

A legislative history is the record of materials, both documents and oral statements, behind pieces of legislation. Examining a legislative history is done to determine “legislative intent.” Legislative intent is what the legislature meant for the provisions of a piece of legislation to accomplish.

If there is a statute you are interested in, you will first need to look at that statute as it is printed in the *Utah Code Annotated*. The statutes that appear on the Utah State Legislature’s website will not give you the information you need to begin the process.

Step 1 Look at the Statutory Credit

The statutory credit is a set of information at the end of the statute. It typically looks something like this:

History: C. 1953, 76-10-1102, enacted by L. 1973, ch. 196, § 76-10-1102; 1998, ch. 127, § 7.

This is what that history information means:

C. 1953, 76-10-1102

This tells you the section of the *Utah Code* you are looking at: Title 76, Chapter 10, Section 1102, of the Code of 1953. The current *Utah Code* is the code of 1953; that was when the Utah legislature last did a complete revision of the *Utah Code*.

enacted by L. 1973, ch. 196, § 76-10-1102

This tells you that this statute was first enacted in 1973. The legislation enacting this statute can be found in the 1973 volume of the *Laws of Utah* at chapter 196. The statute was enacted as § 76-10-1102; sometimes statutes are enacted with different section numbers that are later changed.

1998, ch. 127, § 7

This tells you that the statute was amended in 1998. The legislation amending this statute can be found in the 1998 volume of the *Laws of Utah* at chapter 127, section 7.

Step 2 Determine the Applicable Law

If a particular statute has been amended since it was enacted, you will need to determine which version of the statute is the one you are interested in. The S.J. Quinney Law Library has old copies of the *Utah Code Annotated* that you can look up old versions of the statute in. You can also look up each version of the statute in the appropriate volumes of the *Laws of Utah*.

Step 3 Locate Bill in *Laws of Utah*

After you find the version of the statute you are interested in, look up the law that created the statute by its chapter number in the appropriate volume of the *Laws of Utah*. You will need to copy down the bill number that appears at the beginning of that chapter.

Step 4 Copy the *House Journal* & *Senate Journal* entries

The *Senate Journal* and the *House Journal* contain the minutes of each meeting of the Utah state legislature. The journals sometimes contain information that would help you determine the legislative intent for a law. The journals will tell you the legislative committees that reviewed each bill. Also, to listen to the floor debates for a piece of legislation, you will need to know the dates on which the law you are interested in was discussed on the floor of the Utah House and Senate. The journals have an index of bill numbers at the back of each volume.

Step 5 Look at the Bill File

The bill file contains all versions of a bill from its introduction in the legislature to its amendments to its final version as signed by the governor. The bill file may also contain draft versions of a bill, letters from the sponsor of the bill, and research done on the contents of the bill. These may give insight into the legislative intent behind a bill.

Bill files from 1990 onwards can be found on the Utah State Legislature’s website. Go to <<http://www.le.state.ut.us/>> and select “Bills” from the menu on the left-hand side of the screen. Then choose the link for “1990–Ongoing Bill Files.”

Bill files and records of bills before 1990 can be found at the Utah State Archives.

Step 6 Listen to the Floor Debates

The floor debates are recordings of comments by and debates between members of the Utah House of Representatives and the Utah Senate. They are often the only meaningful source of information about legislative intent in Utah. In order to know the dates of the debates you must listen to, you must have first looked up the bill in the *House Journal* and the *Senate Journal*.

Utah House and Senate floor debates can be found on the internet. Go to the Utah State Legislature’s website <<http://www.le.state.ut.us/>> and select the link for “Legislative Histories” on the left-hand side of the page. Then click on the link for either the House floor debates or the Senate floor debates. House floor debates are available on the internet from 1994 onwards. Senate floor debates are in the process of being put on the internet.

Floor debates that are not online must be obtained from the House and Senate offices. Go to the Utah House web site <<http://www.le.state.ut.us/house/>> and the Utah Senate web site <<http://www.utahsenate.org/>> for their current locations and contact information.

Step 7 Look at Committee Minutes and Reports

Minutes and reports of legislative committees are available from the Utah State Legislature and the Utah State Archives. Recent committee information can also be found on the Utah State Legislature’s webpage. Go to their website at

