

Climbing Capitol Hill: The Basics of Congressional Research

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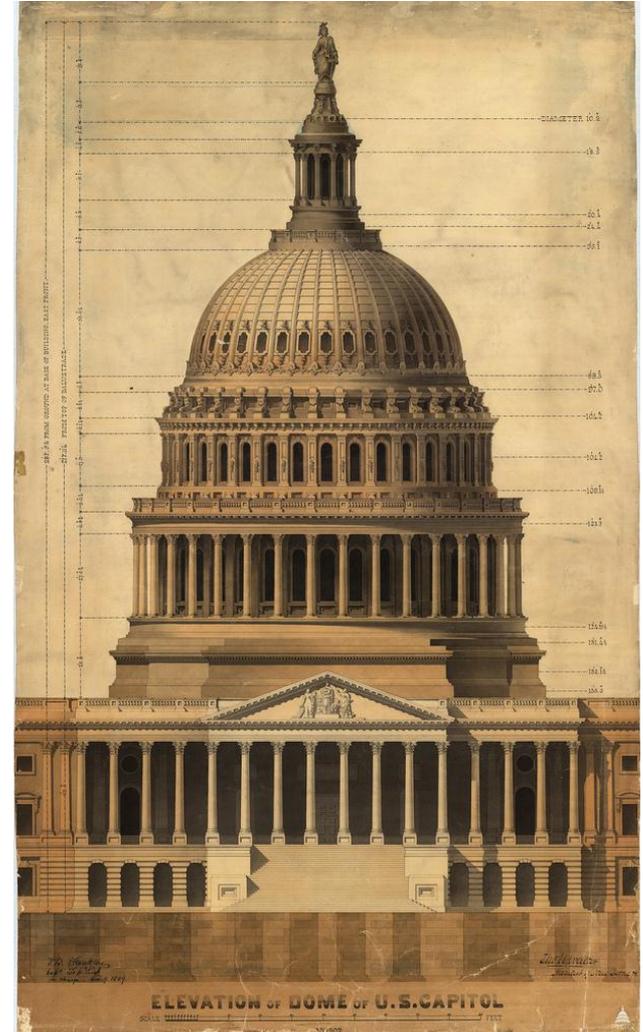


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- **A caveat (or three)**
- **Brief civics lesson**
- **Tips & tricks**
- **What Congress Produces**
- **How researchers may use that content**
- **How to find that content (for free and for fee)**
- **Auxilliary services for congress**
- **Questions and Answers**





- **Established in Article 1 of the US Constitution**
 - "all legislative powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and a House of Representatives."
 - **House**
 - 435 members
 - Elected every 2 years
 - Initiates revenue-raising bills
 - Initiates impeachment processes
 - **Senate**
 - 100 members
 - Elected every 6 years
 - Ratifies treaties and approves presidential appointments
 - Decides impeachment cases
 - **Meets for two-year 'Congresses' each with two 'Sessions' that are numbered – currently in the 113th Congress, 1st Session.**
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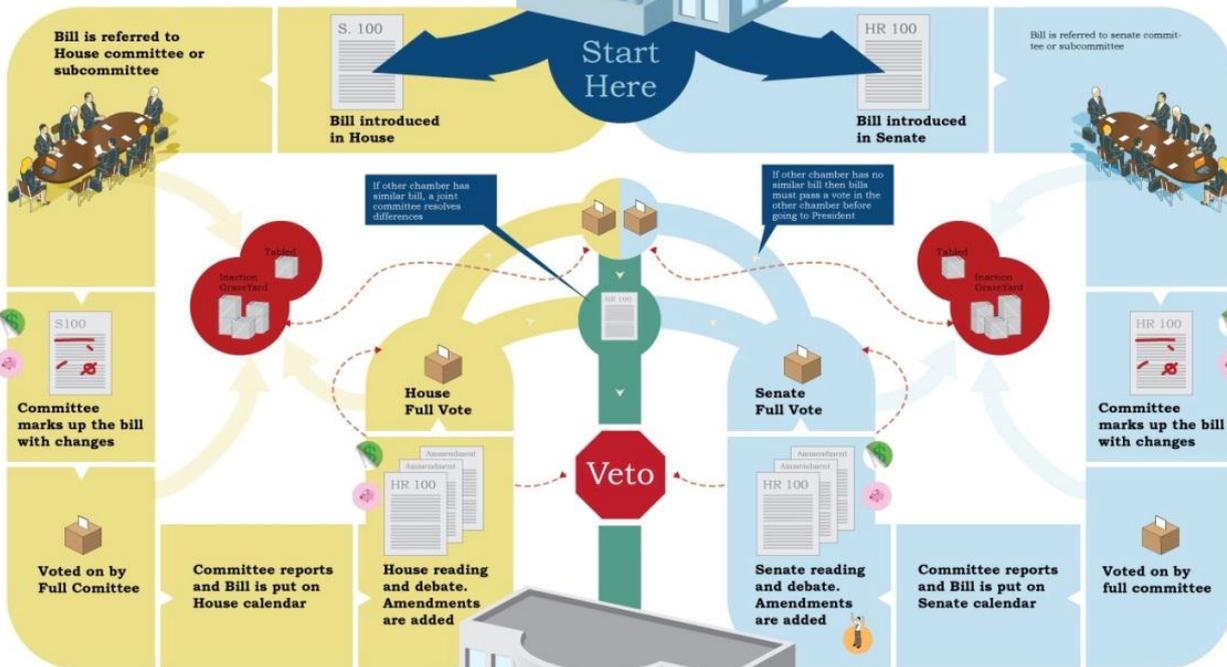


Congress: A Civics Lesson Cont.

HOW DOES A BILL BECOME A LAW?

435
Representatives

Each state receives representation in the House in proportion to its population but is entitled to at least one Representative. Each representative serves for a two-year term. The House was granted its own exclusive powers: the power to initiate revenue bills, impeach officials, and elect the president in electoral college deadlocks.



100
Senators

Each U.S. state is represented by two senators, regardless of population. This ensures equal representation of each state in the Senate. Senators serve staggered six-year terms.

HOUSE
of Representatives

SENATE

Start Here

S. 100

HR 100

Bill is referred to House committee or subcommittee

Bill is referred to senate committee or subcommittee

Bill introduced in House

Bill introduced in Senate

Tabled
Reaction Green-Yard

Tabled
Reaction Green-Yard

If other chamber has similar bill, a joint committee resolves differences

If other chamber has no similar bill then bills must pass a vote in the other chamber before going to President

House Full Vote

Senate Full Vote

S. 100

Committee marks up the bill with changes

HR 100

Committee marks up the bill with changes

Voted on by Full Committee

Committee reports and Bill is put on House calendar

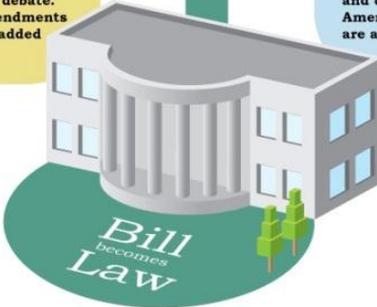
House reading and debate. Amendments are added

Veto

Senate reading and debate. Amendments are added

Committee reports and Bill is put on Senate calendar

Voted on by full committee



Veto
The President can Veto (Decline) the Bill. Bill can still pass but must be re-voted by House or Senate and receive 2/3 vote to pass

Pork Barrel
Typically, "pork" involves funding programs whose economic benefits are concentrated in a particular area but whose costs are spread among all taxpayers.

Earmark
Earmarks are funds provided by Congress for projects by bypassing the Presidential evaluation processes.

Filibuster
AKA - "Talking a bill to death." An informal term for extended debate or other procedures used to prevent a vote on a bill in the Senate.



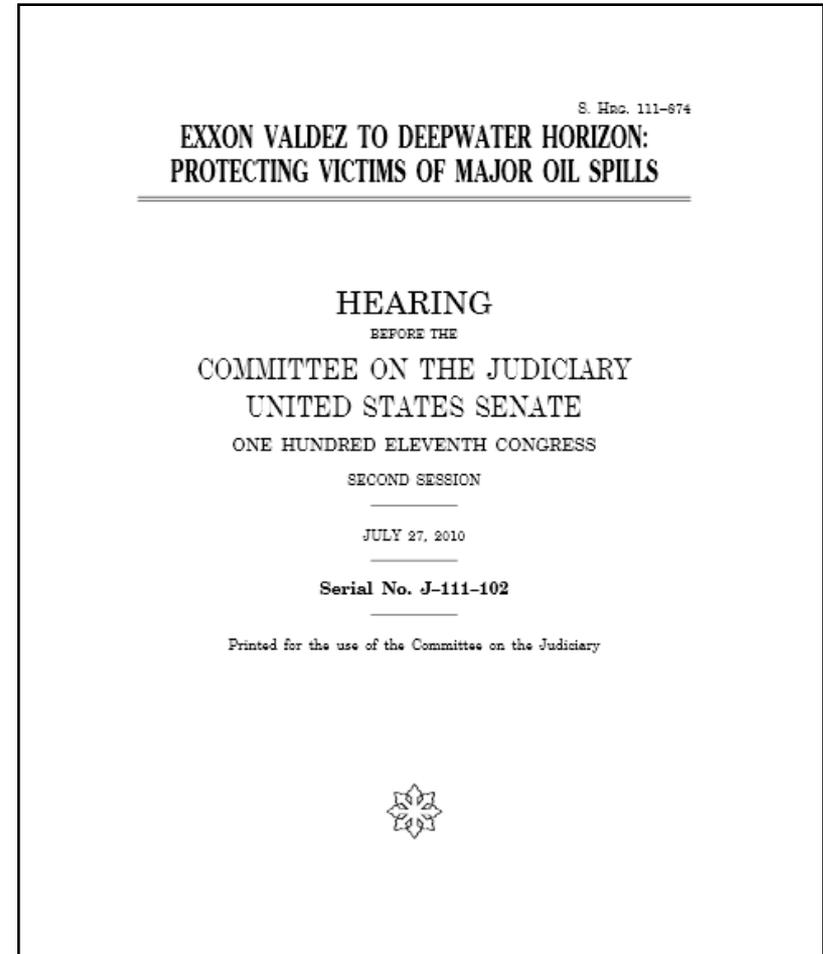
<http://visual.ly/how-does-bill-become-law>



- **Names matter (and they change)**
 - Bills and Acts are numbered (differently in House and Senate and Joint) and sometimes named, too (i.e. 'Obamacare' vs. 'Affordable Care Act')
 - Publications (Annals of Congress > Congressional Record)
 - Agencies ('Health Education and Welfare' became separate departments of Health and Human Services and Education)
 - Committees
 - **Names/Numbers/Dates will make your life easier if you have them**
 - Name of congressperson, witness, committee, bill, etc.
 - What congress AND what session
 - Day/Date of votes, floor discussion, hearings, etc.
 - Bill number (was it in the House or Senate)
 - Serial Set Numbers
-



- **Congressional Hearings**
- **Serial Set**
- **Congressional Record**
- **CBO Reports**
- **CRS Reports**
- **Legislative Histories**





Congressional Hearings: What are they?

- Meeting or session of a Senate, House, joint, or special committee of Congress
 - Used to obtain information and opinions on proposed legislation, conduct an investigation, or evaluate/oversee the activities of a government department or the implementation of a Federal law.
 - May also be purely exploratory in nature, providing testimony and data about topics of current interest.
 - Contain data and testimonies from a wide variety of sources
 - Most congressional hearings are published two months to two years after they are held. Some are never published.
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Congressional Hearings: What are they used for?

- Researching a particular issue or policy – often considered primary sources for students
 - Researching the inner workings of Congress – committee structure, power plays among members, etc.
 - Researching special interests via witnesses called to testify
 - Tracking issues over time (Nuclear nonproliferation during the Cold War vs. after The Cold War)
 - Evaluating the relationship between Congress and the Administration (confirmation hearings).
 - Wonderful source of data
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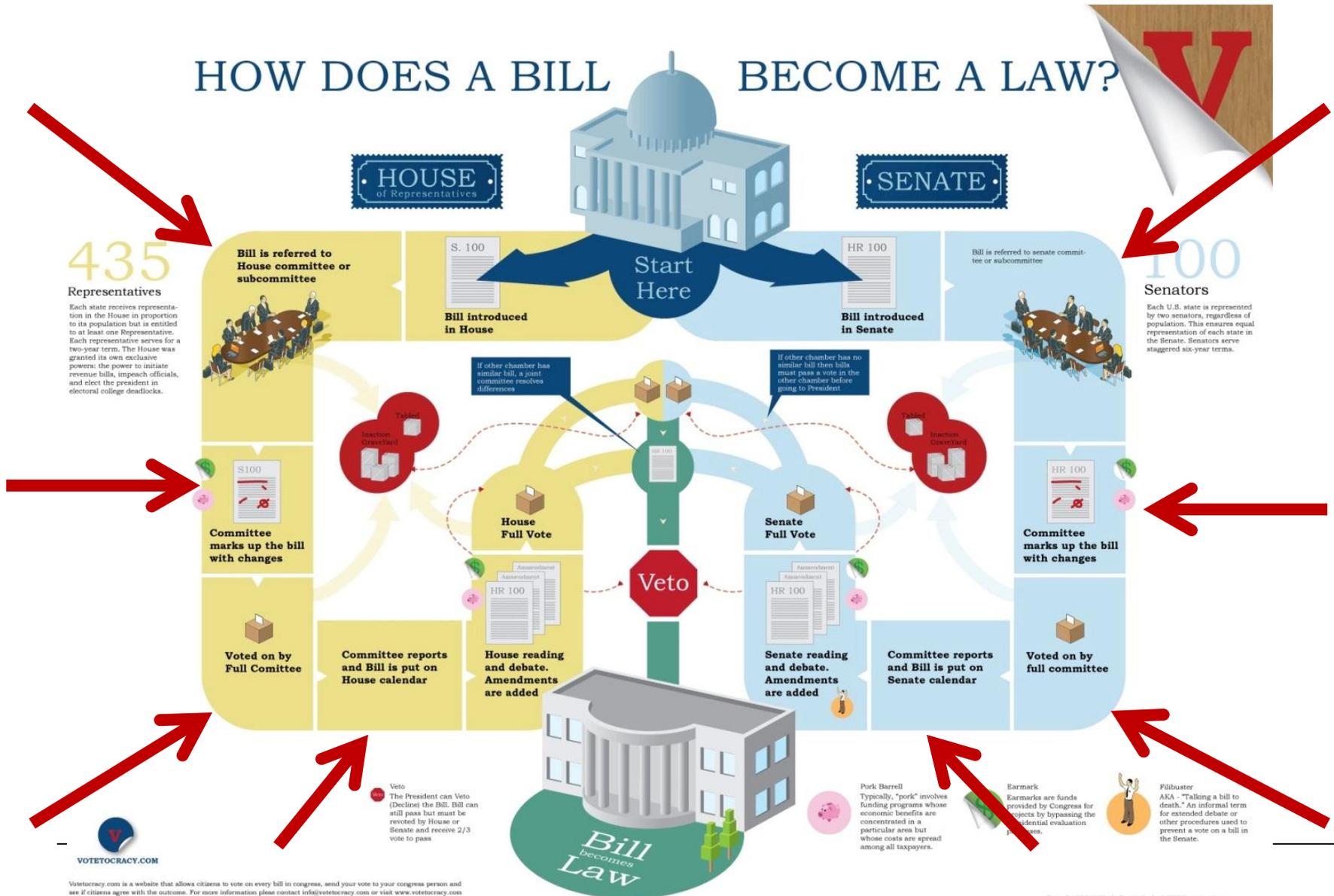


Congressional Hearings: How do you find them?

- **In Print or Microfiche**
 - **Online for Free**
 - [FDSys](#) (99th – 113th Congress 1985 - Current)
 - [C-SPAN Video Library](#) (selected hearings)
 - **Online for \$\$**
 - ProQuest Congressional
 - WestLaw
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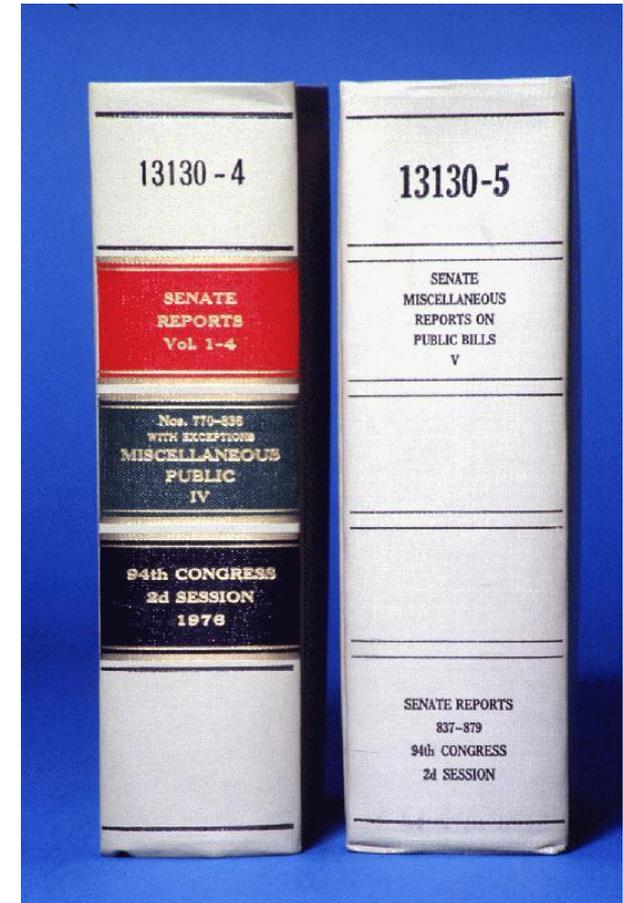
HOW DOES A BILL BECOME A LAW?



- **Began with the 15th Congress, 1st Session (1817)**
 - **Documents before 1817 may be found in the [American State Papers](#).**
 - **Documents cover a wide variety of topics and may include**
 - Reports of executive departments and independent organizations,
 - Reports of special investigations made for Congress
 - Publications about the history of the government, institutions and architecture of Washington
 - Annual reports of non-governmental organizations.
 - During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, executive-branch materials were also published in the *Serial Set*.
 - **Useful in researching almost anything to do with government, policy, legislation, etc.**
 - **[Additional info](#) from GPO:**
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- **Contains:**
 - House Documents
 - Senate Documents
 - House Reports
 - Senate Reports
 - Senate Treaty Documents
 - **Documents** are primarily the information coming **IN** to the committee. This includes texts of various executive communications to Congress, executive agencies' annual or special reports to Congress, accounts of committee activities and committee-sponsored special studies, and a miscellany of publications such as ceremonial tributes to individuals or reports of patriotic organizations.
 - **Reports** are primarily the information coming **OUT** of a committee to the larger body (House or Senate). This is how congressional committees formally report and make recommendations to the Senate or House as a whole concerning their findings and deliberations regarding specific pieces of legislation, or their investigative or oversight activities.
 - Can sometimes be the most informative documents related to the creation of specific legislation. They can provide the data the committee used in their decision-making, and can provide insight into the thinking behind a particular piece of proposed legislation.
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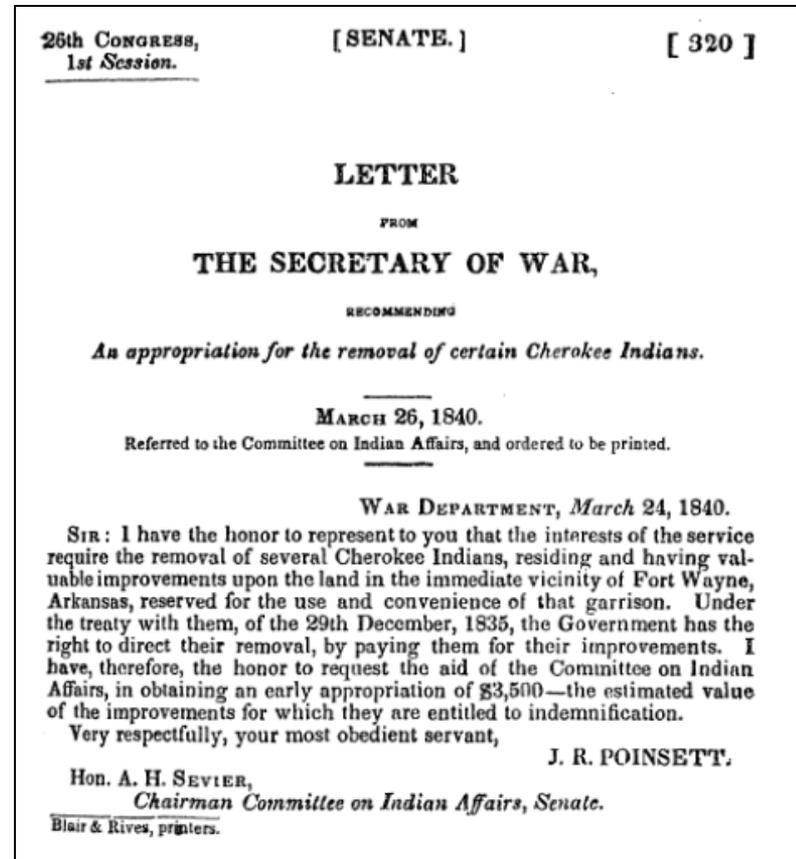
- **In Print (bound volumes or microfiche)**
- **Online for Free**
 - [Congressional Reports](#)
(104th – 113th Congress 1995 – Current)
 - [Congressional Documents](#)
(94th – 113th Congress 1975 – Current)
 - [Library of Congress](#)
(23rd – 64th Congress 1833-1917)
- **Online for \$\$**
 - ProQuest Congressional
 - Hein Online
 - Readex





Serial Set: What is it Used For?

- Researching a particular policy
- Researching a particular Congress
- Researching topics across time
- Researching organizations or institutions
- Tribute volumes are often of particular interest
- Early Serial Set volumes include things like
 - Annual Reports of government agencies
 - Reports on the relocation of the Cherokee
 - Discussion on financing the Lewis and Clark expedition, etc.





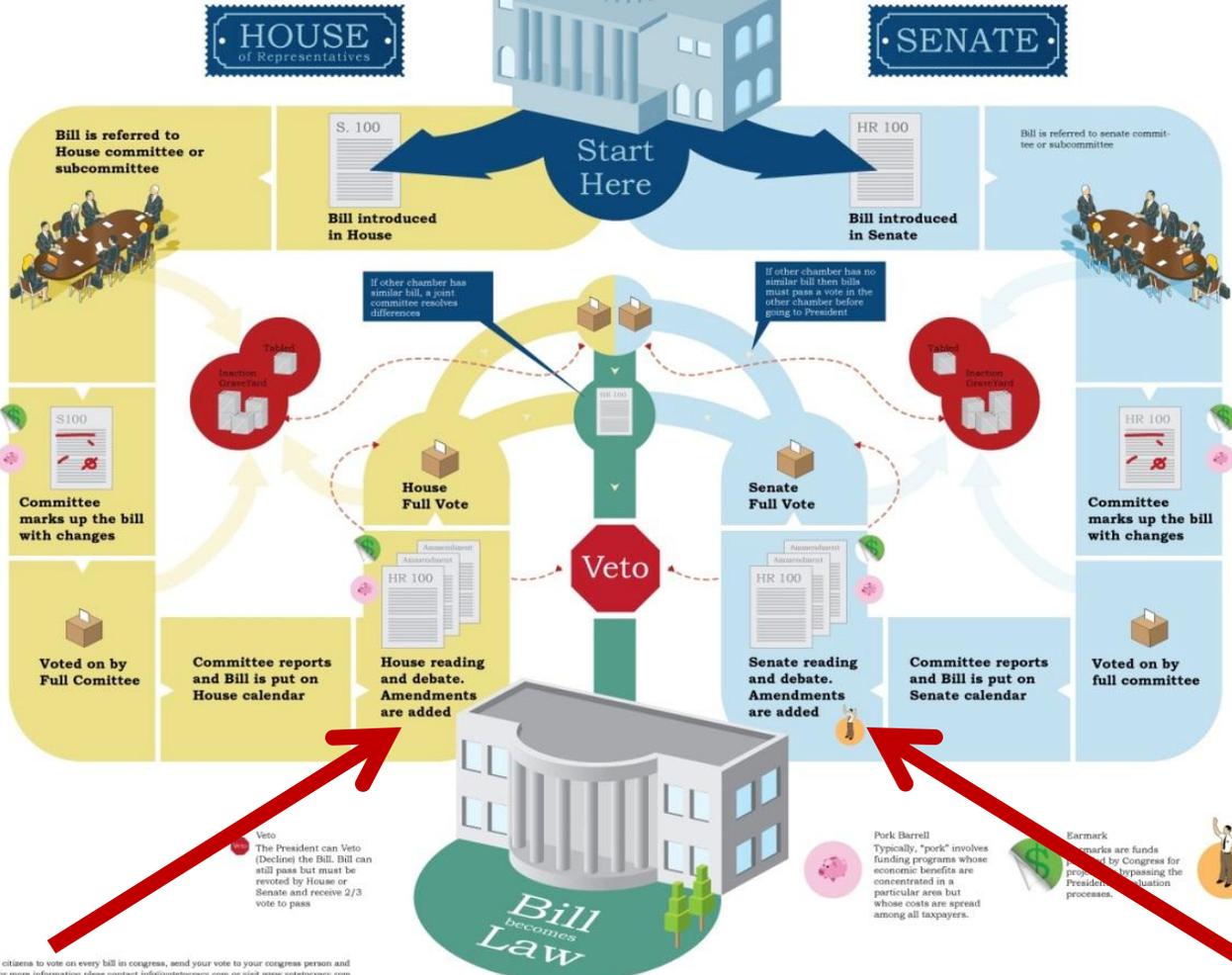
- **It is the official record of the proceedings and debates of the United States Congress.**
 - **Title Changes**
 - Annals of the Congress of the United States: 1st – 18th Congresses (1789-1824)
 - Register of Debates in Congress: 18th Congress 1st session – 25th Congress 1st session (1824–1837)
 - Congressional Globe: 23rd through 42nd Congresses (1833–1873)
 - Congressional Record: 43rd Congress (1874) – Present
 - **Covers what happens on the floor of Congress (NOT what happens in committees)**
 - **Important to know:** Members of Congress can revise or extend their remarks and for most of the years of congress these are not indicated in the CR. Now, they are in a different typeface or indicated with a bullet.
 - Additional info available here: <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/abt.cong.rec.html>
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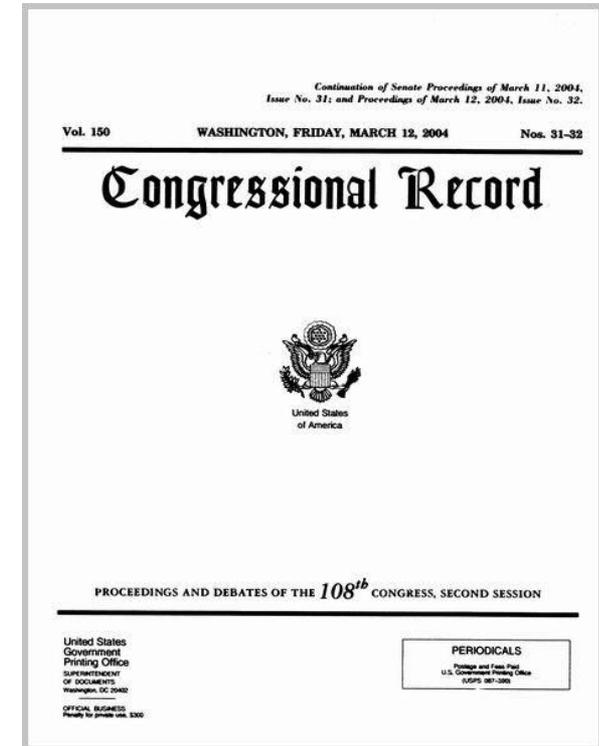


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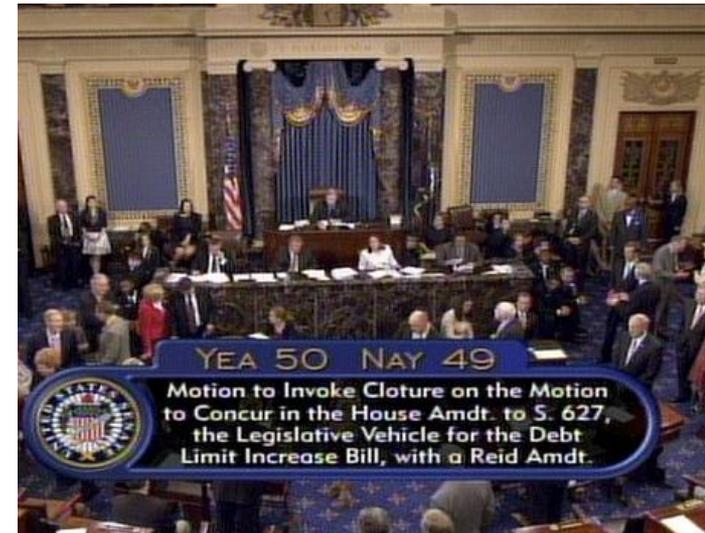
Consists of

- House section and Senate section each covering floor debate and business.
- Extensions of Remarks (speeches, tributes and other clarifications that were not actually uttered during open proceedings – formerly called Appendix)
- Daily Digest (Summary of what happens)
- Index for each session of congress by name & subject
- Also contains communications from the President and the Executive Branch, memorials, petitions, and various information (including amendments and cosponsors)

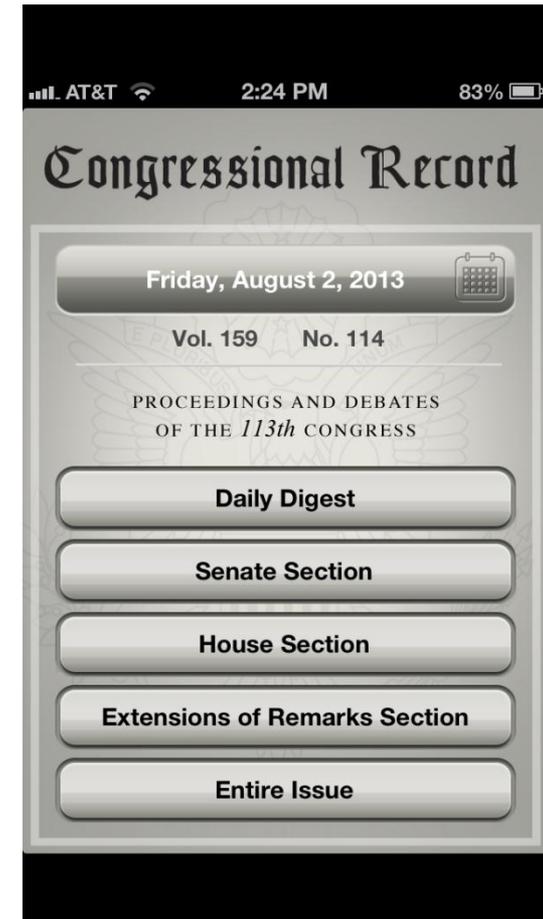




- **To track debates on topics across time (compare Prohibition and Repeal debates)**
- **Congressional Rhetoric**
- **To look at members 'Record' on particular issues**
- **Tracks votes**
- **Demonstrates changes in procedure over time**



- **In Print or Microfiche**
- **Online for Free**
 - [FDSys](#) (1994 – present)
 - [THOMAS](#) from LOC (1989 – Present)
 - [American Memory from LOC](#) (1773 – 1874)
 - [iOS App](#) (back to 1995)
 - [C-SPAN Video Library](#) (selected debates)
- **Online for \$\$**
 - ProQuest Congressional
 - Hein Online
 - WestLaw



- **Congressional Research Service**

- Nonpartisan
 - Congress' 'think tank'
 - Policy group staffed by experienced researchers, economists, policy analysts and statisticians
 - Existed informally earlier but was codified in 1946 and called The Legislative Research Service. Renamed CRS in 1970.
 - Does not provide reports to the public except through your congressperson (or FOIA request).
 - Available Online in ProQuest Congressional but not widely for free
 - Major Studies and Issue Briefs of the CRS was also put out in MF
 - Some can be found online – for example: <https://opencrs.com/>
 - Goldmine of information for researchers on any topic.
 - Example: “Youth and the Labor Force: Background and Trends” from July 2013
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- **Congressional Budget Office**

- Created in 1974
 - Nonpartisan
 - Provides economic data to congress
 - Publishes reports in print (SuDoc Y10.2) and online (<http://www.cbo.gov/topics/>) back to 94th Congress (1975-76)
 - Reports analyze economic impact of proposed legislation as well as enacted legislation
 - Really useful for students writing policy analysis or policy proposal papers
 - Example: [The Economic Impact of S. 744, the Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act](#)
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What are they?

- Allows you to track a law from it's first appearance as a bill in the house or Senate all the way through the hearings, revisions, discussions and votes.
- Usually used to teach legislative process or to determine intent behind a law

Legislative History [← Back to res](#)

prev Document 1 of 1 [Add to selected items](#)

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Title Info

Legislative History of:	PL111-148
Title:	Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act
Date:	March 23, 2010
Length:	906 p.
Enacted Bill:	111 H.R. 3590 ; Retrieve Bill Tracking Report
Congress Session:	111-2
CIS-Number:	2010-PL111-148
PL Number:	P.L. 111-148
Statute at Large:	124 Stat. 119
Bills:	107 S. 2933; 108 H.R. 2490; 108 S. 333; 108 S. 2940; 109 H.R. 4993; 109 S. 2010; 110 H.R. 20; 110 H.R. 1783; 110 H.R. 2833; 110 H.R. 3163; 110 H.R. 6444; 110 S. 334; 110 S. 1070; 110 S. 2236; 111 H.R. 3590; 111 S. 1796; 111 H.R. 20; 111 H.R. 1740; 111 H.R. 3200; 111 H.R. 3962; 111 S. 324; 111 S. 1679; 111 S. 1790; 111 H.Res. 903; 111 H.Res. 1203;

How do they work?

- **Before you begin your research, it helps to know at least one of the following two pieces of information:**
 - The public law citation or the Statutes at Large citation (e.g. P.L. 107-56; 115 Stat. 272)
 - The bill number and Congress of the Act or Resolution (e.g. H.R. 3162 from the 107th Congress)

How do you find them:

- Proquest Congressional
 - ProQuest Legislative Insight
 - Hein Online, Westlaw, LexisNexis
 - On the open web in places like:
 - http://www.justice.gov/jmd/ls/legislative_histories/legislative-histories.html
 - <http://www.llsdc.org/Leg-Hist/>
-

- **Congress/Session Numbers with corresponding Congressional Record/Debates volumes**
 - **GovDoc-L Listserv - <http://govdoc-l.org/>**
 - **Schoolhouse Rock ‘I’m Just a Bill’**
 - **Research Guides**
 - http://hcl.harvard.edu/research/guides/us_congressional/
 - <http://libguides.nps.edu/content.php?pid=437875&sid=3584211>
 - <http://guides.library.tamu.edu/content.php?pid=302472>
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Questions?

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<http://www.slideshare.net/roztedford/basics-of-congressionalresearch>

OR

<http://slidesha.re/15Ol9jf>



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 - **September 25: Gov Info Tour with Alex Simons**
 - **October 16-18: NCLA Biennial Conference**

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