

Researching Statutes

Legal Research Center Video Series



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Learning Objectives

1. Identify a statute and understand the difference between session laws and codes
2. Identify the key elements of annotated statutes
3. Identify statute and code citations and what each part means
4. Develop proficiency in natural language searches to find relevant statutes
5. Identify citators and understand their role in checking for case interpretations and changes to a statute

Introduction to Statutes

- **Statutes**: laws enacted by a **legislature**
 - Can also be called **acts**
 - Contrast with **case law**, established through court decisions

Introduction to Statutes

- **Session Laws**: compilation of all laws passed during a particular legislative session
 - Published chronologically in the order they were passed by the legislature
 - Federal: Statutes at Large
 - California: California Statutes and Amendments to the Code
 - Useful for finding the full text of an act spanning multiple codes, or understanding how a law's wording/scope have changed over time

Session Law Citations

- **104 Stat. 327**

Volume 104 – Statutes at Large – pg. 327

- **2021 Cal. Stat. 5473**

year 2021 – California Statutes – pg. 5473

Session Law Formula

- Volume or year

+

- First page number
in session law
volume

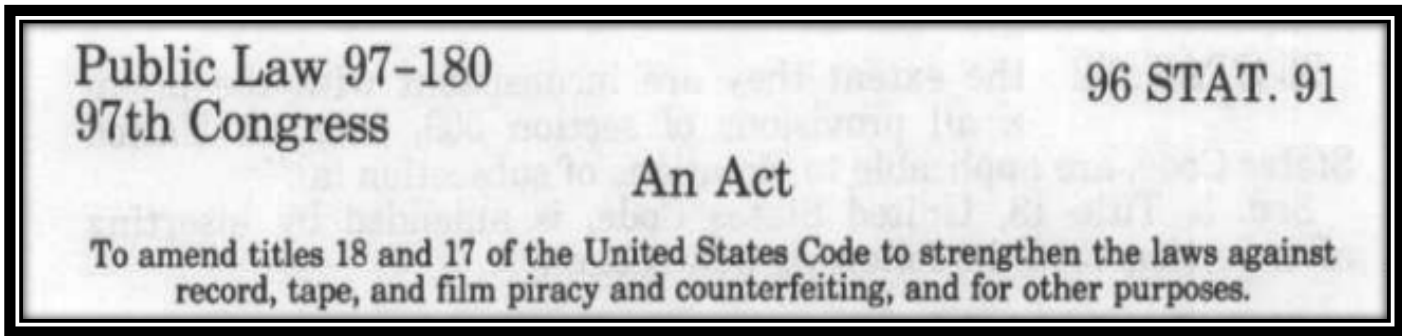
Introduction to Statutes

- Codes: laws published and organized by topic
- Federal: U.S. Code (**U.S.C.**)

- Topics represented by **title numbers**

+ *Title 13—Census
+ *Title 14—Coast Guard
+ Title 15—Commerce And Trade
+ Title 16—Conservation
+ *Title 17—Copyrights
+ *Title 18—Crimes And Criminal Proceed

- Federal statutes may address many different topics, so portions of an Act may appear in different places within the U.S. Code.



Introduction to Statutes

- California: California Codes

- 29 titles

- organized by **subject**

- California Acts generally create or amend a **single subject area** or title within in the California Codes.

[Business and Professions Code - BPC](#)

[Civil Code - CIV](#)

[Code of Civil Procedure - CCP](#)

[Commercial Code - COM](#)

[Corporations Code - CORP](#)

CHAPTER 312

An act to amend Sections 3000.5, 3016.7, 3019.7, 3020, and 15101 of, to add Section 3025.5 to, and to repeal Section 3016.5 of, the Elections Code, relating to elections.

Introduction to Statutes

- You will almost always do your statutory research in the **codes** rather than the **session laws**
 - Current state of the law
 - Research by topic
 - Access to annotations

Statutory Code Citations

Code Formula

- **29 U.S.C. § 1823**

Title 29 – U.S. Code – Section 1823

- **Cal. Corp. Code § 309**

California Codes – Corporations Code – Section 309

- **Conn. Gen. Stat. § 52-570d**

General Stats. of Connecticut – Title 52 (Civil Actions) – Section 570d

- **Named or numbered title**

+
- **Combination of numbered chapters, sections, and subsections**

Statutory Codes: Unannotated vs. Annotated

- Unannotated Codes

- Published by the federal and state governments
- Contains **only the text** of the statutes (no annotations)

- Annotated Codes

- Published by commercial publishers
- Contains statute text **plus extra context and analysis** to help researchers understand the statute and how it is applied

What are Annotations?

- **History** of the statute
- **Secondary Sources**
 - Sources discussing the statute and explaining how it has been interpreted or applied
- **Case Law Summaries**
 - Cases that have applied or interpreted the statute you're researching

Federal Legislative Codes

- **Unannotated Code:**
 - United States Code (U.S.C.)
<https://uscode.house.gov/>
- **Annotated Codes:**
 - U.S. Code Annotated—U.S.C.A. (West)
 - U.S. Code Service—U.S.C.S. (Lexis)

California Legislative Codes

- **Unannotated Codes:**
 - California Legislative Information
<https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/>
- **Annotated Codes:**
 - West's California Codes (West)
 - Deering's California Codes (Lexis)



A Note About West & Lexis

- **Annotations are different**
 - Check both for thorough coverage
- **Exclusive publications and licenses**
 - Annotations can only point you to content affiliated with its own publisher
 - Only West products will refer to West Digest Topic & Key Numbers

Finding a Code Section: When You Know the Code Section

- **Example: 29 U.S.C. § 1823**
 - [Westlaw](#)
 - [Lexis](#)

Finding a Code Section: When You Know the Name of the Act


- **Examples:**
 - “Sarbanes-Oxley Act”
 - “Patriot Act”
 - “TARP”
 - “Dodd-Frank”
- **Popular Name Table** at the end of code sets:
 - USC, USCS, USCA
 - West’s and Deering’s Cal. Codes
 - Westlaw and Lexis

Finding a Code Section: When You Only Know the Topic


- **Example: California programs that provide funding to retrofit schoolbuses for clean fuel**
 - Search terms:
 - California
 - Clean fuel; emissions; clean energy
 - Bus; schoolbus; school transportation
 - Statutes Index
 - Advanced Search (Boolean connectors)

Citators: Staying Current

- Check for negative citing references in your jurisdiction to make sure your law is still good law
 - Westlaw (KeyCite)
 - Citing References
 - Filter by Cases
 - Lexis (Shepard's Signals)
 - Citing Decisions

 **9. Perez v. Howes**
7 F.Supp.3d 715, 727+, W.D.Mich.
LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT - Hours and Wages. I
protections of FLSA.

1 **Conlan v. United States DOL** ▲ 76 F.3d 271
| [Show more](#)
9th Cir. Cal. | February 2, 1996

 Constitutional by
76 F.3d 271 p.273

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