

Researching Legislative Topics in Oklahoma

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Below are several resources for identifying a bill and its effect. The best research approach depends on what information is being sought and how much is already known about bill. Bills that became law are easier to locate than those that were unsuccessful.

Depending on where a bill is in the process, it may have several versions. For example, the first available draft is called the “introduced” version. Successful bill have a final version called the “enrolled” version. Anything other than the enrolled version can be considered a working draft or proposed amendment.

Many of these tools allow searches by topic and by specific bill number. If the research is related to a broad subject like “health care” the topical searches will provide lists of bills affecting the issue. If the research is related to a specific bill, but the bill number is unknown, the topical searches will help identify the bill. Once a bill number is identified the more specific searches will produce multiple related documents.

All of the websites mentioned can be accessed through www.OKHouse.gov. Use the left navigation bar and the fly out menus to find the links.

Successful Bills from Prior Years

Session in Review (formerly known as *Session Highlights*)

This book is produced by the House Research Staff and contains a brief explanation of all major legislation completed during a session. Some discussion of why the bill was passed is included. It is divided into subject areas and has useful indexes. The book is available at http://www.okhouse.gov/Information/Info_Publications.aspx.

Appropriations Process

This book is produced by the House Fiscal Staff and contains a brief explanation of every successful bill that affects the state budget. It is divided into subject areas and has useful indexes. The book is available at http://www.okhouse.gov/Information/Info_Publications.aspx.

Session Overview

This pamphlet is produced by the House Research Staff at the close of the legislative session. It provides a quick explanation of the most important bills which completed the legislative process. It is divided into subject areas. These pages are available at http://www.okhouse.gov/Information/Info_Publications.aspx.

All Bills—Successful and Unsuccessful, Current Year and Prior Years

Subject Search

The Oklahoma Legislative Service Bureau maintains a legislative database known at BTOOnline. This database is accessible to the public at http://www.okhouse.gov/Legislation/Leg_Status.aspx. A variety of searches are

available including: subject, committee, author, bill number, and many others. The search results provide the status of the bill, versions of the bill, bill summaries and more.

Text of Measures

A key word search is available for identifying bills on a specific topic. This search is available at http://www.okhouse.gov/Legislation/Leg_Search.aspx.

Bill Summary

Once a specific bill number has been identified the bill summary may be the best place to start to understand what the bill does. The bill summary contains a brief description of the bill's provisions. If the bill is lengthy and complex the summary may discuss each section of the bill in turn and may be several pages long. More typically, the summary provides a few sentences of explanation. This document is evolving. In 2009 it includes the fiscal statement, explaining any costs to the state budget, combined with a summary. In previous years the fiscal statement was a separate document. This document can be found by going to the committee calendar at <http://webserver1.lsb.state.ok.us/commcal/commcal.aspx>, selecting the proper session and searching for the bill number. Click on the bill and the bill summaries appear in the supporting documents box. They can also be found by going to http://www.okhouse.gov/Legislation/Leg_Status.aspx and using the basic search for a bill number.

Bill Language

Another method for finding the specific provisions of a bill is to read the latest version of the bill. This can be found at http://www.okhouse.gov/Legislation/Leg_Text.aspx or using the searches mentioned above.

Status of Measures

Knowing where a bill is in the legislative process is important to understanding how likely it is to become law. The status of a bill is available at http://www.okhouse.gov/Legislation/Leg_Status.aspx. Comparing the current status to the legislative deadlines may produce critical information. Legislative deadlines for the House can be found at http://www.okhouse.gov/Legislation/Leg_Deadline.aspx.

Taskforce Report

When the legislature wants an extensive research effort focused on a specific issue it creates a legislative taskforce. A taskforce may be required to issue a written report. If a taskforce report is available on a specific topic it can be acquired by contacting the House Research Staff at 405.557.7490. It may also be posted at http://www.okhouse.gov/Information/Info_Publications.aspx.

Interim Study Report

Another approach to legislative research is an interim study. The Speaker of the House approves 50 to 75 interim studies each year. These studies are conducted by the standing committees of the House. Beginning in 2008 a written report was produced for each of these studies. The amount of detail in the report varies widely depending upon

the type of presentations that were made at the meeting. A complete list of interim studies can be found at <http://www.okhouse.gov/Committees/ShowInterimStudies.aspx>. Interim study reports can be obtained by contacting the House Research Staff at 405.557.7490.

Bill's Author

The author of a bill may have collected research on the topic. The author's legislative assistant can be reach at 405.521.2711.

Interested Groups

Often interest groups have the greatest amount of information on a specific topic. They exist to collect and disseminate information. Several groups may have an interest in and information on a specific bill.