill is scheduled for floor debate come from the House Republican Majority Leader and the Senate Democratic Caucus. This information is usually published a few days in advance and can change rapidly.

Information on state legislation comes from Open States, a Sunlight Foundation project that publishes data on state legislative activity for all 50 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia. This data originates from the official websites of the 50 state legislatures, and it is published at various times throughout the day, depending on the state.

Regulatory information is provided from the *Federal Register* and published throughout the day. Scout's data covers 2009 to the present.

Researching Current Federal Regulations

Regulations are issued by federal departments and agencies under the authority delegated to them by federal law.² Final rules are printed in the *Federal Register (FR)* and later codified by subject in the *Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)*.

Governmental Sources

Code of Federal Regulations

<http://gpo.gov/fdsys>

The *Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)* codifies final rules having general applicability and legal effect that first appeared in the *FR*. The *CFR*'s 50 titles are arranged by subject. The *CFR* is revised annually (one-quarter of the titles at a time) in January, April, July, and October. Because the annual revision incorporates new regulations and drops superseded ones, the *CFR* reflects regulations in effect at the time of printing. An index volume that includes tables accompanies the set. By using the *FR* and *CFR* sources, with their many finding aids, it is possible to identify existing regulations in a subject area or those that pertain to a specific title and section of the *United States Code*, identify regulations issued pursuant to a specific public law, and find proposed regulations that are not yet final.³

The Electronic Code of Federal Regulations, <http://ecfr.gpo.gov> (e-CFR), is the current, updated version of the *CFR*. However, it is not an official legal edition of the *CFR*, but an unofficial editorial compilation of *CFR* material and *FR* amendments produced by the National Archives and Records Administration's Office of the Federal Register (OFR) and GPO. The OFR updates the e-CFR on a daily basis.

Federal Register

<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/browse/collection.action?collectionCode=FR>

The *Federal Register (FR)* contains the official announcement of regulations and legal notices issued by federal departments and agencies. It includes proposed and final federal regulations having general applicability and legal effect; executive orders and presidential proclamations; documents required to be published by act of Congress; and other federal documents of public interest. Daily and monthly indexes, and an accompanying publication, *List of CFR Sections Affected*, aid in its use.

The *FR* also publishes the "Unified Agenda of Federal Regulatory and Deregulatory Actions" twice yearly (usually in April and October). This document provides advance notice of proposed

² For more information, see CRS Report RL32240, *The Federal Rulemaking Process: An Overview*, by Maeve P. Carey.

³ For more information, see CRS Report RL30812, *Federal Statutes: What They Are and Where to Find Them*, by Cassandra L. Foley.

rulemaking by listing all rules and proposed rules that more than 60 federal departments, agencies, and commissions expect to issue during the next six months. Regulations that concern the military or foreign affairs, or that deal only with agency personnel, organization, or management matters, are excluded. The agenda is available online from 1994 through the present.

GPO Federal Digital System

<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys>

The Government Printing Office's Federal Digital System (FDsys) is a website that enables GPO to display and deliver information from all branches of the U.S. government. Materials available on FDsys include the full-text of bills, the *Congressional Record* and the *Congressional Record Index* (which includes the History of Bills and Resolutions section), congressional calendars, public laws, selected congressional reports and documents, the *Daily Compilation of Presidential Documents*, and the *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*, the *Federal Register*, and the *Code of Federal Regulations*. Coverage varies by title.

RegInfo.gov

<http://www.reginfo.gov>

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the General Services Administration (GSA) produce this website. RegInfo.gov provides a list of all rules undergoing Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA) E.O. 12866 regulatory review. Updated daily, it also provides a list of all rules on which review has been concluded in the past 30 days; lists and statistics on regulatory reviews dating back to 1981; and letters to agencies regarding regulatory actions.

Regulations.gov

<http://www.regulations.gov>

This website was launched in 2003 to enhance public participation in federal regulatory activities. Users can search and view proposed regulations from more than 176 federal departments and agencies. Many proposed regulations include a link to a comment form that readers can complete and submit to the appropriate department or agency. There are 127 non-participating agencies that may receive comments through this site. Regulations.gov is updated each business day with proposed new regulations. Among the database's search options are keyword or subject; department or agency name; regulations published today; comments due today; open regulations or comments by publication dates; and *Code of Federal Regulations* citation.

White House Executive Clerk's Office

The Office of the Executive Clerk at the White House provides a recorded message with information on the dates that executive orders and presidential proclamations appeared in the *Federal Register*. If the desired information is not included in the taped message, callers can also be connected to a staff member. The recorded message is available at (202) 456-2226.

Nongovernmental Sources

BNA's Daily Report for Executives

<http://dailyreport.bna.com>

This online report covers a broad spectrum of issues, providing news reports and links to the full text of key documents, such as proposed and final legislation, regulations, testimony, and fact sheets summarizing major issues. Available in electronic and print formats only to subscribers.

Federal Regulatory Directory

<http://www.cqpress.com/product/Federal-Regulatory-Directory-15th.html>

This link leads to a product description and purchase information for the *Federal Regulatory Directory*. This publication may be purchased in print or electronic format. The *Federal Regulatory Directory* provides profiles of the mandates and operations of more than 100 federal regulatory agencies and is published every two years. Each profile gives a brief history and description of the agency and its regulatory oversight responsibilities, and lists key staff, information sources, legislation, and regional offices. It also provides an overview of the federal regulatory process. Other aids are the full texts of key regulatory acts and executive orders, a guide to using the *Federal Register* and the *Code of Federal Regulations*, and subject and name indexes.

HeinOnline

<http://heinonline.org>

HeinOnline is a searchable digital library of current and historical materials, including some U.S. congressional documents back to 1789. The *United States Codes*, *Code of Federal Regulations*, and *U.S. Statutes at Large* are accessible through HeinOnline. Users can browse *CFR* indexes, determine if a federal regulation is current, find a presidential proclamation or an executive order. HeinOnline is available only to subscribers.

Media Sources

Print and web-based media sources provide useful background information on the status of federal legislation and regulations through their reporting, political analysis, and editorial perspectives. None of the sources listed are endorsed by CRS.

CQ.com

<http://www.cq.com>

In addition to the legislative analysis and tracking role of this fee-based subscription service, CQ.com also provides a daily news feature, full-text of *CQ Weekly*, *Budget Tracker* for articles on appropriations bills and continuing resolutions, and a variety of CQ specialty news sources such as *CQ Healthbeat*, *CQ Homeland Security*, *CQ Financial Transcripts*, and *CQ Hot Docs*. RSS news feeds are also provided as news occurs.

C-SPAN.org

<http://www.c-span.org>

C-SPAN is a private, nonprofit company, created in 1979 by the cable television industry as a public service. Its mission is to provide public access to the political process.

The Hill

<http://www.thehill.com>

The Hill is a weekly newspaper covering Congress and its members.

Politico

<http://www.politico.com>

Politico.com covers political news with a focus on national politics, Congress, Capitol Hill, the presidential race, lobbying, and advocacy.

Politico Pro

<https://www.politicopro.com>

This premium subscription service goes beyond the standard political news coverage of its sister publication, *Politico*. According to its website, *Politico Pro* was launched in June 2010 to provide “access to intense *Politico*-style coverage of Washington’s most important policy issues.” At present, six issue areas are covered—Defense, Energy, Finance, Health Care, Technology, and Transportation.

Roll Call

<http://www.rollcall.com>

Roll Call, a daily newspaper, has been covering Capitol Hill news since 1955. *Roll Call* is free to congressional staff, both online and in print.

CRS Resources

Classes at CRS

Introduction to Legislative Research: Using Books and the Internet to Locate Laws, Regulations, and Court Decisions

A two and a half hour seminar offered six times a year by the Library of Congress Law Library and CRS. This seminar outlines the fundamentals of legal research and focuses on sources of federal legal materials: Congress, the executive branch, and the federal courts. It covers print and electronic sources and examines the basic legal documents each branch generates and the types of information contained in them. The documents include the *U.S. Code*, the *Federal Register*, the *Code of Federal Regulations*, the *U.S. Reports*, the *Federal Reporter*, and the *Federal Supplement*. The seminar is intended for staff with limited or no experience with federal legal research techniques. To register, go to http://www.crs.gov/programs/Pages/eventcal_legal.aspx and select class from the Events Calendar, then select “Register” tab.

Federal Legislative History Research: Using Print and Electronic Resources

This two and a half hour seminar is offered four times a year. A Library of Congress Law Library specialist will discuss various electronic and print chronological and topical publications containing federal laws and how to research the legislative history of those laws. Participants will be shown where and how to locate electronic and print versions of congressional documents, including bills, resolutions, committee reports and prints, and floor debates that are generated in the legislative process constituting the legislative history of those laws. Sources of compiled legislative histories and methods of compiling legislative histories will be covered. Internet sources that will be discussed include THOMAS and other Library of Congress sites, GPO's FDsys, and various congressional sites. To register, go to http://www.crs.gov/programs/Pages/eventcal_legal.aspx and select class from the Events Calendar, then select "Register" tab.

Federal Statutory Research: Using Print and Electronic Resources

This two and a half hour seminar is offered two times a year. Content coverage includes organizational principles and features facilitating research, the historical development of federal statutory publications, and an explanation as to the significance of enactment of titles of the United States Code into positive law. Internet sources that will be discussed include THOMAS and other Library of Congress sites, various congressional sites, GPO's FDsys, and Cornell's Legal Information Institute site. To register, go to http://www.crs.gov/programs/Pages/eventcal_legal.aspx and select class from the Events Calendar, then select "Register" tab.

Introduction to Congress Courses

CRS staff regularly provide classroom instruction to congressional staff on legislative process and procedure. Two such courses available to House and Senate staff are

- **Congress: An Introduction to Resources and Procedure.** This is an all-day program that is designed for those seeking a better understanding of the legislative process and the resources available to monitor it. This program is not open to interns. Registration information is available at <http://crs.gov/programs>.
- **Legislative Concepts.** CRS also offers a monthly introductory "Legislative Concepts" class to House staff and interns in the House Learning Center. Information is available on HouseNet at <http://housenet.house.gov> under "House Learning Center."

Advanced Legislative Process Institute

This Institute builds on the basic procedures and resources provided in "Congress: An Introduction to Resources and Procedure." In depth sessions describe processes and procedural strategy that are specific to each chamber. Additional information on this class and others can be found at <http://crs.gov/programs>.

Congressional Dictionary

Congressional Quarterly's *American Congressional Dictionary*

This online dictionary provides a quick reference to definitions and brief explanations of many terms and expressions currently used in Congress. Updated as necessary by CRS specialists and analysts. Available at http://crs.gov/pages/glossary_a.aspx.

Selected CRS Reports

Additional information on researching legislation and regulations is provided in the following CRS reports:

CRS Report 98-673, *Publications of Congressional Committees: A Summary*, by Matthew Eric Glassman.

CRS Report RS20120, *Legislative Support: Useful Telephone Numbers and Internet Addresses*, by Jennifer E. Manning.

CRS Report RS20991, *Legislative Planning: Considerations for Congressional Staff*, by Judy Schneider.

CRS Report RS21363, *Legislative Procedure in Congress: Basic Sources for Congressional Staff*, by Jennifer E. Manning.

CRS Report RL30812, *Federal Statutes: What They Are and Where to Find Them*, by Cassandra L. Foley.

CRS Report RL32240, *The Federal Rulemaking Process: An Overview*, by Maeve P. Carey.

CRS Report R41865, *Legislative History Research: A Basic Guide*, by Julia Taylor.

Appendix. Comparison of LIS and THOMAS

	LIS	THOMAS
Address	http://www.congress.gov (automatically goes to THOMAS if user is outside Legislative Branch)	http://thomas.loc.gov
Who Can Use It	Congress, including state and district offices, and legislative support agencies only.	Available to the public.
Availability	24 hours a day, 365 days a year	24 hours a day, 365 days a year
Best Used For	Finding the most complete legislative information for Members and congressional staff; obtaining information using databases; and linking to pages that are not available to the public on THOMAS. Should not be used for making links from Member or committee home pages since the public cannot access LIS.	Working with constituents; making links from Member or committee home pages; making printouts that are to be sent to constituents.
Commercial Databases	Links to databases that have been licensed for use by House and Senate staff, such as National Journal and CQ.com.	No links to commercial databases.
CRS Reports	Links from Bill Summary & Status display to CRS reports related to a bill. Ability to search all CRS reports via the CRS Home Page; these products can be searched, displayed, and printed.	No CRS reports are available to the public.
Restricted Links	Links to restricted Capitol Hill websites such as the HouseNet, and Senate amendment tracking system.	No links to restricted Capitol Hill websites.
Floor & Committee Schedule Information	Links to Capitol Hill and selected outside sources of floor and committee schedule information.	Minimal links to floor and committee schedule information.
Advanced Search Capabilities	Special advanced search capabilities in all databases, providing Boolean searching (and, or, not), word proximity searching (quotes to indicate phrases, adj/1, near/2), and other features.	Advanced search capabilities only in Bill Summary & Status database. Basic search capabilities in full-text databases.
Saved Searches and E-mail Alerts	The ability to save searches and to request daily e-mail alerts of new items added to databases that meet the search criteria. Instructions available at http://www.congress.gov/help/about-alert.html .	No ability to save searches or request email alerts.

Source: Compiled by CRS.

Note: For assistance using LIS or THOMAS, contact

CRS La Follette Congressional Reading Room 707-7100 | CRS Senate Center 707-5978

LIS Team lismail@crs.loc.gov | Senate Library 224-5978 | House Call Center 225-6002

Author Contact Information

Jerry W. Mansfield
Information Research Specialist

Acknowledgments

Christina M. Bailey, information research specialist, assisted in the research for this report.