

# Legal Resources on the Internet (Part II)

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## Primary Law

### Federal Statutes and Legislative History

The Government Printing Office's (GPO) legislative collection is housed at *GPOAccess*, [www.access.gpo.gov/su\\_docs/legislative.html](http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/legislative.html). It contains the U.S. Constitution—Analysis & Interpretation, Unratified Amendments; Public Laws (1995–date); the current U.S. Code; Congressional Record (1995–date); Congressional Record Index (1983–date); Congressional Bills (1993–date); Congressional Hearings (1997–date); Congressional Reports (1995–date); Congressional Committee Prints (1997–date); and Senate, House & Treaty Documents (1995–date), among others. See the Superintendent of Documents web page for complete information on all GPO databases, [www.access.gpo.gov/su\\_docs](http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs). However, the U.S. Code at this site is dated and the site's search engine is rudimentary.<sup>1</sup>

In stark contrast to the GPO website, you will find the Library of Congress "THOMAS" Legislative Information on the Internet, [www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov), very easy to use. It offers bill tracking and legislative history information including bill text (1989–date), summaries and status (1973–date); Public Laws (1973–date); Congressional Record text (1989–date) and index (1994–date); Committee Reports (1995–date); calendars and votes.

The U.S. House of Representative's Office of Law Revision Counsel [scode.house.gov/uscode.htm](http://scode.house.gov/uscode.htm) offers a searchable version of the current code, previous versions of the code, and the U.S. Code Classification Tables, which detail sections amended, enacted, and omitted.

*Findlaw*, [www.findlaw.com](http://www.findlaw.com), and Cornell's *Legal Information Institute*, [www.law.cornell.edu](http://www.law.cornell.edu),

both offer accessible versions of the U.S. Code and related material. At *Findlaw*, in addition to the ability to search by title, section, or keyword, you also get updating information provided by links to "THOMAS" and the U.S. House of Representative's Office of Law Revision Counsel. The Cornell site allows you to search the U.S. Code by title or section, permits browsing by tables of contents, and keyword searching by title.

The Library of Congress' "American Memory" Collection, [memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/lawhome.html](http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/lawhome.html), contains historical legislative information including the House and Senate Journals, Statutes at Law, U.S. Serial Set, Annals of Congress, Register of Debates, Congressional Globe, Thomas Jefferson's papers, and much more (1774–1873). The Library of Congress also sponsors the "Global Gateway," <http://www.loc.gov/law/glin/>, which provides access to both foreign and U.S. legal materials.

### Federal Judicial Opinions, Briefs, and Arguments

Cornell's *Legal Information Institute*, [www.law.cornell.edu](http://www.law.cornell.edu), continues to be one of the better sources for federal case law, offering Supreme Court opinions (1990–date), Court of Appeals opinions (dates vary; none older than 1986), and District Court opinions (coverage inconsistent), as well as opinions from courts of special jurisdiction (tax, international trade, etc.). At the website of the U.S. Supreme Court, [www.supremecourtus.gov](http://www.supremecourtus.gov), in addition to opinions (1999–date), you can find oral argument transcripts (2000–date).

*FindLaw*, [www.findlaw.com](http://www.findlaw.com), offers Supreme Court opinions from 1893–date (coverage varies), as well as Supreme Court briefs in its "Constitutional Law Center." *FindLaw* provides federal appellate and trial court opinions with varying coverage by date, searchable by title or docket number.

*LexisOne*, [www.lexisone.com](http://www.lexisone.com), also provides full-text, keyword searching of federal case law from 1996.

*USSC+ Online Database*, [www.uscplus.com](http://www.uscplus.com), offers Supreme Court opinions from 1793 to date, and *FedWorld/FLITE*, [www.fedworld.gov/supcourt/index.htm](http://www.fedworld.gov/supcourt/index.htm), offers Supreme Court opinions from 1937–1975.

### Federal Judicial System, Forms, Dockets, Procedural and Evidentiary Rules, Jury Instructions, and Orders

Cornell's *Legal Information Institute*, [www.law.cornell.edu](http://www.law.cornell.edu), is one of the better sources for links to current and complete Federal Rules of Civil Procedure and Federal Rules of Evidence. The U. S. Supreme Court, [www.supremecourtus.gov](http://www.supremecourtus.gov), provides its current rules, opinions (1999–date), docket, calendar, orders (1992–date), and oral argument transcripts (2000–date). The Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, [www.uscourts.gov](http://www.uscourts.gov), provides Circuit, District, and Bankruptcy Court forms, as well as federal court statistics. *LLRX's* "Litigator's Internet Resource Guide: Rules of Court," [www.llrx.com/courtrules](http://www.llrx.com/courtrules), gives information on federal and state court rules. *Appellate.net*, [www.appellate.net](http://www.appellate.net), offers jury instructions.

### Federal Agency Rules, Regulations, Decisions, and Forms

National Records and Archives Administration (NARA), [www.access.gpo.gov/nara](http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara), offers the Federal Register (chronological arrangement from 1994–date), and the Code of Federal Regulations (hierarchical/subject arrangement from 1996–date). One may browse the CFR sections as well as keyword search them. The Library of Congress' Official Executive Branch provides links to the web pages of executive offices, departments, and agencies, in the event a *Google* search should fail to produce them.

*FedForms*, [www.fedforms.gov](http://www.fedforms.gov), offers the top 500 federal forms used by the public, and *FirstGov*, [www.firstgov.gov](http://www.firstgov.gov), offers a search engine that covers “all online resources offered by the federal government.” I have found this site to be most useful for agency materials. Finally, *FedLaw*, [www.thecre.com/fedlaw/default.htm](http://www.thecre.com/fedlaw/default.htm), seeks to be your federal portal and offers access to all federal laws and regulations, links to the federal judiciary and legislative branch, the General Accounting Office, Congress, legislation, arbitration and mediation links, general reference links, and links to professional associations and organizations.

## Secondary Sources

### Legal Research Guides

Numerous sites offer subject-specific research guides to get you up and running, and these can be located easily by searching *Google*. One of the best publishers of research guides is *LLRX*, [www.llrx.com](http://www.llrx.com), which

offers guides on a variety of subjects. The State Bar of Michigan Libraries Committee website also offers research guides on a variety of legal issues in Michigan and information about library-based document delivery services in Michigan, [www.michbar.org/committees/libraries/](http://www.michbar.org/committees/libraries/). Finally, most of the Michigan law library websites offer helpful research guides.

### Michigan Law Libraries

Catalogs of the major law collections in the state can be searched at the following sites: Ave Maria Law Library, [www.avemarialaw.edu/library/](http://www.avemarialaw.edu/library/); Grand Valley State-Steelcase Library, [www4.gvsu.edu/library/circ/steel2.htm](http://www4.gvsu.edu/library/circ/steel2.htm); Library of Michigan Law Library, [www.michigan.gov/hal/](http://www.michigan.gov/hal/); Michigan State University-Detroit College of Law Library, [www.law.msu.edu/library/](http://www.law.msu.edu/library/); Oakland County Law Library, [www.co.oakland.mi.us/lawlib/](http://www.co.oakland.mi.us/lawlib/); Thomas Cooley Law Library, [www.cooley.edu/library/](http://www.cooley.edu/library/); University of Detroit Mercy

Law School, [murphy.law.udmercy.edu/screens/libinfo.html](http://murphy.law.udmercy.edu/screens/libinfo.html); University of Michigan Law Library, [www.law.umich.edu/library/](http://www.law.umich.edu/library/), and Wayne State University Law Library, [www.lib.wayne.edu/lawlibrary/](http://www.lib.wayne.edu/lawlibrary/). The Library of Michigan Law Library offers a directory of public law libraries at [www.libraryofmichigan.org/law/lawpublic.html](http://www.libraryofmichigan.org/law/lawpublic.html).

### E-Books and Law Journal Articles

Residents of Michigan enjoy free access to an extensive collection of electronic licensed material, courtesy of a grant program known as *AccessMichigan*. Log in with a Michigan Driver's License or State Identification number at the Michigan eLibrary (MEL), [www.mel.org/accessmich](http://www.mel.org/accessmich). Available items include a large collection of e-books via *netLibrary* and the aggregate database known as *FirstSearch*. Many of the e-books concern legal issues. *NoloPress* titles are included in *netLibrary*. *FirstSearch* contains databases that are useful for legal research, some of which provide

full-text law review articles: *ArticleFirst* (abstracts and tables of contents of law journals), *GPO Monthly Catalog* (US government documents), *Index to Legal Periodicals & Books*, *WilsonSelectPlus* (indexes business and law review articles—some full-text), and *WorldCat* (a national catalog of books and other materials—more than 40 million records). For a list of the full-text journals in *AccessMichigan* databases, please see [www.oakland.k12.mi.us/newmedia/nmos.cfm](http://www.oakland.k12.mi.us/newmedia/nmos.cfm).

The *Michigan Bar Journal* is now online, [www.michbar.org/journal/home.cfm](http://www.michbar.org/journal/home.cfm), and offers articles from 2000–date, and an index of articles from 1980–date, and many law reviews are now routinely published on the free web. Use the *Index to Legal Periodicals* in *FirstSearch* to identify articles, and then use *Google* or the *University Law Review Project*, [www.lawreview.org](http://www.lawreview.org), to locate the full-text articles. The *University Law Review Project* is published by the Coalition of On-Line Law Journals, and offers a search engine that simultaneously searches the websites of Cornell's *Legal Information Institute*, [www.cornell.edu/journals.html](http://www.cornell.edu/journals.html); *FindLaw*, [www.findlaw.com](http://www.findlaw.com); *Hieros Gamos*, [www.hg.org](http://www.hg.org); *Jurist: The Legal Education Network*, [jurist.law.pitt.edu](http://jurist.law.pitt.edu), and USC Law School, [lawweb.usc.edu/library/journals/journals.html](http://lawweb.usc.edu/library/journals/journals.html), all of which offer access to full-text online law journals. The *Legal Scholarship Network* (LSN),

## ***The State Bar of Michigan Libraries Committee website also offers research guides on a variety of legal issues in Michigan and information about library-based document delivery services in Michigan, [www.michbar.org/committees/libraries/](http://www.michbar.org/committees/libraries/).***

<http://www.ssrn.com/ltn>, contains abstracts of working papers and articles recently accepted for publication. There is no restriction on searching the LSN database of abstracts and some full-text documents may be downloaded for free.

### **Reference Material**

#### **Federal**

For government information, try *FirstGov* Reference Shelf, [www.firstgov.gov/Topics/Reference\\_Shelf.shtml](http://www.firstgov.gov/Topics/Reference_Shelf.shtml). The *National Records and Archives Administration* (NARA), [www.access.gpo.gov/nara](http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara), also offers the *U.S. Government Manual* online.

#### **Michigan**

The State Bar of Michigan Attorney Directory, [www.michbar.org/member/content.html](http://www.michbar.org/member/content.html), and the State of Michigan Government Telephone Directory, [www.state.mi.us/dmb/ocat/directory](http://www.state.mi.us/dmb/ocat/directory), are on the web. The current edition of the *Michigan Manual* is available at the Michigan Legislature site, [michiganlegislature.org](http://michiganlegislature.org), under “Publications,” and contains Michigan’s Constitution, historical information, and information concerning the three branches of government, institutions of higher education, local government, elections, general information, and statistics. *Michigan in Brief*, [www.michiganinbrief.org](http://www.michiganinbrief.org), offers state government and public policy information, history of state and local governments, state budget process information, Michigan non-profit information, statistics, and economic forecasts. Michigan eLibrary (MEL) also offers a law page, [www.mel.org/government/GOV-index.html](http://www.mel.org/government/GOV-index.html). As noted above, the Michigan Supreme Court offers the *Michigan Uniform System of Citation*, [courtofappeals.mijud.net/rules/public/default.asp](http://courtofappeals.mijud.net/rules/public/default.asp).

#### **General**

For general reference sources, try *Bartleby* (quotations, encyclopedias, thesauri, style guides, etc.), [www.bartleby.com](http://www.bartleby.com); *Black’s Legal Dictionary*, [dictionary.findlaw.com](http://dictionary.findlaw.com); ICLE’s collection of legal directories, [www.icle.org/lawlinks](http://www.icle.org/lawlinks); *Legal Citation Guide* (guide to the “Bluebook”), [www.law.cornell.edu/citation/citation.table.html](http://www.law.cornell.edu/citation/citation.table.html); *Roget’s Thesaurus*, [humanities.uchicago.edu/forms\\_unrest/ROGET.html](http://humanities.uchicago.edu/forms_unrest/ROGET.html); *xrefer* (encyclopedias, dictionaries, thesauri, etc.), [www.xrefer.com](http://www.xrefer.com); and *Webster’s Dictionary*, [serendipity.magnet.ch/search/webster.html](http://serendipity.magnet.ch/search/webster.html).

#### **Legal Research Bookmark Collection**

The author’s personal collection of bookmarks for the sites on which this article is based may be downloaded and imported into your browser. The bookmarks are updated regularly and are available at the Wayne State University Law Library web page, [www.lib.wayne.edu/lawlibrary](http://www.lib.wayne.edu/lawlibrary), under “Subject Guides and Internet Resources.” ♦



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#### **FOOTNOTE**

1. As of this writing, GPOAccess is in the process of upgrading its search engine and interface.