



Federal Legislative History Research Guide

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|--|----|
| Federal Legislative History Research on the Lexis+® and Lexis® Services: | 2 |
| Overview: | 2 |
| Reviewing Resources: | 2 |
| Search Strategies: | 4 |
| Researching an Act by Name: | 4 |
| Related Materials: Bill Tracking: | 4 |
| Related Materials: Bill Text: | 5 |
| Related Materials: CIS Legislative History: | 6 |
| Using Explore Content: | 7 |
| Post-Search Filters: | 7 |
| Content Type: | 7 |
| Source Filter: | 8 |
| Advanced Search: | 8 |
| Related Materials: | 10 |
| Additional Tips and Strategies: | 11 |

Federal Legislative History Research on the Lexis+ and Lexis Services:

The purpose of this toolkit is to help you, the researcher, be more efficient and effective when conducting federal legislative history research on the Lexis+ or Lexis service.

We provide tips and suggestions on how to approach this research, knowing that you will choose what works for you.

Overview:

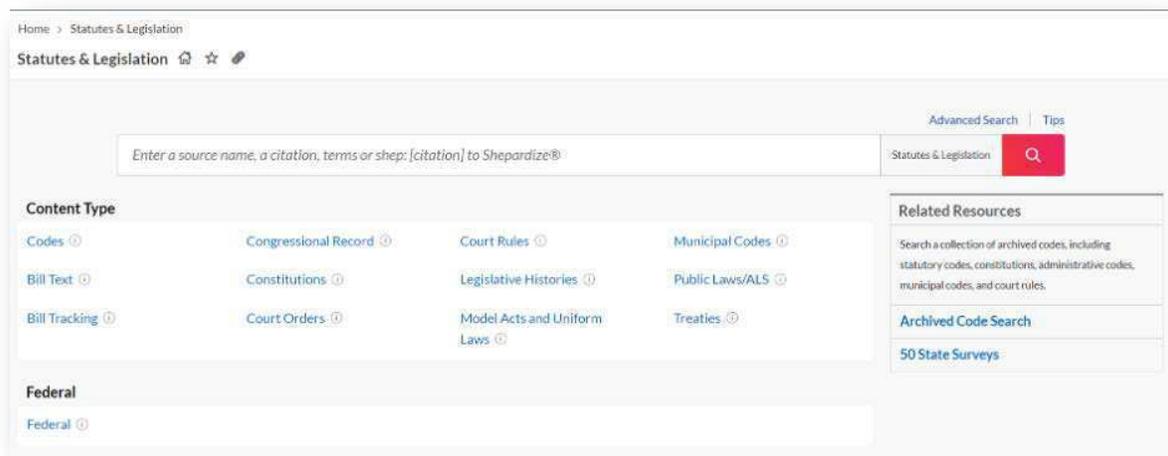
Broadly speaking, if the act you are researching was passed between 1995 and the present, you will be able to find a great deal of the legislative history documents linked and connected on Lexis+ and Lexis.

If the act was passed prior to 1995, the legislative history documents may be found on Lexis. But the various documents are not linked. Finding them will require searching and retrieving documents from specific sources.

If the act is from around 1995, either a year or two before or a year or two later, you may want to try both approaches outlined to ensure you've taken all the steps.

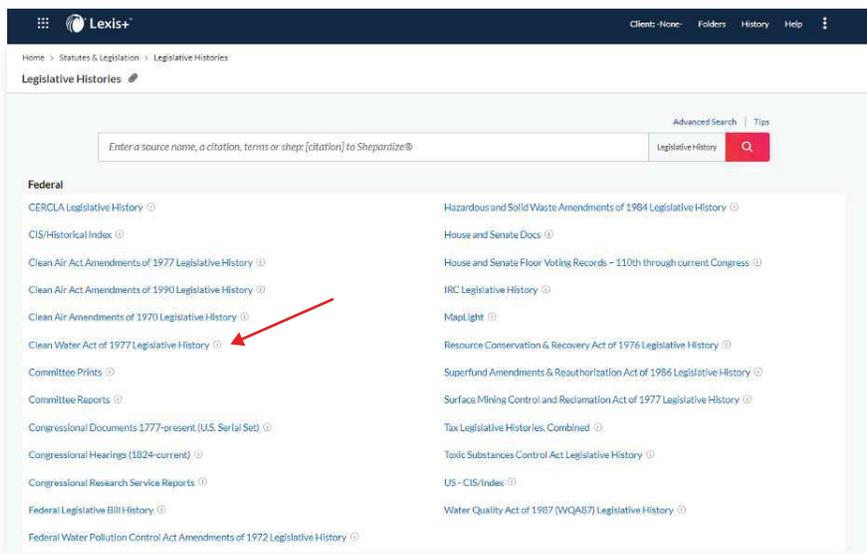
Reviewing Resources:

To become familiar with the content you will be searching, use the Explore Content pod and select [Statutes & Legislation](#).



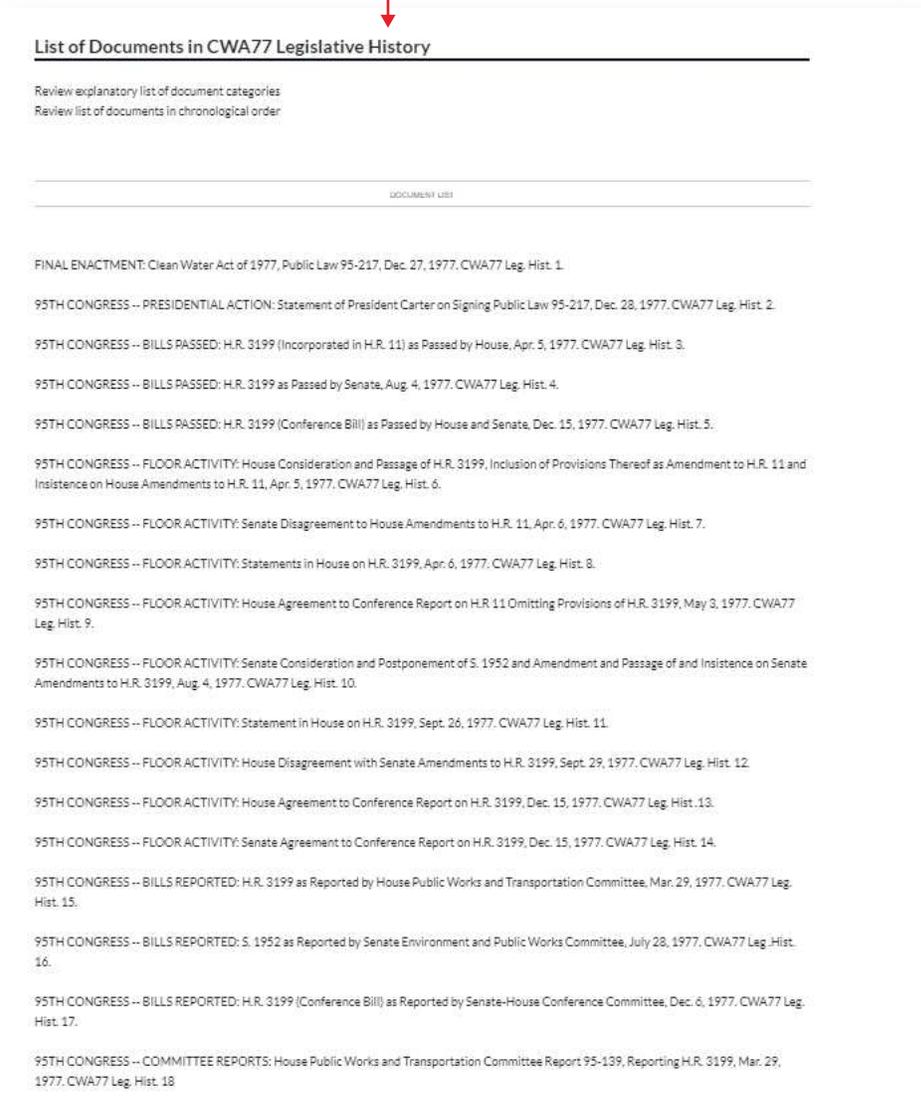
The [Content Type](#) section lists the sources you will encounter in this research.

Select [Legislative Histories](#) to see a list of federal sources, compiled legislative histories, and groupings of resources for searching in jurisdictions or practice areas. This toolkit is focused on **federal** legislative history research, so we will be working with the sources in the first section.



To get a sense of the compilation of documents in a legislative history, open one of the specific ones listed, for example, the [Clean Water Act of 1977 Legislative History](#).

Then select the **Get all documents for this source** menu item, scroll to [List of Documents in CWA77 Legislative History](#) and open it.



You will see that a legislative history contains a variety of items, from bills at various stages to committee reports, committee hearings, agency testimony and amending laws. Now that you have a sense of what a legislative history contains, let's walk through the steps needed to compile one.

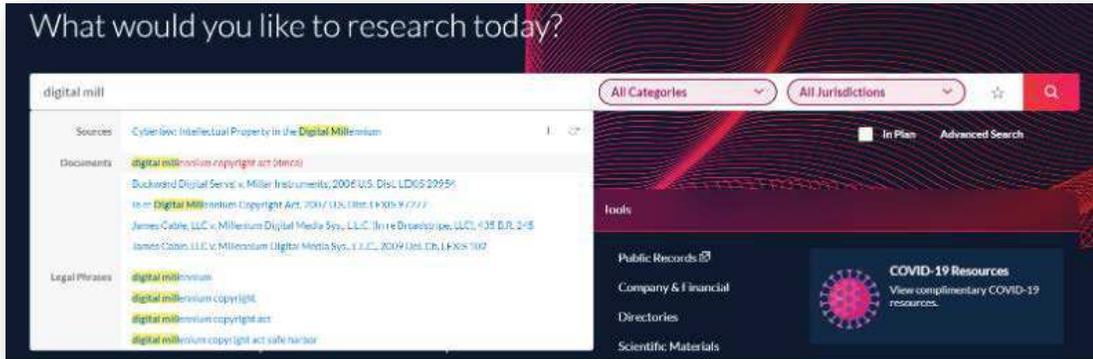
Search Strategies:

Researching an Act by Name

First, we are going to construct a legislative history for an act after 1995.

We will use the [Digital Millennium Copyright Act](#) (DMCA) as our research example.

You can type the name of the act in the search box and select the act once it appears.



Then open the act, and you will see a box to the right of the text with a tab titled "Info":



This is where linking between documents is built into the system—and where you can easily retrieve related documents.

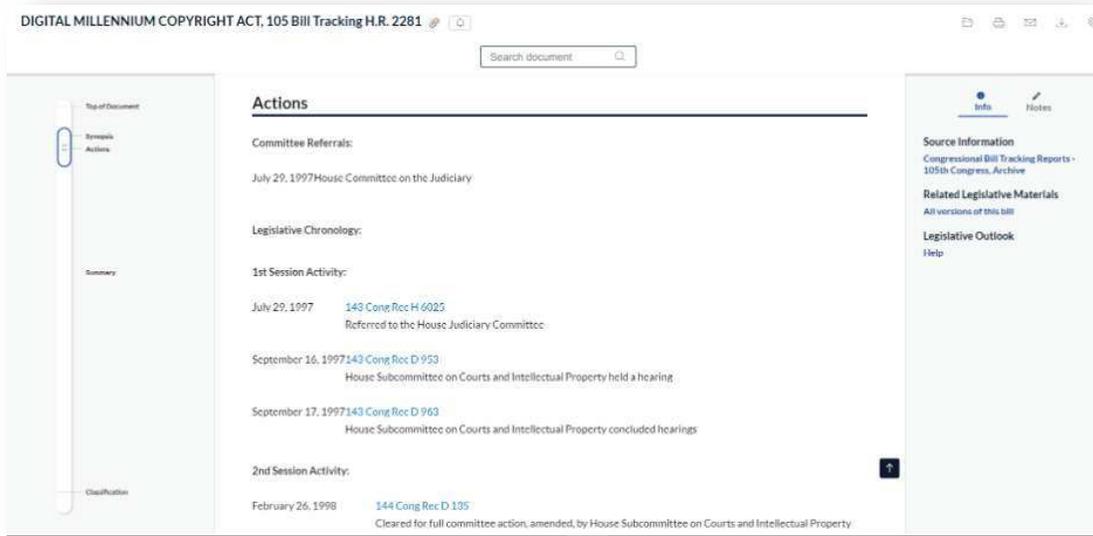
Related Materials: Bill Tracking

Under Related Legislative Materials, select [Bill Tracking](#) :

TIP: right-click on document links and open as new windows or new tabs to keep track of what documents have been opened.



From here you are presented with a chronological list of the activities connected to the bill. And you can link to a specific document to review it and see if you need it for your final report.



For example, click the link above **Remarks by Sen. Ashcroft**. You will find insight into the differences between the language of the House and Senate bills.

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| July 17, 1998 | 144 Cong Rec D 785 Ordered reported, as amended, by House Committee on Commerce |
| July 17, 1998 | 144 Cong Rec D 785 Report filed by House Committee on Commerce (H. Rept. 105-551, Pt. 2) |
| July 22, 1998 | 144 Cong Rec H 6185 Discharged from House Committee on Ways and Means pursuant to clause 5 of rule X |
| August 4, 1998 | 144 Cong Rec H 7074 Motion by Rep. Coble to suspend the rules and pass the measure, as amended |
| August 4, 1998 | 144 Cong Rec H 7103 Agreed to motion by Rep. Coble (by voice vote) and the measure is passed, as amended |
| August 31, 1998 | 144 Cong Rec S 9681 Received in the Senate after passage in the House |
| August 31, 1998 | 144 Cong Rec S 9682 Placed on Senate Calendar |
| September 3, 1998 | 144 Cong Rec S 9935 Remarks by Sen. ASHCROFT, JOHN D (R-MO) |

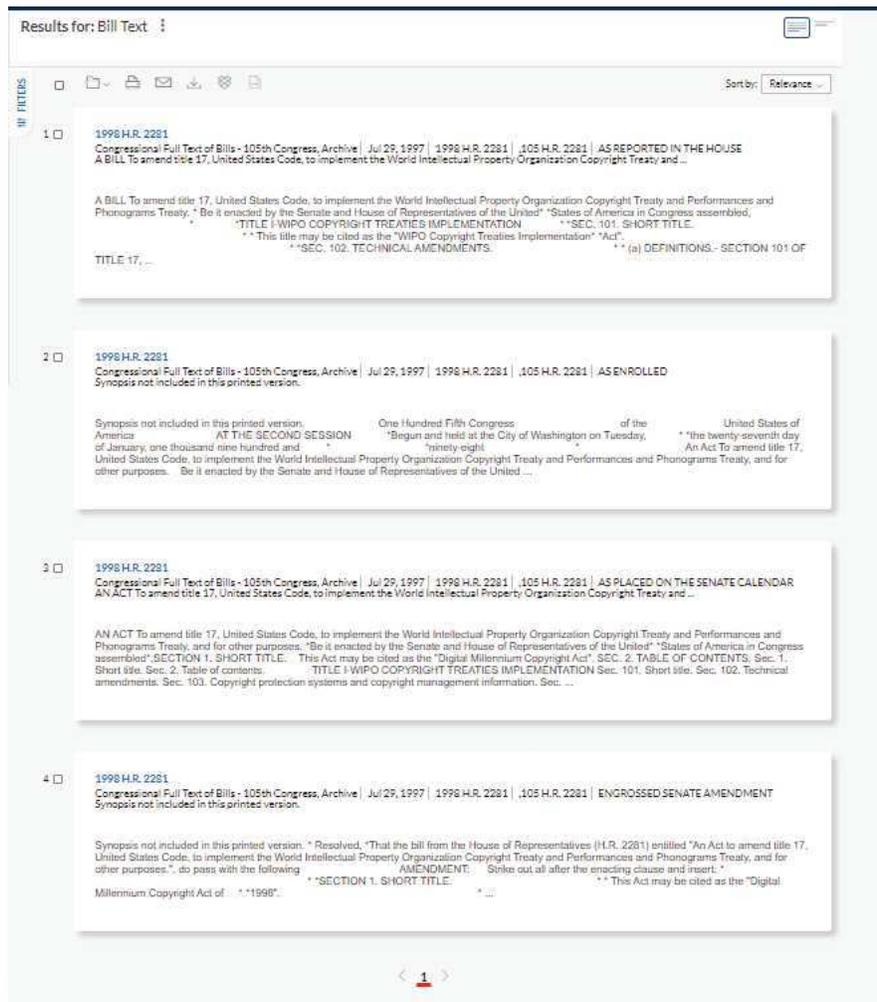
TIP: download this chronological list and use this as a guide and checklist for collecting the items that support your research.

Related Materials: Bill Text

Return to the [Digital Millennium Copyright Act, 1998](#). Go to the Info tab > Related Legislative Materials, select [Bill Text](#).



Here you will find a list of the versions of the bill through the legislative process. If your research requires these versions, you can select them all for delivery.

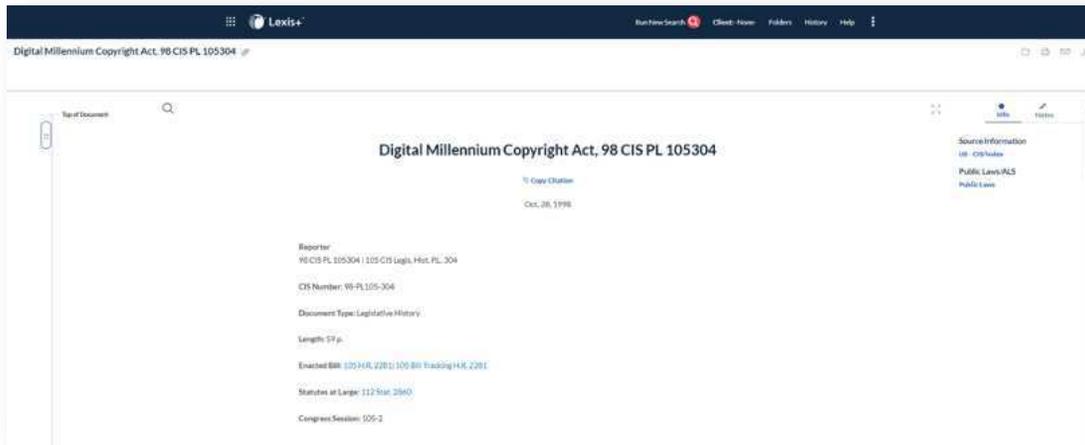


Related Materials: CIS Legislative History

Return to [DMCA](#). Go to the Info tab > Related Legislative Materials and select [CIS Legislative History](#) to view Congressional Information Service history.

Now you are presented with an overview of the act and important documents and references.

This list is organized by type of document and can be utilized as a guide and checklist to facilitate compiling the relevant documents. The value of this list is that, as you become comfortable with this research, you can zero in on the sources you find most helpful, like Committee Prints.



Again, the documents are linked, so you can easily open them. After reviewing them, you can select the items to be included in your compilation and deliver them as you prefer.

Using Explore Content:

Once you have gained some experience with legislative history research, another approach is to start in the Explore Content pane on your research home page. Then select [Statutes & Legislation > Federal](#).

Let's search for the *Paycheck Protection Act* by entering text in quotation marks as shown here:

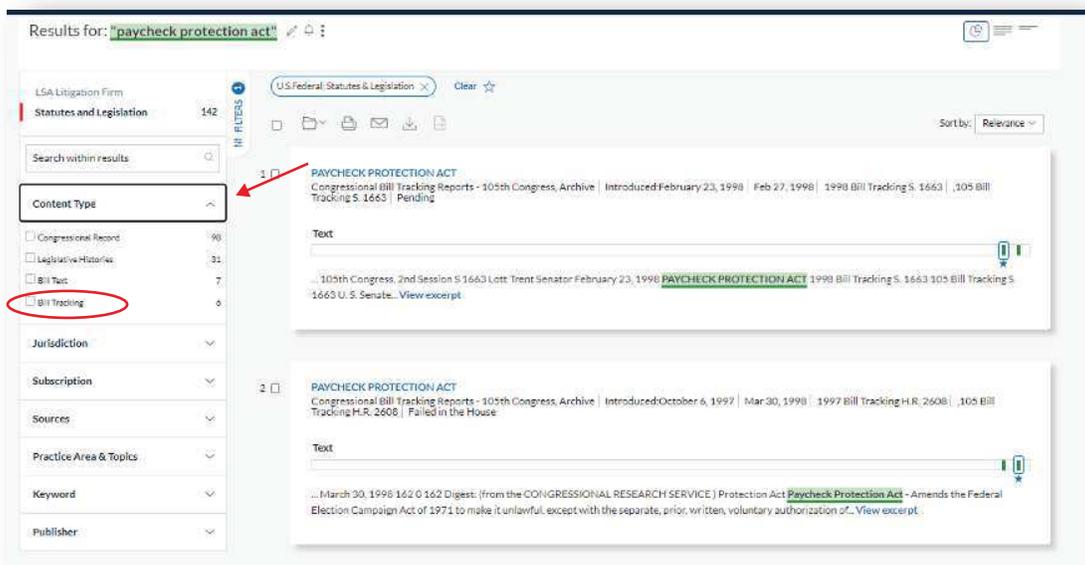


Post-Search Filters:

Content Type:

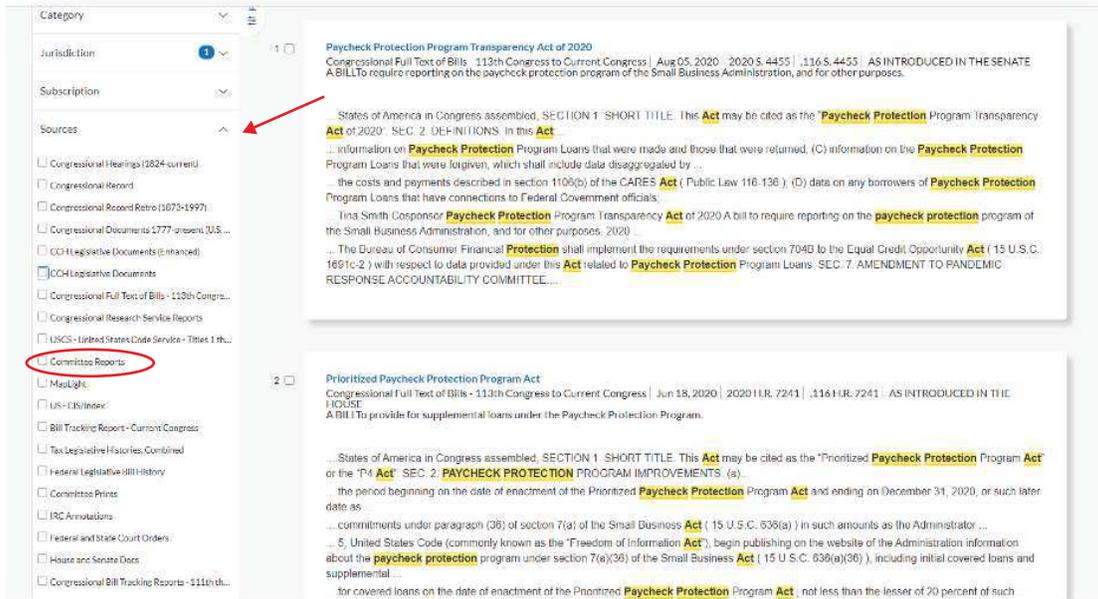
Then use the post-search filters on the left to limit results to categories and sources that reflect the items of interest.

In the filters on the left, expand Content Type. This is where you will find Bill Tracking:



Source Filter:

Next, expand on the Sources filter, and drill down to the specific documents you want, like Committee Reports.



Consider using this approach in combination with the checklists from [Bill Tracking](#) or [US – CIS Index](#). You can use the checkboxes to deliver many results at once and save time.

Advanced Search:

Now let's look at an act prior to 1995, the Social Security Act, which was enacted in 1935.

Begin from the Explore Content pane and select [Statutes & Legislation > Federal](#).

Next, click the [Advanced Search](#) link at the top right to take advantage of the template. Use the title segment and the tools for limiting to a date range to execute a precise search. The date range is incredibly helpful to narrow the results to the time close to when the original act was passed. As you can imagine, this act has been referred to thousands of times in legislation afterwards.



In the Title segment, enter "social security act" in quotation marks and, using the date segment, limit it to *Date is before* 12/31/1939.

The screenshot shows a search interface for "social security act" on the U.S. Federal Statutes & Legislation website. The search term is entered in the top bar. Below the search bar, there are several filter sections:

- Statutes and Legislation:** A dropdown menu to "Select a different content type".
- Terms:** Four input fields with "Add" buttons for filtering by terms: "All of these terms", "Any of these terms", "Exactly this phrase", and "Excluding these terms".
- Document Segments/Fields:** A section for applying filters to document parts. The "Date" field is set to "Date is before" with a date of "12/31/1939" entered. Other fields for "Citation" and "Title" are empty.
- Use Connectors:** A sidebar with options like "Exact phrase", "AND", "OR", "AND NOT", "In", and "!".
- Frequently Asked Questions:** A sidebar with questions about searching, legal phrases, and document processing.

At the bottom left, there are "Search" and "Clear" buttons.

The screenshot shows a search result for "Social Security Act". It includes the following information:

- 4** (with a small square icon)
- Social Security Act.** (in blue)
- United States Statutes at Large | Aug 14, 1935 | 74 P.L. 271 | ,49 Stat. 620, 74 Cong. Ch. 531 | Enacted
- Text** (with a small square icon)
- ... 74th Congress, Session I Enacted August 14, 1935 Public Law 74-271 Chapter 531 **Social Security Act**, 74 P.L. 271 49 Stat. 620 74 Cong. Ch. 531. **excerpt**

Open that document, and you learn that this is a Committee on Finance, Senate Hearing, and is 233 pages.

This document is not the complete hearing. But it has metadata and information that provides search terms for uncovering the full-text documents.

From this document, you can identify two witnesses, Russell Reagh and Frances Perkins.

Related Materials:

Notice that you do not see any Related Legislative Materials on the Info tab. To access additional documents connected to this act, go back to the search results and use the Source post-search filter to limit to [CIS/Historical Index and US - CIS/Index](#).

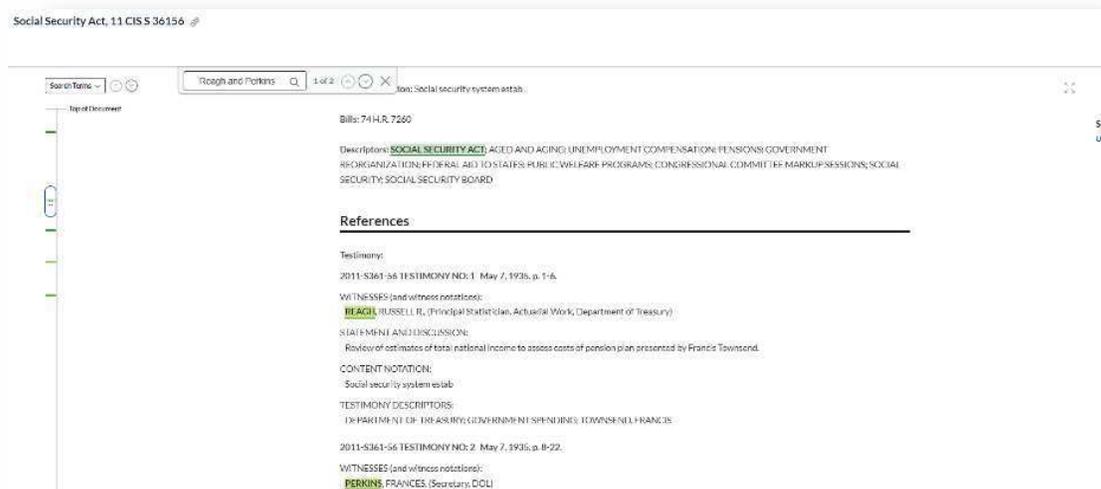
Scan these documents to find any occurring prior to the time the act was enacted.

In this case, you will find [11 CIS S 36156](#).

Open that document, and you learn that this is a Committee on Finance, Senate Hearing, and is 233 pages.

This document is not the complete hearing. But it has metadata and information that provides search terms for uncovering the full-text documents.

From this document, you can identify two witnesses, Russell Reagh and Frances Perkins.



Returning to the results for “social security act,” access the Source filter; check Congressional Documents, Congressional Hearings, and United States Statutes at Large; and uncheck the CIS/Historical Index and US-CIS/Index. Search Within:

Use the Search Within results filter, and search reagh and perkins.

There is one result, and it is the actual hearing.

Open that, and the text you see is merely the metadata. Check the Info tab, and you’ll find an Attachments section that contains a PDF titled Replica of Original Proceedings.

Open this and you are viewing the full-text of the document as a PDF. Use your browser’s find feature to focus on the terms you are looking for, in this case perkins or reagh.

This is a high-level overview of legislative history research on the Lexis+ and Lexis services. If you would like further assistance, please contact your Knowledge and Research Consultant.

Additional Tips and Strategies:

If you have a statute as your starting point, the History section contains the act or public law that is the best starting point. And it is linked for easy access.

Consider using the Code Compare tool if your research includes identifying how the text of a statute has changed over time. And that can give you search term suggestions when you're looking at supporting documents. (Note: Code Compare is available from 1992 through effective versions.)

Consider *Shepardizing*[™] the code section you are researching. You may find insight about the language and intent of the law from a judicial perspective.

Consider searching in News, Legal News and Secondary Materials if you are trying to discover intent. You may find how various groups reacted to the legislation as it moved through Congress, what the original intent was and whether that was changed through the legislative process.

For detailed information about the sources and tips for constructing searches, check out this Customer Support page: [Finding Legislative History on Lexis](#).

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