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Legislative Research for Congressional Staff: How to Find Documents and Other Resources

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January 11, 2016

Congressional Research Service

7-....

www.crs.gov

R43434

Summary

This report is one of a series of reports on legislative process and research; it is intended to serve as a finding aid to sources of information, such as documents, news articles, analysis, contacts, and services, used in legislative research. It does not define or describe the purpose of various government documents; that information can be found in companion CRS Report R41865, *Legislative History Research: A Guide to Resources for Congressional Staff* and CRS Report RL33895, *Researching Current Federal Legislation and Regulations: A Guide to Resources for Congressional Staff*. This report is not intended to be a definitive list of all resources, but rather a guide to pertinent subscriptions available in the House and Senate in addition to select resources freely available to the public. This report for use by Members and congressional office staff will be updated annually.

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Introduction

During the legislative process, many documents are prepared by Congress and its committees. Governmental and non-governmental entities track and record congressional activities, and many more entities chronicle and analyze the development of public policy. The wide availability of such information can be overwhelming to those involved in legislative research. The purpose of this report is to assist Members and congressional staff in identifying and accessing key resources used during legislative research.

This report does not define or describe the purpose of the various information resources and documents; that information can be found in companion CRS Report R41865, *Legislative History Research: A Guide to Resources for Congressional Staff* and CRS Report RL33895, *Researching Current Federal Legislation and Regulations: A Guide to Resources for Congressional Staff*.

This report is not a comprehensive catalog of resources for conducting legislative research; instead it provides a selection of widely used resources. Some of the resources mentioned are only available with a paid subscription whereas others are free; this availability is noted in the report along with the access points for Members and congressional staff. The inclusion of resources in this report does not imply endorsement by the Congressional Research Service (CRS) of the content or the products listed. In addition, CRS does not acquire or manage congressional offices' access to subscription resources.

CRS is available for consultation on legislative research or to perform legislative research upon request. CRS can also advise Members and congressional staff on the use of the resources listed in this report, including advice on how to select the best resource to use, how to search for information within a resource, or how to develop the most effective research methodology. This report is one of a series of reports on legislative process and research; see **Table A-2** for other reports in the series.

Legislative Research: Documents and Resources

The resource titles and access points are presented in four tables. The tables provide information on how to find congressional and other government documents relevant to the legislative process (**Table 1**); information from congressional news sources and legislative support agencies (**Table 2**); experts and contacts from think tanks, academia, executive branch agencies, and CRS (**Table 3**); and research-related training and services for Members and congressional staff (**Table 4**).

Table 1 serves as a reference guide for locating legislative and executive branch documents using free, subscription, and restricted access resources. The first column of the table contains documents commonly used in legislative research. The second column lists where these documents can be found. The third column contains typical citations for the documents listed in the first column. The fourth column contains explanatory notes and references to other information.

Italicized entries in the second column indicate a subscription-based resource available in most House and Senate offices and also at CRS reference centers (whose locations and hours of operation are available in **Table 4**). Unless otherwise indicated, all other resources listed are freely available to all congressional offices.

Table A-1 provides additional information on the items contained in **Table 1**, including more detailed descriptions and URLs linking directly to the resources (when available).

Table I. Legislative and Executive Branch Documents

Document	Access Points ^a	Example Citations ^b	Notes
Bills and Amendments			
Bills and Resolutions 1993 to present	LIS.gov or Congress.gov <i>CQ.com</i> <i>ProQuest Congressional</i>	H.R. 123, S.Res. 200	See CRS reports on Bills and Resolutions: Origins and Introduction. ^c For a basic explanation of how a bill becomes law, see Figure A-1 .
Bills and Resolutions before 1993	Law Library of Congress (or call CRS: 7-....) <i>ProQuest Congressional</i>	S. 236, H.Con.Res. 728	The Law Library Reading Room contains microfiche, microfilm, and ultrafiche materials, including federal bills and resolutions dating back to the 1 st Congress. ^d CRS has access to <i>ProQuest Congressional</i> , which offers bill and resolution text going back to 1789. Years of coverage in House and Senate subscriptions to <i>ProQuest Congressional</i> may differ.
Floor Amendments	LIS.gov or Congress.gov (1981-present) Senate Amendment Tracking System <i>CQ.com</i>	S.Amdt. 15, H.Amdt. 75	Published in the <i>Congressional Record</i> . On LIS.gov, amendments can be found under “Bill Status with Amendments” or “Amendments” on the Bill Summary & Status page. On Congress.gov, amendments can be found under the “Amendments” tab or the “Actions” tab, clicking “All Actions, including Floor Amendments” on a bill page.
Laws			
Statutes (laws)	LIS.gov or Congress.gov (1995-present) <i>ProQuest Congressional</i>	P.L. 111-148, 124 Stat. 119	LIS.gov links to GPO FDsys and Congress.gov hosts the GPO PDF of the law. For older laws, refer to <i>ProQuest Congressional</i> or call CRS at 7-....

Document	Access Points ^a	Example Citations ^b	Notes
U.S. Code	uscode.house.gov Cornell LII	42 USC 543, 35 U.S.C. §123(a)	The main edition of the U.S. Code is published every six years by the Office of the Law Revision Counsel of the House of Representatives, with annual cumulative supplements. The current edition of the Code was published in 2006.
Floor Debate			
<i>Congressional Record</i> Bound	<i>ProQuest Congressional</i>	142 Cong. Rec. 15466	The <i>Congressional Record</i> bound edition is the permanent version. Its text is somewhat edited, revised and rearranged in comparison to the daily version. The pagination is continuous for each session; but there is no H, S, or E (for Extensions of Remarks) before each page number. There is a volume number for each session and numerous parts to each volume. The final two volumes of the permanent <i>Record</i> of each session are an index containing a history of bills and resolutions and a compilation of Daily Digests for the session.
<i>Congressional Record</i> Daily	LIS.gov or Congress.gov (1989-present) <i>CQ.com</i> <i>ProQuest Congressional</i>	158 Cong. Rec. H5618	The <i>Congressional Record</i> daily edition reports each day's proceedings in Congress and is published on the succeeding day. Pagination is preceded by an H, S, or E, to indicate whether the recorded text took place in the House, the Senate, or was an Extension of Remarks. Periodically, throughout a session, indices to the daily <i>Record</i> are published.

Document	Access Points ^a	Example Citations ^b	Notes
Floor Votes	CQ.com LIS.gov or Congress.gov (1990-present) House.gov Senate.gov CQ Almanac (for votes pre-1990)	Roll no. 30, Record Vote Number: 11	Votes are published in <i>Congressional Record</i> . On LIS.gov, votes can be found under “Major Actions” while viewing Bill Summary & Status. On Congress.gov, see the “Actions” tab under “Major Actions.” To find votes on specific issues, over a time period, or other criteria, call CRS at 7-.....
Committee Actions			
Committee Schedules	CQ.com LIS.gov or Congress.gov House.gov Senate.gov		See CQ Schedules.
Committee Hearings (official)	Committee websites GPO FDsys <i>ProQuest Congressional</i>	S. Hrg. 106-67	
Committee Hearing Transcripts and Webcasts (unofficial)	CQ.com C-Span Committee websites		Consider contacting the committee staff for hearing transcripts unavailable through these sources.
Committee Reports	LIS.gov or Congress.gov (1995-present) CQ.com <i>ProQuest Congressional</i>	H.Rept. 112-14, S.Rept. 110-55	
Committee Markup	CQ.com Committee websites		
Committee Rosters	CQ.com GPO FDsys Committee websites		
Committee Prints	GPO FDsys <i>ProQuest Congressional</i>	S. Prt. 109-88	
Draft Legislation	Committee websites CQ.com Sponsor’s website		For CQ.com, see the CQ “Hot Docs” page.
Regulations			
Rules, Proposed Rules, and Notices	FederalRegister.gov GPO FDsys Regulations.gov	59 <i>Federal Register</i> 4233	Published in the <i>Federal Register</i> . See corresponding entry in Table A-1 for additional information.
General and Permanent Rules (codified)	GPO FDsys	15 C.F.R. 254	Published in the <i>Code of Federal Regulations</i> (CFR).

Document	Access Points ^a	Example Citations ^b	Notes
Executive Branch Information			
Executive Orders	National Archives GPO FDsys	E.O. 12893	Published in the <i>Federal Register</i> , <i>Compilation of Presidential Documents</i> , and title 3 of the <i>Code of Federal Regulations</i> .
Grants	Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance		See CRS Report RL34035, <i>Grants Work in a Congressional Office</i> , CRS Report RL34012, <i>Resources for Grantseekers</i> , and CRS Report RL32159, <i>How to Develop and Write a Grant Proposal</i> .
Presidential Signing Statements	GPO FDsys		Published in the <i>Federal Register</i> , <i>Compilation of Presidential Documents</i> . See CRS Reports on Presidential Action on Legislation.
The President's Fiscal Year Budget Proposal	OMB GPO FDsys		See CRS Report 98-721, <i>Introduction to the Federal Budget Process</i> and CRS Report R43475, <i>FY2016 Budget Documents: Internet and GPO Availability</i> .
Miscellaneous Information			
Appropriations Bills	CRS Appropriations Status Table		Available from FY1999-Present on CRS.gov. See also CRS Report R42388, <i>The Congressional Appropriations Process: An Introduction</i> .
Cost Estimates of Current Bills	CBO		Published under the "Cost Estimates" section of the website.
Legislative Histories (compilations)	<i>ProQuest Congressional</i>		See CRS Report R41865, <i>Legislative History Research: A Guide to Resources for Congressional Staff</i> .
State Laws and Regulations	LLSDC: State Legislatures, Laws, and Regulations		For assistance on identifying state laws and regulations, call CRS at 7-.....
Treaties	Congress.gov Senate.gov Law Library of Congress (or call CRS: 7-....)		See CRS Report 98-384, <i>Senate Consideration of Treaties</i> .

Source: Compiled by the Congressional Research Service (CRS).

Notes: Plain text indicates the resource listed is freely available; *Italics* indicate a subscription-based resource available in most House and Senate offices, and also at CRS research centers.

- a. More detailed descriptions and direct links to these resources are available in **Table A-1**.
- b. For official legal citation style, refer to: *The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation* (<https://www.legalbluebook.com>). The Government Printing Office Style Manual is another guide for official citation formats and is available online at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/search/pagedetails.action?granuleId=&packageId=GPO-STYLEMANUAL-2008>.
- c. Refer to the Congressional Operations section of the CRS website for a list of reports providing analysis, resources, and information on key legislative and administrative processes and procedures of the Congress.
- d. For further information, refer to the Law Library's page on microtext collections at <http://www.loc.gov/law/find/microtext.php>.

News and Analysis

Table 2 serves as a finding aid for resources covering current events related to Congress and the legislative process. Resources in this table may contain editorial content and discussion. Inclusion of these resources does not imply endorsement of the views held by the publications listed.

Table 2. Selected Resources for News and Analysis and Relevant Legislative Research

	Resource	Access Points
Congressional News & Analysis	<i>CQ</i>	http://www.cq.com
	The Hill	http://www.thehill.com/
	<i>National Journal</i>	http://www.nationaljournal.com/
	Politico	http://www.politico.com/
	Roll Call	http://www.rollcall.com/
	<i>Bloomberg Government (BGOV)</i>	http://about.bgov.com/
	<i>Bloomberg BNA</i>	http://www.bna.com/
	Journal articles & historical news through Library of Congress databases	Databases such as <i>ProQuest</i> , <i>LexisNexis</i> , <i>Factiva</i> , <i>JSTOR</i> , and <i>EBSCOhost</i> , along with numerous others are available for use onsite at CRS research centers and the public reading rooms at the Library of Congress. See a list of all databases at http://eresources.loc.gov/
Legislative Support Agency Analysis & Resources	Congressional Research Service (CRS)	http://www.crs.gov/
	Congressional Budget Office (CBO)	http://www.cbo.gov/
	Government Accountability Office (GAO)	http://www.gao.gov/

Source: Compiled by CRS.

Notes: Plain text indicates the resource listed is freely available; *Italics* indicate a subscription-based resource available in most House and Senate offices, and also at CRS research centers.

Table 3 provides sources and tools to identify experts and contacts outside Congress from the legislative support agencies, executive branch, academia, non-profits, and think tanks. The resources include directories, databases and lists available through House and Senate libraries, CRS reference centers, and online. Contacts from these sources may provide partisan views or

analysis. Inclusion of these sources does not imply endorsement of the views held by contacts found using these tools.

Table 3. Finding Experts and Contacts

Name (Publisher)	Access	Notes
The Leadership Library (Leadership Directories, Inc.)	CRS Reference Centers—online access online access via kiosk PCs; see Table 4 for locations Senate Library—online access, also available in all Senate offices. House Library—print version only	Formerly known as the Yellow Books. Contact information for over 500,000 leaders of 40,000 United States government, business, professional and nonprofit organizations.
Encyclopedia of Associations (Gale)	CRS Reference Centers—online access online access via kiosk PCs; see Table 4 for locations Senate Library—online access	Detailed information concerning 23,000+ nonprofit American membership organizations of national scope.
National Directory of Nonprofit Organizations (Gale)	CRS Reference Centers—online access online access via kiosk PCs; see Table 4 for locations	Contact and basic factual information on the largest nonprofit organizations in the United States.
National Trade and Professional Associations of the United States (Columbia Books)	CRS Reference Centers—print version (LCRR only; see Table 4 for location) House Library—print version	Lists more than 7,500 trade associations, labor unions, professional societies, and similar national groups.
Washington Information Directory (CQ)	CRS Reference Centers—print version (LCRR only; see Table 4 for location) House Library—print version Senate Library—print version	Guide to Washington, DC, area governmental and private organizations is arranged in 20 broad subject areas. Under each area, pertinent federal departments and agencies, and private nonprofit organizations are listed.
Washington Representatives (Columbia Books)	CRS Reference Centers—print version (LCRR only; see Table 4 for location) House Library—print version Senate Library—print version	This is a list of 17,000 Washington contacts of U.S. trade associations, professional societies, labor unions, corporations, and various special interest and public interest groups.
CRS Report 98-446, <i>Congressional Liaison Offices of Selected Federal Agencies</i>	CRS website: http://www.crs.gov/resources/Pages/liaisonoffices.aspx	This list of about 200 congressional liaison offices is intended to help congressional offices in contacting government agencies. (For congressional use only.)
Social Sciences Citation Index (Web of Knowledge/Thompson Reuters)	CRS Reference Centers—online access (use “Congressional Bookmarks” see Table 4 for locations)	Covers 2,700 of the most important journals in the social sciences and allows users to identify subject area experts.

Name (Publisher)	Access	Notes
<i>Federal Register</i>	FederalRegister.gov	This site is jointly administered by the National Archives and Records Administration and the U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO) to provide an unofficial, HTML edition of the daily <i>Federal Register</i> to make it easier for citizens and communities to understand the regulatory process and to participate in government decision-making. Notices and proposed rules include contact information for relevant agency experts.
Congressional Research Service	http://www.crs.gov	For confidential, authoritative, and objective research and analysis on issues before Congress. Contact analysts through "Find an Analyst" on CRS.gov, from author contact information reports, or by calling CRS at 7-.....

Source: Compiled by CRS.

Training and Services

Table 4 contains a list of locations where congressional staff can obtain training and other services on Capitol Hill.

Table 4. Training and Services

Name	Location and Contact	Hours	Services
Congressional Research Service (CRS)			
CRS	Call CRS 7-.... (202 5700) and press 1, 5 http://www.crs.gov	-707- M-Th 8a-8p F 8a-6p (Sat 10a-5p when Congress is in session)	Research and analysis related to legislative issues. Personalized office briefings. Training in the following topics: -Appropriations and Budget -Federal Legal Research -Legislative Process -Policy and Legal Seminars -Programs for District Offices For training and program descriptions and current schedules, visit: http://www.crs.gov/programs/Pages/TrainingProgramDescriptions.aspx
CRS Reference Centers			
La Follette Congressional Reading Room (LCRR)	Library of Congress, Madison Building: LM-202 Phone: 7-....	M-Th 10a-8p F 10a-6p Sat 10a-5p when Congress is in session	Database access; reference and research assistance.
CRS Senate Center	Senate, Russell B335 Phone: 7-....	M-F 10a-4p	Database access, meeting space for CRS training and private briefings.

Name	Location and Contact	Hours	Services
Library of Congress (non-CRS)			
Congressional Relations Office (CRO)	202-707-6577 http://www.loc.gov/lcnet/	M-F 8:30a-6p	Book loans, tours of the Library of Congress, constituent services, educational resources
Law Library of Congress	Library of Congress, Madison Building: LM-201 202-707-2700 http://www.loc.gov/law/	M-F 8:30a-9:30p Sat 8:30a-5p, and whenever Congress is in session	Assists Congress with information and analysis on U.S., foreign, comparative and international law Training in the following topics: -Legislative research -Statutory research -Orientation to Law Library collections -Congress.gov
House of Representatives			
House Learning Center	B249B/C Longworth HOB 202-226-3800 HLC@mail.house.gov https://housenet.house.gov/training	M-F 8:30a-5:30p	Legislative training topics include: -Legislative Concepts (taught by CRS) -Legislative Information System (LIS.gov) and Congress.gov -ProQuest -National Journal -GAO: An Introduction to the Congressional Watchdog Other topics such as Constituent Correspondence, ethics, and many more are also available for online and in-person training
House Library	263 Cannon 202-225-9000 library@mail.house.gov http://extranet.clerk.house.gov/library	M-F 9a-6p	Research assistance, subject guides, database access and training
Senate			
Senate Library	Russell B15 202-224-7106 reference@sec.senate.gov http://webster/library	M-F 9a-6p (and whenever the Senate is in session)	Research assistance and training. Training includes -News resources -Congressional Record -Desktop research tools -LIS.gov and Congress.gov -Other classes and custom training is available

Source: Compiled by CRS.

Appendix. Additional Resources

Table A-1. Legislative Research Resources

(provides additional details on information explored in **Table I**)

Resource	Description	URL
Congress.gov	Congress.gov is the official source for federal legislative information. It will eventually replace LIS.gov, though both sites are currently up to date and in use. The new Congress.gov provides: (1) a single search across all available information and years; (2) permanent URLs; (3) faceted search; (4) Member profiles; and (5) bill summaries and lists of actions for legislation. The new site permits users with legislative branch devices to access CRS reports and products from bill records, the homepage, and help pages.	http://www.congress.gov/
CBO	The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) produces independent analyses of budgetary and economic issues to support the congressional budget process. CBO does not make policy recommendations.	http://www.cbo.gov/
CQ	This subscription database provides bill texts, summaries, tracking, and analysis. Also includes (but not limited to) roll-call votes, legislative histories, floor and committee schedules, detailed committee coverage, hearing transcripts. Coverage varies by information category. CQ.com is available in all Senate and in most House offices.	http://www.cq.com
Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance	The CFDA is the primary source of information on federal grants and nonfinancial assistance programs; actual funding depends upon annual budget appropriations. After grantseekers identify federal programs in CFDA and contact state agency representatives, they may register and apply at websites such as Grants.gov (http://www.grants.gov) or FedConnect (http://www.fedconnect.net).	https://www.cfda.gov
Cornell LII	The Cornell Legal Information Institute provides an unofficial but freely available, searchable and easy to navigate version of the <i>U.S. Code</i> .	http://www.law.cornell.edu/
C-SPAN	C-SPAN is a private, nonprofit company that provides public access to the political process. Includes a searchable video library of hearings, floor debate, press conferences, speeches, and other types of news programs and events.	http://www.c-span.org

Resource	Description	URL
Federalregister.gov	This site is jointly administered by the National Archives and Records Administration and the U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO) to provide an unofficial, HTML edition of the daily <i>Federal Register</i> to make it easier for citizens and communities to understand the regulatory process and to participate in government decision-making.	http://www.federalregister.gov
GPO FDsys	The Government Printing Office Federal Digital System provides free online access to official publications from all three branches of the federal government.	http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/
Law Librarians' Society of Washington, DC	LLSDC provides a freely available list of state legislatures, laws, and regulations websites and contact information. In addition, the LLSDC provides a set of legislative research guides called the Legislative Source Book (http://llsdc.org/sourcebook/).	http://www.llsdc.org/state-legislation
LIS.gov	The purpose of the Legislative Information System (LIS) is to provide Members of Congress and their staff with access to legislative information that is accurate, timely, and complete. LIS is not available to the public. LIS will be replaced by Congress.gov sometime after the close of 2016.	http://www.lis.gov/
National Archives and Records Administration	Disposition Tables contain information about Executive Orders beginning with those signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt and are arranged according to presidential administration and year of signature. The tables are compiled and maintained by the Office of the Federal Register editors.	http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/executive-orders/
Office of Management and Budget	The OMB website provides the President's Budget, including, for example: <i>Analytical Perspectives</i> (http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/Analytical_Perspectives), the <i>Appendix</i> (http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/Appendix), and <i>Historical Tables</i> (http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/Historicals).	http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget
ProQuest Congressional	This subscription database contains detailed abstracts and links to the full text of many congressional and federal documents, such as the <i>Congressional Record</i> , congressional hearing transcripts, committee prints, and legislative histories. Length of coverage varies depending on the category of information, although most categories are covered starting in 1789 or at some point in the 1800s. <i>ProQuest Congressional</i> is available to all House and Senate offices.	http://congressional.proquest.com

Resource	Description	URL
Reginfo.gov	This site provides information about the status of agency documents undergoing Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA) review.	http://www.reginfo.gov/public/
Regulations.gov	This site provides a government-wide portal for the public to review and comment on published regulatory actions and to view any supporting materials provided by the agency.	http://www.regulations.gov
Senate Amendment Tracking System	The Amendment Tracking System (ATS) is a web application that displays images of submitted and proposed amendments to legislation pending before the U.S. Senate. Amendments are available on ATS approximately 15 minutes after the Bill Clerk receives them.	http://ats.senate.gov/

Source: Compiled by CRS.

Table A-2. Related CRS Products

CRS Report R42638, *Appropriations: CRS Experts*, by (name redacted) and (name redacted)

CRS Report 98-706, *Bills and Resolutions: Examples of How Each Kind Is Used*, by (name redacted)

CRS Report 98-728, *Bills, Resolutions, Nominations, and Treaties: Characteristics, Requirements, and Uses*, by (name redacted)

CRS Report 98-437, *Calendars of the House of Representatives*, by (name redacted)

CRS Report 98-446, *Congressional Liaison Offices of Selected Federal Agencies*, by (name redacted)

CRS Report R40897, *Congressional Printing: Background and Issues for Congress*, by (name redacted) and (name redacted)

CRS Report RL30812, *Federal Statutes: What They Are and Where to Find Them*, by (name redacted)

CRS Report 98-169, *House Committee Reports: Required Contents*, by (name redacted)

CRS Report R41865, *Legislative History Research: A Guide to Resources for Congressional Staff*, by (name redacted)

CRS Report RS20991, *Legislative Planning: Considerations for Congressional Staff*, by (name redacted)

CRS Report RS21363, *Legislative Procedure in Congress: Basic Sources for Congressional Staff*, by (name redacted) and (name redacted)

CRS Report RS20120, *Legislative Support Resources: Offices and Websites for Congressional Staff*, by (name redacted) and (name redacted)

CRS Report RL30787, *Parliamentary Reference Sources: House of Representatives*, by (name redacted) and (name redacted)

CRS Report RL30788, *Parliamentary Reference Sources: Senate*, by (name redacted) and (name redacted)

CRS Report RL33895, *Researching Current Federal Legislation and Regulations: A Guide to Resources for Congressional Staff*, by (name redacted)

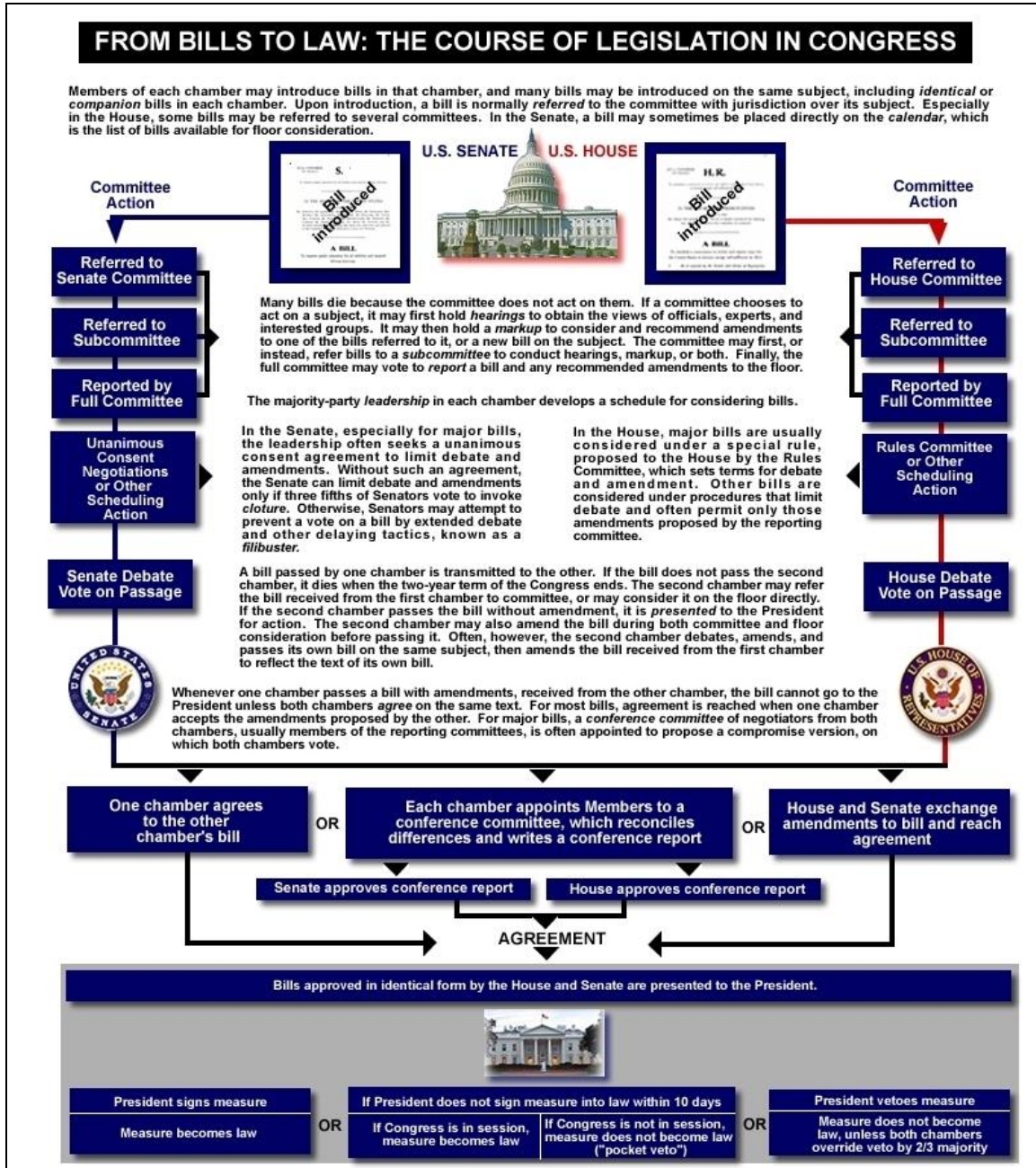
CRS Report RL34012, *Resources for Grantseekers*, by Merete F. Gerli

CRS Report 98-305, *Senate Committee Reports: Required Contents*, by (name redacted)

CRS Report 98-429, *The Senate's Calendar of Business*, coordinated by (name redacted)

CRS Report 98-438, *The Senate's Executive Calendar*, coordinated by (name redacted)

Figure A-I. The Course of Legislation in Congress



Source: Created by CRS.

Note: See CRS Report R42843, *Introduction to the Legislative Process in the U.S. Congress*, by (name redacted), for more information on legislative process.

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