

## INFORMATION RESOURCES AND RESEARCH TIPS

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### ❖ OVERVIEW

- **Assess Research Needs and Goals**
  - Federal, state, or local issue? A combination?
  - Goals: New legislation? Understanding a current issue? Responding to a constituent?
  - “Research” vs. “obtaining a source”
- **Choosing Research Methods**
  - Internet vs. paper text?
  - Legislative Homepage and Folio – starting points for most research on Wisconsin law
- **Primary and Secondary Sources**
  - Description
  - Working from secondary sources vs. direct use of primary sources
  - Use of Internet search engines – use common sense and evaluate reliability of source and date of publication
  - Sources available for typical research topics: legislative service agency staff, media and other private publications – law reviews, journal articles, white papers, etc.

### ❖ CURRENT STATE AND LOCAL LAW

- **Wisconsin Constitution**
  - Primary sources: nxt – Public Access database, Folio, .pdf and bound volumes
  - Secondary sources: Legislative Reference Bureau (LRB) publications
- **Wisconsin Statutes and Acts**
  - Primary sources: nxt – Public Access database, Folio, .pdf and bound volumes

- Secondary sources: LRB drafting files and bill analyses, Legislative Council (LC) Memos and bill files, Legislative Audit Bureau (LAB) reports, Legislative Fiscal Bureau (LFB) information and budget papers, Agency liaisons, Agency publications
- **Wisconsin Administrative Code**
  - Primary sources: nxt – Public Access database, Folio, .pdf and bound volumes
  - Secondary sources: Agency liaisons, Agency publications, LC Adm. Code Procedures Manual
- **Wisconsin Court Decisions**
  - Primary sources: [www.wicourts.gov](http://www.wicourts.gov), bound reporters
  - Secondary sources: LC and LRB publications
- **Municipal Codes**
  - Primary sources: municipal websites
  - Secondary sources: municipal officials, municipal publications, Agency liaisons and publications (depending on subject matter)
- **Opinions of the Attorney General:**
  - The Attorney General is a constitutional officer whose duties include issuing opinions on questions presented to the office
  - A state employee or agency relying on an opinion of the Attorney General should be able to make a good faith claim of adhering to the law, but it should be noted that the Wisconsin Supreme Court has stated that an opinion of the Attorney General is entitled only to such persuasive effect as the court deems the opinion warrants

❖ **PENDING STATE LAW**

- **Pending Bills**
  - Related content: legislative history, amendments, fiscal estimates, notification service
  - Primary sources: nxt – Public Access database, Folio
  - Secondary sources: Legislative colleagues, LRB drafting files and bill analyses, LC bill files, LC Amendment Memos, LFB publications (Budget bills), LC publications (Leg. Council bills), Agency liaisons, fiscal estimate status: <http://fes.doa.state.wi.us/start.asp>
- **Proposed Administrative Rules**
  - Primary sources: nxt – Public Access database, Folio, executive branch rules website: <http://adminrules.wisconsin.gov>
  - Secondary sources: Agency liaisons, LC Staff, LC Adm. Code Procedures Manual

## II. FEDERAL LAW

- **U.S. Constitution**

- Primary sources: [www.legis.state.wi.us/rsb/2wiscon.html](http://www.legis.state.wi.us/rsb/2wiscon.html), [www.law.cornell.edu/anncon/html/index.html](http://www.law.cornell.edu/anncon/html/index.html), bound volumes
- Secondary sources: LRB publications

- **Federal Statutes [U.S. Code (USC)]**

- USC: <http://uscode.house.gov/>, [www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/](http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/), or [www.gpoaccess.gov/uscode/index.html](http://www.gpoaccess.gov/uscode/index.html)
- Public Laws: <http://thomas.loc.gov/bss/d110/d110laws.html>, or [www.gpoaccess.gov/plaws/index.html](http://www.gpoaccess.gov/plaws/index.html)
- Secondary sources: Federal Agencies and Federal Agency Publications

- **Federal Regulations [Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)]**

- How to find: [www.gpoaccess.gov/CFR/INDEX.HTML](http://www.gpoaccess.gov/CFR/INDEX.HTML), or [www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/](http://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/)
- Secondary sources: Federal Agencies and Federal Agency Publications

- **Federal Register**

- The official daily publication for federal regulations and proposed regulations and notices of federal agencies and organizations, as well as executive orders and other presidential documents
- Can be accessed at: [www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/Index.html](http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/Index.html)

- **Federal Court Opinions**

- Internet sites: [www.law.cornell.edu/supct](http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct), [www.justia.com](http://www.justia.com)
- Bound reporters

## III. OTHER STATES' LAW

- **Primary Sources:**

- Other state websites
- Bound volumes of statutes and court opinions

- **Secondary Sources:**

- National Conference of State Legislatures ([www.ncsl.org](http://www.ncsl.org))
- Council of State Governments ([www.csg.org](http://www.csg.org))
- National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws ([www.nccusl.org](http://www.nccusl.org))
- LRB and LC equivalents in other states