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Arkansas Legislative History Research
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Definition of Legislative History

Legislative history is the collection of documents produced in the process of the enactment of a session law. A traditional legislative history is the gathering together of every relevant document that is part of the passage of a piece of legislation.¹ The idea is to find out what the legislative body thought it was doing when it passed the legislation by examining the evidence of what the legislators knew and said at the time.²

Be aware that Arkansas publishes no committee reports, committee prints, or floor debate.

Arkansas General Assembly

The Arkansas General Assembly, Arkansas' 135-member legislative body, has 35 members in the Senate and 100 members in the house of Representatives. The General Assembly convenes on the second Monday of the year. Until 2010, it only met during odd-numbered years. An Arkansas legislative session lasts 60 days unless the legislature votes to extend the session. The governor may call a special session.

The Arkansas Legislative Council describes the Arkansas legislative process in chapter 3 of [THERE OUGHTA BE A LAW! A MANUAL](#).

Websites:

[General Assembly](#)

[Senate](#)

[House of Representatives](#)

Telephone:

Arkansas House of Representatives: 501-682-7771

Senate: 501-682-6107

Bills and Resolutions

Online Resources

[General Assembly](#). Current bills and resolutions are under "Bills and Resolutions." Older bills and resolutions are under "Previous Legislative Sessions/Historical Acts and Bills," 1987- .

[Digest Arkansas](#): The ARKANSAS LEGISLATIVE DIGEST's online version (required password is available at the Reference Desk). A commercial service that provides summaries of bills and resolutions. Serves as an index to bills and resolutions.

Lexis: AR Full Text Bills and AR Bill Tracking

Westlaw: AR-BILLS and AR-BLLTRK (bill tracking).

Books and Microform

ARKANSAS DAILY LEGISLATIVE DIGEST (Little Rock: Arkansas Legislative Digest, Inc.) A commercial service that provides summaries of bills and resolutions. Serves as an index to bills and resolutions. Offers the INTERIM DIGEST, a weekly report on the activities of the interim legislative committees and executive actions taken when the legislature is not in session.

Arkansas General Assembly. HOUSE BILLS, SENATE BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS (Little Rock: Arkansas Bureau of Legislative Research.) 57th Session, 1949-2001.

Session Laws

Session laws with no emergency clause have “effective dates” of 91 days after final adjournment of the session in which the act was passed. The day of adjournment is not counted so that acts become effective on the 91st day unless they have a specified effective date or an emergency clause. The state Attorney General publishes an opinion after each legislative session which gives the effective date for the session’s acts. The prefatory information of ARKANSAS STATUTES ANNOTATED volumes, predecessor of the current *Arkansas Code Annotated*, gives the effective dates of session laws from 1838 to approximately 1979. *Arkansas Statutes Annotated* also gives the adjournment dates of Arkansas legislative sessions from 1868 through 1979.

Online Resources

General Assembly. Provides the full text of session laws since 1987. Current session laws are under “Acts.” Older session laws are under “Previous Legislative Sessions.”

HEINONLINE SESSION LAWS LIBRARY. Coverage begins with 1995.

LEXIS: Arkansas Advance Legislative Service.

WESTLAW: Current in AR-LEGIS. Archive in AR-LEGIS-OLD, 1991- .

Books and Microform

ACTS OF ARKANSAS (Little Rock: Secretary of State, 1837-). Biennial except for special sessions. Beginning in 1967 the publisher separated the general acts and the appropriations acts into the GENERAL ACTS OF ARKANSAS in volume 1 and the appropriations acts into APPROPRIATIONS ACTS OF ARKANSAS in volume 2.

ARKANSAS ADVANCE LEGISLATIVE SERVICE (Charlottesville, VA: Lexis Law Publishing). Biennial. Paperback. Published during and immediately after a legislative session. No annotations.

[ACTS](#) (Buffalo, NY: Hein, 1819-). Territorial session laws, 1818-1936 (Territories of Missouri and Arkansas); Arkansas session laws, 1836-1989.

House and Senate Journals

Online Resources

[House Journals](#) (2003-). On General Assembly's web site under "Previous Legislative Sessions." Journals provide minutes of the House's proceedings.

[Senate Journals](#) (2003-). General Assembly's web site under "Previous Legislative Sessions." Journals provide minutes of the Senate's proceedings.

Retrospective (Books)

Not indexed and virtually unusable. The Secretary of State's Elections Office houses complete runs of the journals listed below, beginning 1840 for the Senate and 1842 for the House.

Arkansas. General Assembly. [JOURNALS OF THE ... SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS](#) (Little Rock: Woodruff & Pew, Printers to the State, 1836-1840). Transcribed proceedings of both houses.

Arkansas. General Assembly. House of Representatives. [JOURNALS OF THE HOUSE FOR THE ... SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS](#) (Little Rock: Eli Colby, 1843-). Transcribed proceedings of the House.

Arkansas. General Assembly. Senate. [JOURNALS OF THE SENATE FOR THE ... SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS](#) (1843-1859). Transcribed proceedings of the Senate.

Arkansas. General Assembly. Senate. [JOURNAL OF THE SENATE OF ARKANSAS](#) (1871-). Transcribed proceedings of the Senate.

Floor Debate

No floor debate officially recorded.

The [ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT](#), [ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE](#), and [ARKANSAS GAZETTE](#) sometimes report excerpts of floor debate. Articles are indexed in the [ARKANSAS GAZETTE INDEX](#) (Russellville, Ark.: Arkansas Tech University), the [ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE INDEX](#) (Russellville, Ark.: Arkansas Tech University, 1993-), and [ARKANSAS ONLINE](#) (Little Rock, Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, 1984-1991, 1994-). The [Central Arkansas Library System](#) main library, Little Rock, has complete runs of all three newspapers.

[LEXIS](#): ARKDEM file, begins October 1984.

WESTLAW: ARKDEM, more selective.

Committee Reports

No committee reports are published except those published in the older House and Senate Journals.

Hearings

No hearings are published.

Research Reports

Consists of research reports, staff reports, and informational memos published by the Arkansas Legislative Council which are indexed by the [ARKANSAS LEGAL INDEX](#).

Arkansas. General Assembly. Bureau of Legislative Research. [STAFF REPORT - ARKANSAS LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL](#) (Little Rock: Arkansas Legislative Council).

Arkansas. General Assembly. Legislative Council. Research Dept. [RESEARCH REPORT](#) (Little Rock, AR: The Department).

Arkansas. General Assembly. Legislative Council. Research Dept. [INFORMATIONAL MEMO](#) (Little Rock: Arkansas Legislative Council, 1962-1977).

Bibliographies of Research Reports

Arkansas. General Assembly. Bureau of Legislative Research. [LISTING OF RESEARCH REPORTS, INFORMATIONAL MEMOS, AND STAFF REPORTS, 1970-1980](#) (Little Rock: The Council, 198-).

[LIST OF RESEARCH REPORTS PUBLISHED, 1949-1975](#) (Little Rock: Arkansas Legislative Council, Research Department, 1975).

Arkansas Bureau of Legislative Research, phone number: 501-682-1937.

Reference Resources

Arkansas Senate. [MEMBERS OF THE ARKANSAS SENATE](#).

Arkansas House of Representatives. [ARKANSAS STATE REPRESENTATIVES](#).

Arkansas House of Representatives. [HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW](#).

Hellebust, Lynn. [STATE LEGISLATIVE SOURCEBOOK](#) (Topeka, KS: Government Research Service, 1985-).

LEGISLATIVE DIRECTORY (Little Rock: Arkansas Legislative Digest, Inc. 1993-).

Manz, William H. GUIDE TO STATE LEGISLATIVE AND ADMINISTRATIVE MATERIALS (7th ed. Chicago: AALL, 2008).

Mullins, Morell Eugene. A HANDBOOK FOR LEGISLATIVE DRAFTERS: (ARKANSAS EDITION) (Little Rock: Arkansas Legislative Digest, Inc., 1986).

THERE OUGHTA BE A LAW!: A MANUAL FOR NEW ARKANSAS LEGISLATORS. Little Rock: Written to acquaint newly elected legislators with the basic rules, procedures, forms of motions, organizational structure, and traditions of the Arkansas General Assembly.

¹Robert C. Berring and Elizabeth A. Edinger, *Finding the Law*, 166. 12th ed. St. Paul, MN: Thomson West, 2005.

²*Ibid.*

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