

FINDING AND UPDATING STATUTES

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Boston University School of Law

Pappas Law Library

SUMMARY

- *Session laws vs. the Code*
 - The U.S. Statutes at Large is the official, chronological publication of U.S. session laws. The Statutes at Large volumes are organized in Public Law No. order.
 - The U.S. Code is a codification of public laws into 50 titles by subject matter. When practicing, citation is most often made to the law as codified.

- *Finding tools*
 - General Indexes, Popular Name Tables, and other Tables to the U.S.C., U.S.C.A., or U.S.C.S.
 - Conversion charts
 - "Tables" volume found at the end of U.S. C., U.S. C.A., or U.S. C.S.
 - "List of Public Laws Contained in This Volume" at the beginning of each Statutes at Large volume

FINDING STATUTES

- *If you have a U.S. Code citation*
 - Look up the citation in the print U.S.C., U.S.C.A., or U.S.C.S.
 - Find by citation on Lexis or Westlaw
 - Look up the citation on these Internet sites
 - www4.law.cornell.edu/uscode/ (Legal Information Institute at Cornell Law School)
 - www.gpoaccess.gov (U.S. Government Printing Office)
 - <http://uscode.house.gov/usc> (U.S. House of Representatives)

- *If you have a U.S. Statutes at Large citation*
 - Look up the citation in the print U.S. Statutes at Large
 - Find by citation on Lexis or Westlaw
 - If you don't have access to the above resources
 - Convert the citation to a Public Law No. by using the "Tables" volume found at the end of U.S.C., U.S.C.A., or U.S.C.S.
 - Then look up the Public Law number in the following sources:
 - ⇒ <http://thomas.loc.gov> (Thomas)
 - ⇒ www.gpoaccess.gov (U.S. Government Printing Office)
 - ⇒ U.S.C.C.A.N. (U.S. Code Congressional and Administrative News) (Look for the volumes with "Laws" written on the spine, not "Legislative History." Public Law numbers are listed on the spines of the volumes.)
 - ⇒ Advance legislative service pamphlets to U.S.C.A., or U.S.C.S. (for recent Public Laws)

- *If you have a Public Law number*
 - Find by citation on Lexis or Westlaw
 - <http://thomas.loc.gov> (Thomas)
 - www.gpoaccess.gov (U.S. Government Printing Office)
 - Look it up in Statutes at Large (to convert a Public Law No. to a Statutes at Large citation, go to the Statutes at Large volume for that Congress and consult the "List of Public Laws Contained in This Volume," which is located at the beginning of the volume. This will give you a Statutes at Large page number)
 - Look it up in U.S.C.C.A.N.

- *Searching by topic or subject matter* (when you don't have a citation)
 - General Indexes to the U.S.C., U.S.C.A., or U.S.C.S.
 - Popular Name Table located in the last volumes of the U.S.C., U.S.C.A., or U.S.C.S.
 - Keyword searching on Lexis or Westlaw (use the Thesaurus on Westlaw or Suggested Words and Concepts on Lexis)

UPDATING STATUTES

- *For print codes*
 - For the U.S.C.A. and U.S.C.S., check the pocket part. For the U.S.C., check the bound supplement for the most recent year.
 - The U.S.C.A. and U.S.C.S. both periodically publish softbound pamphlets that update the annual pocket parts.
 - For the U.S.C.A., find the most recent softbound pamphlet (usually kept at the end of the set after the General Indexes) and consult the table called "U.S. Code Sections Amended, Repealed, New, Etc." If your particular Code section has been changed, you'll have to read the Public Law cited in the table to see how your Code section was affected. The pamphlets are organized by Public Law No.
 - For the U.S.C.S., find the most recent softbound U.S.C.S. Advance pamphlet and consult a table called "Table of Code Sections Added, Amended, Repealed, or Otherwise Affected." U.S.C.S. Advance pamphlets are compiled in the Cumulative Later Case and Statutory Service, which is published in January.
 - Because a lag time exists due to the time it takes to publish these update pamphlets and for libraries to receive them, further updating is **always** necessary on Lexis, Westlaw, or free Internet sites such as the U.S. House of Representatives or Thomas.

MASSACHUSETTS STATUTORY RESEARCH

- *Legal research help*
 - Handbook of Legal Research in Massachusetts by Mary Ann Neary et al.
 - www.lawlib.state.ma.us/ (Massachusetts Trial Court Law Libraries)