

## LEGAL RESEARCH CORNER



# Colorado Joint Legislative Library: Background, Resources, and Services

by Molly Otto and Gay E. Roesch

This article is an overview of the Colorado Legislative Council (Legislative Council) and the Joint Legislative Library (Legislative Library). It presents a brief history of the Legislative Council and the Legislative Library; provides information about print and electronic resources and databases available in the Legislative Library, as well as available methods for accessing legislative records; and discusses how to make audio recordings of legislative proceedings.<sup>1</sup>

### Overview of the Legislative Council

The Legislative Council was created in 1953 by the passage of Senate Bill 18,<sup>2</sup> which is codified at CRS §§ 2-3-301 to -311. CRS § 2-3-301(1) states that the Legislative Council is an executive committee with the following members: nine senators, nine representatives, the Speaker of the Colorado House of Representatives (House), the President of the Colorado State Senate (Senate), and the majority and minority leaders of both bodies. Five staff agencies serve the Legislative Council executive committee, the Colorado General Assembly, and the public. Four of the agencies are statutory agencies, and one is a non-statutory agency.<sup>3</sup> The agencies are staffed with nonpartisan research and institutional support personnel whose purpose is to furnish nonpartisan, unbiased, accurate, and timely research and information to fulfill the institutional needs of the General Assembly and its constituents.<sup>4</sup> Staff members do not provide legal advice or legal opinions.

### Development of the Legislative Library

The Legislative Library is one of the support services staff sections in the Office of Legislative Policy Research. The library

was started in 1973 and has grown from a single library shelf to more than 8,000 print and electronic resources. The library's primary mission is to supply nonpartisan library services and resources to members of the General Assembly and their staff; local, state, and federal agencies; and members of the public. Researchers from the private and public sectors may use the resources in the library only, because the collection does not circulate outside the building. (The Appendix at the end of this article provides a listing of Legislative Library resources. See table 1 for print resources; table 2 for Internet resources; and table 3 for additional legislative websites.)

The library is staffed by two full-time professional librarians, who assist with reference and research questions.<sup>5</sup> It is located in the basement of the State Capitol building, near the Colorado State Archives, the Supreme Court Library, the State Publications Library, the Colorado Historical Society, and the Den-



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ver Public Library. As a result, library staff can quickly locate and obtain electronic or hard copy resources not available in the Legislative Library collection.

Charles R. McCarthy, “the father of the special library movement,”<sup>6</sup> recognized the importance of the legislative libraries. Through his association with the Wisconsin Progressive Movement, he promoted legislative reference services as a means of improving legislation and government.<sup>7</sup> As a result, every state currently has a legislative library, and the Legislative Research Librarians staff section is part of the National Conference of State Legislatures.

## Colorado Legislator History In-House Database

One unique resource that the Legislative Library staff has developed and maintains is the Colorado Legislator History in-house database. This database is a legislative profile of all members who have served in the Colorado General Assembly, from territorial days through the current session. Each entry includes the member’s name, district, and party; the number of years the member has served in the House and/or Senate; legislative leadership positions the member has held; and the member’s committee membership.

The database can be a helpful resource for individuals looking for the legislative background on a member of the General Assembly; General Assembly members who need a summary of their legislative activity; or individuals conducting genealogical research. Currently the database is only accessible in-house. However, the Office of Legislative Information Services and the Legislative Council Computer Support staff are designing a public website with this information, which soon will be available.<sup>8</sup>

## Audio CDs of Bill Testimony and Legislative History Research

Legislative researchers can use another distinct library resource as a tool to determine legislative intent. Researchers can listen to and create audio CDs of committee bill testimony and House and Senate proceedings from 2002 through the current legislative session, which are electronically stored in the library.

Library staff can instruct researchers in locating hearings and creating CDs. Users need to bring their own CDs to make recordings and should know the bill number, hearing date, and committee location, if possible. This information is located on the Colorado General Assembly website.<sup>9</sup> The “history” link tracks the legislative progress of a bill, and includes the committee assignments and hearing dates for each bill. The “com-

mittee” link includes committee and bill summaries, the time and location of the committee hearing, the names of persons testifying, and a summary of their position on a bill. Interested persons also may listen to live audio proceedings of the current legislative session by accessing the “audio broadcasts of current proceedings.”

## Conclusion

The Legislative Library staff assists researchers on the local, state, national, and international levels with locating and using significant and unique resources instrumental in legislative research. These print and electronic resources are useful in examining and clarifying the history, development, and enactment of legislation.

## NOTES

1. For information on using Colorado annotations, *Colorado Session Laws*, and federal resources in legislative research, see “Uncovering Legislative History in Colorado,” 32 *The Colorado Lawyer* 47 (Feb. 2003), and “Uncovering Federal Legislative History,” 33 *The Colorado Lawyer* 29 (Feb. 2004).

2. S.B. 53-18 (Colo. 1953), codified at CRS § 2-3-301.

3. The four statutory staff agencies are the Office of Legislative Policy Research (CRS § 2-3-304); Office of Legislative Legal Services (CRS § 2-3-501); Office of the Joint Budget Committee (CRS § 2-3-204); and Office of the State Auditor (CRS § 2-3-104). The one nonstatutory agency is the Office of Legislative Information Services.

4. *Colorado Legislative Council Staff Employee Handbook* (Nov. 2003) at 5.

5. Contact Molly Otto, Manager of Library Services, (303) 866-4011, molly.otto@state.co.us; or Gay Roesch, Assistant Librarian, (303) 866-4799, gay.roesch@state.co.us. The Joint Legislative Library is located at the Colorado State Capitol, #048, 200 E. Colfax, Denver, CO 80203-1784. The library hours are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

6. For a definition of “special library,” see Ackermann, ed., *Searching and Researching Glossary* (Dept. of Computer Science, Mary Washington College, Sept. 2006), available at <http://www.webliminal.com/search/glossary.htm>.

7. Healey and Rumsey, “Visionaries in Law Librarianship: McCarthy, Finley and Tyburski Blaze New Trails for the Profession,” *AALL Spectrum Magazine* (July 2003) at 17, available at <http://www.aallnet.org>.

8. The projected availability date is April 2007. For additional information, please contact the Joint Legislative Library staff at (303) 866-4011 or (303) 866-4799.

9. The Colorado General Assembly website is available at <http://www.leg.state.co.us> (click on the “Bills” link under either the House or Senate headings; then select the “History” and “Committee Reports” links for each bill).

*Appendix begins on page 75.*

## The Colorado Bar Association is Looking to Expand its Historical Library

The Colorado Bar Association is looking for legal books or other historical documents to add to the CBA Historical Library. If you have items you’d like to donate, please bring them or send them to the CBA offices at your convenience: 1900 Grant St., Ste. 900, Denver, CO 80203. Contact Chuck Turner at [cturner@cobar.org](mailto:cturner@cobar.org) with questions or for more information.

## APPENDIX

### Table 1. Legislative Library Print Resources

Table 1 lists the print resources frequently used when researching the history and development of Colorado legislation and the Colorado General Assembly. These items may be used only within the Legislative Library.

#### Statutes/Session Laws/Journals/Colorado Code of Regulations

| Title   | Holdings  |
|---|---|
| <i>Territorial Laws of Colorado</i>   | 1861/62-1872                                    |
| <i>General Laws of Colorado</i>   | 1877 and 1883                                   |
| <i>Compiled Laws Colorado</i>   | 1921  |
| <i>Colorado Revised Statutes; Colorado Statutes Annotated; Revised Statutes of Colorado</i> | 1908, 1935, 1953, 1963, 1973, 1997-current year |
| <i>Colorado Session Laws</i>  | 1874-current year                               |
| <i>Colorado Territory Legislative Council Journals</i>                                      | 1861, 1864, 1865, 1870, 1872, 1874, 1876        |
| <i>Colorado House and Senate Journals</i>   | 1885-current year                               |
| <i>Colorado Code of Regulations</i>   | current year                                    |

#### Legislation/Interim Committees/Committees of Reference

| Title  | Holdings   |
|--|--|
| <i>Legislation/Bills</i><br>Copies of legislation from two most current legislative sessions.  | current 2 years  |
| <i>Interim Committee Reports<sup>1</sup> (also known as Colorado Legislative Council Research Publications)</i><br>Final reports of legislative interim committees that meet between legislative sessions. The legislature determines interim committees and number of topics for study through joint resolutions or laws. These reports often propose legislation for the upcoming session. | 1954-current year  |
| <i>Legislative Committee of Reference Bill Summaries<sup>2</sup></i><br>Summaries of committee hearings on legislation.  | current 3 years (older summaries available at Colorado State Archives) |

#### Ballot/Voting Resources

| Title  | Holdings          |
|--|-------------------|
| <i>Ballot Analyses or the "Blue Book"</i><br>Analyses of ballot initiatives and referenda.   | 1954-current year |
| <i>Abstract of Votes</i><br>Statistical analyses of Colorado votes on issues and candidates. | 1892-current year |

#### Notes

1. Interim studies codified at CRS § 2-3-303.3.
2. See Colorado Constitution, art. V sec. 20. Published as part of the *Colorado Revised Statutes* (Charlottesville, VA: LexisNexis®, 2003-present).

*Appendix continues on page 76.*



## Table 2. Legislative Library Internet Resources

Table 2 includes many of the resources listed in table 1 that are now available electronically through public Internet sites.

### Statutes/Session Laws/Journals/Colorado Code of Regulations

| Title                               | Web Page  | Inclusion Dates   |
|-------------------------------------|---|-------------------|
| <i>Colorado Revised Statutes</i>    | Colorado General Assembly website:<br><a href="http://www.leg.state.co.us">http://www.leg.state.co.us</a>   | current year      |
| <i>Colorado Session Laws</i>        | Colorado Office of Legislative Legal Services website:<br><a href="http://www.state.co.us/gov_dir/leg_dir/olls/HTML/session_laws_of_colorado.htm">http://www.state.co.us/gov_dir/leg_dir/olls/HTML/session_laws_of_colorado.htm</a> | 1993-current year |
| <i>House and Senate Journals</i>    | Colorado General Assembly website: <a href="http://www.leg.state.co.us">http://www.leg.state.co.us</a> (select "Prior Session Information" link)  | 1998-current year |
| <i>Colorado Code of Regulations</i> | Colorado Office of Legislative Legal Services website:<br><a href="http://www.state.co.us/gov_dir/leg_dir/olls/HTML/rules.htm">http://www.state.co.us/gov_dir/leg_dir/olls/HTML/rules.htm</a>                                       | current year      |
| <i>Colorado Digest of Bills</i>     | Colorado Office of Legislative Legal Services website:<br><a href="http://www.state.co.us/gov_dir/leg_dir/olls/HTML/digest_of_bills.htm">http://www.state.co.us/gov_dir/leg_dir/olls/HTML/digest_of_bills.htm</a>                   | 1994-current year |

### Legislation/Interim Committee/Committee of Reference Sources

| Title   | Web Page  | Inclusion Dates   |
|---|---|-------------------|
| <i>Legislation / Bills</i><br>Includes bills introduced from the 1997 through current session. Most years include all versions of a bill, its history in the legislative process, fiscal notes, final committee reports, and committee votes. | Colorado General Assembly website: <a href="http://www.leg.state.co.us">http://www.leg.state.co.us</a> (select "Current Session Information" or "Prior Session Information" link)   | 1997-current year |
| <i>Interim Committee Reports &amp; Activities</i><br>Includes interim meeting schedules, agendas, and committee reports.  | Colorado Legislative Council Interim Committee website:<br><a href="http://www.state.co.us/gov_dir/leg_dir/lcsstaff/Scrollpages/InterimScroll.htm">http://www.state.co.us/gov_dir/leg_dir/lcsstaff/Scrollpages/InterimScroll.htm</a>  | 1998-current year |
| <i>Legislative Committee of Reference Resources</i><br>Committee minutes and summaries on legislation.  | Colorado General Assembly website:<br><a href="http://www.leg.state.co.us">http://www.leg.state.co.us</a> <sup>1</sup><br><br>Final interim committee reports are available through the University of Denver website: <a href="http://www.law.du.edu/library/CLC">http://www.law.du.edu/library/CLC</a> | 2000-current year |

### Ballot/Voting Resources

| Title  | Web Page  | Inclusion Dates  |
|--|---|--|
| <i>Ballot Initiatives</i><br>Blue Book analyses, initiative process, history of ballot issues. | Colorado Legislative Council website: <a href="http://www.state.co.us/gov_dir/leg_dir/lcsstaff/balpage.htm">http://www.state.co.us/gov_dir/leg_dir/lcsstaff/balpage.htm</a> | 1998-current year<br>(Blue Book analyses)<br><br>1912-current year<br>(ballot history) |

#### Note

1. The committee summaries are available from the 2004 session to the current session. On the Colorado General Assembly website, choose the "Current Session Information" or "Prior Session Information" link; click on the "COMMITTEES" link at the top of the page; and then select "Summaries by Bill" or "Summaries by Committees." Click on the blue arrows to the left of the items to locate bill summaries, committee summaries, and votes.

**Table 3. Additional Legislative Websites**

| Title  | Web Page  |
|--|---|
| <i>Frequently Asked Questions</i><br>Covers legislative term limits, testifying before a committee, terms used in the legislative process, and how a bill becomes a law. | Colorado General Assembly website:<br><a href="http://www.state.co.us/gov_dir/leg_dir/lcsstaff/StaffInfo/geninfo.htm">http://www.state.co.us/gov_dir/leg_dir/lcsstaff/StaffInfo/geninfo.htm</a> |
| <i>National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)</i><br>Studies state public policy and legislative issues nationwide.  | NCSL website:<br><a href="http://www.ncsl.org">http://www.ncsl.org</a>  |
| <i>NCSL</i><br>Fifty-state legislative tracking website.   | NCSL website:<br><a href="http://www.ncsl.org/programs/lis/lrl/50statetracking.htm">http://www.ncsl.org/programs/lis/lrl/50statetracking.htm</a>  |
| <i>Project Vote Smart</i><br>Information on state and congressional officials.   | Project Vote Smart website:<br><a href="http://vote-smart.org">http://vote-smart.org</a>  |

## Read a book. Write a review.

*The Colorado Lawyer* Editorial Department has several books available for review. If you are interested in reading a law-related book and writing a review for publication in *The Colorado Lawyer*, contact Leona Martínez at [leonamartinez@cobar.org](mailto:leonamartinez@cobar.org) for guidelines and deadlines. Publications currently available for review include:

- *Arbitration Law in Colorado*, by Robert E. Benson (Denver, CO: CBA–CLE, 2006); 675 pp., loose-leaf binder
- *Colorado Courtroom Handbook for Civil Trial*, 2nd ed., Victoria Swanson, managing ed. (Denver, CO: CBA–CLE, 2006); 250 pp., loose-leaf binder
- *Colorado Evidence Handbook*, by Victoria C. Swanson (Denver, CO: Bradford Publishing, 2006); 240 pp., loose-leaf binder
- *The Criminal Lawyer's Guide: A Survival Guide*, by Amber L. St. Clair (Chicago, IL: ABA GP Solo, 2006); 141 pp. plus CD, soft cover
- *Directors' and Officers' Liability* (B.C., Canada: Specialty Technical Publishers, 2006); 2 parts, loose-leaf binders
- *A Guide to Federal Agency Rulemaking*, 4th ed., by Jeffrey S. Lubbers (Chicago, IL: ABA, 2006); 556 pp. plus appendices and table of cases, soft cover
- *Practical Guide to Leadership for Lawyers*, by Herb Rubenstein (NITA; Denver, CO: CBA–CLE, 2006); 148 pp., soft cover
- *Sword and Shield: A Practical Approach to Section 1983 Litigation*, 3rd ed. (Chicago, IL: ABA Section of State and Local Govt. Law, 2006); 479 pp. plus table of cases, soft cover
- *Trade Remedies for Global Companies*, Timothy C. Brightbill, Linda S. Chang, and Peggy A. Clarke, eds. (Chicago, IL: ABA Section of Int'l Law, 2006); 160 pp. plus appendices, soft cover
- *Understanding the Americans with Disabilities Act*, 2nd ed., by William D. Goren (Chicago, IL: ABA GP Solo, 2006); 164 pp. plus table of statutes and regulations, soft cover

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