Finding a Compiled Legislative History on ProQuest Legislative Insight

ProQuest Congressional offers access to Congressional publications such as House and Senate Committee Reports, Hearings, debates from The Congressional Record, and bills and Public Laws. A related database, ProQuest Legislative Insight, also produces compiled legislative histories for many pieces of enacted legislation since the 1st Congress. If a bill is not signed into law, it will not get a compiled legislative history in Legislative Insight.

A compiled legislative history pulls together documents relating to the passage of a law: all versions of the bill, hearings, congressional reports, debates from the Congressional Record, and the public law itself.

Let’s assume you have been asked to find a compiled legislative history of the Ethics Reform Act of 1989.

If you are already in ProQuest Congressional, you can link to Legislative Insight from the home page. Alternatively, you can go directly to Legislative Insight by searching for it on the Georgetown Law Library’s Databases page.

To locate a legislative history using the popular name, either select the “Popular Names of Laws List” on the main search page, or begin typing and select the law from the auto-generated suggestions. If you have a citation to the public law, statutes at large, or bill, you can also use the citation checker.

The legislative history for our act is the first result. If you click into it, you can see that you can filter by or hop to various document types. Notice also that this legislative history contains a lot of documents – this is not unusual for federal laws.

Imagine that you had found a reference in a contemporary news article to a statement in a hearing on “public outrage” that drove this legislation. You would like to cite the original statement and need to find it. To filter your results so they only include hearings, use this drop-down. Then use “Find terms in full text publications” to look for the phrase “public outrage.” From there, you can sort through the different hearings where this phrase was mentioned to locate the original statement.

ProQuest Legislative Insight also has various other tools to help you contextualize and understand legislation. The Historical Context link provides short backgrounders on the current events of the time and the makeup of the legislature.

The Legislative Process link shows you how Congress works – you can plug in the Public Law number of a law you are interested in examining, such as our Ethics Reform Act, and use the information buttons and the process map to review the law’s progress through Congress on its way to enactment.

If you have questions, please consult a librarian.