

Determining legislative intent in Massachusetts can be a difficult task. Few successful bills make it to the Governor's desk accompanied by detailed reports. When there is a report about the need for the new legislation it is usually appended to the original bill that becomes part of the Legislative Documents series.

TRACING LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

1. Find the section of the Massachusetts General Laws that you wish to research.

2. Following that section in the annotated laws ([ALM](#) or [MGLA](#)) you'll find historical notes with references to chapters in the Massachusetts Acts & Resolves (cited as "St.") These citations are to original enactments or amendments to that section over the years.

Acts & Resolves of Massachusetts

5th floor States [KFM 2425 .A213](#)

Also on microfiche on the 4th Floor

3. Early Official Codifications & Compilations

Colonial Laws of Massachusetts (Cited C.L.)

1st floor Non-core [KFM 2430 1672 .A2 1887](#)

Revised Statutes of 1836 (Cited R.S.)

1st floor Non-core [KFM 2430 1836 .A22 1836](#)

General Statutes of 1860 (Cited G.S.)

1st floor Non-core [KFM 2430 1859 .A223 1873](#)

Public Statutes of 1882 (Cited P.S.)

1st floor Non-core [KFM 2430 1881 .A22 1882](#)

Revised Laws of 1902 (Cited R. L.)

1st floor Non-core [KFM 2430 1901 .A22 1902](#)

General Laws of 1921 (Cited G.L.)

1st floor Non-core [KFM 2430 1921 .A22 1921](#)

General Laws, Tercentenary Edition (1932)

1st floor Non-core [KFM 2430 1921 .A22 1932](#)

4. To convert the Chapter number back to the original Bill number you can use the table found at the back of the annual [Bulletin of Committee Work](#). The Bulletin is located at the end of each year's [Legislative Documents](#), or for the years after 1973. Consult the tables in:

Acts Approved by the Governor 1967-1973

MICROFORMS [KFM 2441 G84 1967](#)

Guide to Massachusetts General and Special Acts

1974-1984

MICROFORMS [KFM 2441 .G85](#)

1985- 2008

5th floor States [KFM 2441 .G85](#)

5. See the Legislative Documents for the text of bills and possibly some commentary:

Bill texts for years prior to 1945 are located at the [State Library of Massachusetts](#), State House, 3d floor

1945 -1966

5th floor States [KFM 2406 .M37](#)

1967-1994

MICROFORMS [KFM 2406 .M37](#)

1986-2009

5th floor States [KFM 2406 .M37](#)

2010-

[malegislature.gov](#)

6. For summaries of legislative proceedings see the Journals of the House and Senate

1715-1779

5th floor State [KFM 2418 .M36](#)

1867-

5th floor States [KFM 2418 .M36](#)

7. For reports issued by the General Court on specific topics see

Index of Special; Reports Authorized by the General Court 1900-1988

with Supplement 1988-1994

5th floor States [KFM 2418.5 .M37](#)

MICROFORMS [KFM 2418.5 .M37](#)

MORE SOURCES FOR LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

1. The SPONSOR of the bill might provide information about the legislation. For contact information about Massachusetts legislators see:

The Massachusetts Political Almanac REF 4 [JK 3130 .M37](#)

2. The [STATE ARCHIVES](#) has "Legislative Packages" for bill introduced since 1775

220 Morrissey Blvd. Boston 617 727-2816

Provide the bill number and year.

Current legislative packages are with the House and Senate Clerk's office, State House (617) 722-2000

3. For further information regarding debates, proceedings, committee hearings and news release consult the [STATE LIBRARY](#): State House, Room 341 (617) 727-2590

WEB SITES & DATABASES

The Massachusetts General Court offers bill tracking of current legislation through its home page:

<http://www.malegislature.gov/>

The State Library has old Massachusetts Acts & Resolves in searchable portable document format (pdf) from 1692 through 2008. [Massachusetts Acts & Resolves](#)

The State Library has House and Senate Bills in searchable pdf's from 1840 through 2008

<http://archives.lib.state.ma.us/>

[MASSTRAC: RESEARCH DATABASE](#) Available for in-library use, includes bill texts and tracking, roll call votes and a wealth of other information about bills and laws since the 1995-1996 legislative session. INSTATRAC is available on all computer terminals at the Library.

[State House News Service](#) provides daily and archived coverage of the Massachusetts House and Senate sessions since 1986. Materials include articles, profiles, summaries, forecasts, and background information on virtually every aspect of Massachusetts government, politics and regulatory affairs. State House News Services is available for in-library use.

LLMC-DIGITAL Available for in-library use, includes House and Senate Journals and Debates of the Massachusetts Constitutional Convention of 1917-18.

New England Law Boston has Reports of the Massachusetts Legislative Research Council 1964-1994 and Indexes of Special Reports Authorized by the General Court 1900-1994.

https://student.nesl.edu/research/Legislative_Council.cfm