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## Kentucky Legislative Histories: Finding Your Way Part Two: Piecing Together a Legislative History

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Creating a legislative history in Kentucky is a game of chance, you may be lucky and locate relevant materials, or you may come up empty with little to show for your efforts. As you know, a legislative history includes the papers and documents generated during the legislative process; examples: reports of committees that considered the bill, statements of persons sponsoring the bill, floor debates, and various versions of the bill showing certain language was specifically deleted. Kentucky does not officially publish legislative debates or committee reports, the core resources used in a legislative history. However, there are ways of locating background information and here are a few tips:

1. **KRS.** Read the KRS section in question and go to the history portion at the end of the statute. Note the citation to the *Kentucky Acts*, the year, chapter and section information. [Covered in part one of this article]. Use the citation to pull the relevant volume of the *Kentucky Acts*.

2. **Kentucky Acts.** The *Kentucky Acts* contain the session laws of the General Assembly and provide the language of the law at that time. You may be lucky and find an "older" *Kentucky Acts* volume that includes a preamble explaining the purpose of the legislation. The *Kentucky Acts* provide two key pieces of information needed to expand your research: the sponsor's name(s) and the bill number. The name of the bill sponsor is included in the "Table of Contents" at the front of the volume. The Senate Bill or House Bill number appears at the beginning of the law as part of the heading.

3. **LRC Resources.** The Legislative Research Commission [LRC] publishes the *House Journal* and the *Senate Journal*. The journals are the official record of the General Assembly and include the committee referral information, the various versions of bills and resolutions, the voting records, and the Governor's veto messages. The appendix portion of the journals offers two key pieces of information the "History of Action Tables on Bills and Resolutions" and the "Roll Call Votes". Use the "History of Action Tables..." to trace the bill activity and to pinpoint the committee(s) that considered the bill. The House and Senate Journals are available in the law library from 1820s to the present.

4. **LRC Help.** You can request help from the Legislative Research Commission Library [606-564-8100]. The LRC librarian will search the committee minutes and look for any detailed discussion of the bill. He/she will verify if the committee meeting was taped. Taped coverage of committee meetings has improved over the years. The committee chair used to determine whether a meeting was taped or not. This erratic coverage began in the mid-1980s and continued into the mid-1990s. KET began videotaping the General Assembly sessions and some committee meetings in 1992. As of 2004 all of the committee meetings are taped.

*When contacting the LRC Library it will be useful to know the year the law was enacted, the chapter number assigned the law, the brief title/name of the law, the House or Senate bill number, the sponsor of the bill, and the key committee that considered the bill.*

5. **LRC Help.** You can request information from the bill sponsor and the LRC committee staff. The LRC Librarian can provide the contact information and advise you as to whether this approach will work.

6. **LRC Resources.** The LRC publishes a series of regular and occasional publications that may be of use. The *Informational Bulletin* and the *Research Reports* are published regularly and include the results of studies commissioned by the LRC. The LRC publishes two biannual publications: *Issues Confronting the 20xx General Assembly* and *Mid-interim Reports of the Joint, Special and Statutory Committees*. You can browse a list of the bulletins and reports posted on the LRC web site [web site provided below] or use NKU's online catalog NKUIRE [<http://nku.kyvl.org>] to locate the materials in the law library.

6. **Other Leads.** The *Kentucky Law Journal*, the *Northern Kentucky Law Review* and the *Kentucky Bench & Bar* may discuss proposed or recently enacted legislation. You can also look for newspaper coverage of the General Assembly. The Stealy Library [NKU main campus] provides access to back issues of the *Louisville Courier-Journal*, *Lexington Herald-Leader*, and *Kentucky Post*. Lexis and Westlaw also offer access to several Kentucky newspapers.

7. **Online + Web Resources.** You will find that many of the resources referenced above are posted on the Kentucky Legislative Research Commission's web site and are available via Westlaw.

#### Legislative Research Commission Web Site

Kentucky Legislative Resources	<a href="http://www.lrc.ky.gov/legresou/legres.htm">http://www.lrc.ky.gov/legresou/legres.htm</a>
Kentucky Acts [1998 forward]	<a href="http://www.lrc.ky.gov/acts/mainacts.htm">http://www.lrc.ky.gov/acts/mainacts.htm</a>
LRC Research Reports	<a href="http://www.lrc.ky.gov/lrcpubs/research_reports.htm">http://www.lrc.ky.gov/lrcpubs/research_reports.htm</a>
LRC Informational Bulletins	<a href="http://www.lrc.ky.gov/lrcpubs/info_bulletins.htm">http://www.lrc.ky.gov/lrcpubs/info_bulletins.htm</a>
Legislation & Legislative Record	<a href="http://www.lrc.state.ky.us/legislat/legislat.htm">http://www.lrc.state.ky.us/legislat/legislat.htm</a>
Past Legislative Sessions [Old Bills]	<a href="http://www.lrc.ky.gov/legislat/pastses_new.htm">http://www.lrc.ky.gov/legislat/pastses_new.htm</a>

#### Westlaw's Kentucky Legislative History Library

Kentucky Legislative History Journals	<i>Legislative Journals</i>	KY-LH-JRNLS
Kentucky Legislative History Messages	<i>Governor's Press Releases</i>	KY-LH-MSG
Kentucky Legislative History Votes	<i>Roll Call Votes</i>	KY-LH-VOTES
Kentucky Bill Text	<i>All Versions Current Bills</i>	KY-BILLTXT
Kentucky Bill Text Old	<i>Bills From Past Sessions</i>	KY-BILLTXT-

In closing, searching for relevant legislative materials is similar to finding your way through a maze with several twists and turns. This checklist should help you stay focused and ensure that you have tried all possible avenues of information. Access to legislative materials is gradually improving with more state legislative materials available on the web and commercial vendors offering legislative history services. You will end up using a combination of print and electronic resources, and in Kentucky, a big part of your research still requires using an old method, the telephone.