Legislative History: Getting Started

Let’s get started with an actual legislative history problem: let’s find the legislative history of the law that covers colleges that prevent ROTC access or military recruiting on campus.

We will follow these steps to find the law and the documents that were produced as the law was enacted:

1. Find the appropriate U.S. Code section
2. Find the Public Law number
3. Use the Public Law number to find the documents produced

This tutorial will cover steps 1 and 2 using Westlaw.

Using the U.S. Code’s index (available in print or electronic form) is just one way to find the law. The index directs us to Title 10, section 983 of the U.S. Code.

If you need a review of the various methods of finding statutory codes, please review either the Library’s tutorials or research guide.

In the Credits section at the end of the text of the statute, you will find the numbers and dates of the Public Laws that created and amended the statute.

This section of the Code originated with Public Law 104-106 which was signed into law on February 10, 1996. The particular provision is found in div. A, title V, § 541(a) of the Public Law.

It was amended by several other public laws as well, information that would be valuable to us if we wanted the entire history of the statute.

The next two tutorials will show us how to take this information and find the legislative history documents for this law.