

# Congressional Bills Helpful Hints

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## **Congressional Bills**

### **Content and File Format**

The [Congressional Bills](#) databases contain all published versions of each bill from the 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress (1993-94) through the present. The database for the current session of Congress is updated daily by 6 a.m. when bills are published and approved for release. The documents in these databases are available as [ASCII text](#) and [Adobe Acrobat Portable Document Format \(PDF\)](#) files. [1]

### **Maximum Responses**

The maximum responses you may receive from a query is set at a default of 40. To locate a larger number of documents (up to 200), you must change the setting. All of the *GPO Access* search pages provide a box in which you may change the maximum number of returned documents. Generally, 40 responses should be adequate to retrieve the document for which you are searching. If you cannot find a desired document with the default 40 responses, you may want to try making your query more specific before expanding the number of returned documents.

### **Identification Codes**

In the list that displays your query results, each bill is displayed with the bill number and the initial words of the bill's name. The specific version of the bill is identified by the abbreviation in parentheses that follows the bill number; the explanation of this abbreviation appears in brackets following the name of the bill. For example, in the entry "H.R. 5 (ih) To amend the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act," "H.R. 5" is the bill number, and "(ih)" is the code that indicates this version of the bill was introduced in the

House. A list of the abbreviations used to identify different versions of the same bill follows the sample searches below.

### Added and Deleted Text

Text that was added to or deleted from a particular version of a bill is indicated in different ways in [ASCII text](#) and [Adobe Acrobat Portable Document Format \(PDF\)](#) files.

ASCII text files include tags to mark changes in the text.

- Added text is enclosed in quotation marks. These quotes should not be confused with the quotation marks that are part of the text of the bill.
- Deleted text is preceded by a <DELETED> tag and followed by a </DELETED> tag. (In the files for the 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress, deleted text is distinguished by the insertion of a hyphen before each deleted character. To view an example, consult the bill "S. 286 (rs)" in the 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress database.)

**Note:** When multiple paragraphs have been deleted, the tags appear at the beginning and end of each affected paragraph. However, when multiple paragraphs have been added, the quotation marks appear at the beginning of each affected paragraph and at the end of the last paragraph in the series.

PDF files mark changes in the text in exactly the same way that those changes appear in the printed version.

- Added text is presented in italics.
- Deleted text is stricken through with a line.

To view example of added and deleted text in both ASCII text and PDF files, consult the bill "S. 399 (rs) To amend the Morris K. Udall Scholarship and Excellence in National [Reported in Senate]." This document can be retrieved by performing a search in the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress database for "**s. 399**".

### Catalog of Available Bills

To view a catalog of Congressional bills available via *GPO Access*, click on the "submit" button on the search page without having entered any query terms and then select the appropriate document from the results list. A catalog will be retrieved for any Congress (i.e., 106<sup>th</sup> Congress, 105<sup>th</sup> Congress, etc.) that is highlighted on the search page.

### Sample Searches

The following sample searches are provided as guides to popular types of searches in the *Congressional Bills* databases. They are performed in the *Congressional Bills* database for the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress. [2]

**Note:** You may search more than one *Congressional Bills* database at a time by clicking and dragging your mouse on the databases that you wish to search in the scroll box.

### Search by Subject

This type of search returns bills that are related to a specific subject. The word(s) that you enter as your search term(s) may appear anywhere within the document.

Query:       **"national forests" AND (conservation OR management)**  
Alternative: **national ADJ forests AND (conservation OR management)**

Results: H.R. 4570 (ih) To provide for certain boundary adjustments and conveyances involving  
S. 2237 (pcs) Making appropriations for the Department of the Interior and related  
H.R. 2107 (enr) Making appropriations for the Department of the Interior and related  
(Other documents were returned that are not included here.)

## Search by Bill Number

This type of search returns bills that contain a given bill number. The returned documents may be bills that bear the number you have entered as a query, or they may reference the bill number in their title or text, as in a regular subject search.

**Note:** The bill number may be typed with or without punctuation. If no punctuation is used, you must leave a space between the “h” and the “r” for bills in the House.

Query: "h.r. 2"

Alternative: "h r 2"

Results: H.Res. 133 (rh) Providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 2) to repeal the United States  
H.R. 2 (rh) To repeal the United States Housing Act of 1937, deregulate the public  
H.R. 2 (eh) To repeal the United States Housing Act of 1937, deregulate the public  
(Other documents were returned that are not included here.)

The above query returns bills that bear the number “H.R. 2” and bills that make reference to H.R. 2. The order of returned documents is determined by [relevance ranking](#), not by chronology; this ranking accounts for the appearance of a reported bill before an engrossed bill and the listing of a House resolution that makes reference to a bill before the bill itself.

## Abbreviations

### Abbreviations for Types of Legislation

The following abbreviations stand for types of legislative documents in the *Congressional Bills* databases. They are included as part of the bill number in the identification code.

H.R.	House Bill
S.	Senate Bill
H.J.Res.	House Joint Resolution
S.J.Res.	Senate Joint Resolution
H.Con.Res.	House Concurrent Resolution
S.Con.Res.	Senate Concurrent Resolution
H.Res.	House Simple Resolution
S.Res.	Senate Simple Resolution

### Abbreviations for Versions of Bills

The following abbreviations stand for versions of a bill in the *Congressional Bills* databases. An abbreviation and its explanation are included with each bill in your results list.

(ash)	Additional Sponsors House
(ath)	Agreed to House
(ats)	Agreed to Senate
(cdh)	Committee Discharged House
(cds)	Committee Discharged Senate

(cph)	Considered and Passed House
(cps)	Considered and Passed Senate
(eah)	Engrossed Amendment House
(eas)	Engrossed Amendment Senate
(eh)	Engrossed in House
(ehr)	Engrossed in House—Reprint
(eh_s)	Engrossed in House (No.) Star Print [3]
(enr)	Enrolled Bill
(es)	Engrossed in Senate
(esr)	Engrossed in Senate—Reprint
(es_s)	Engrossed in Senate (No.) Star Print
(fah)	Failed Amendment House
(fps)	Failed Passage Senate
(hdh)	Held at Desk House
(hds)	Held at Desk Senate
(ih)	Introduced in House
(ihr)	Introduced in House—Reprint
(ih_s)	Introduced in House (No.) Star Print
(iph)	Indefinitely Postponed in House
(ips)	Indefinitely Postponed in Senate
(is)	Introduced in Senate
(isr)	Introduced in Senate—Reprint
(is_s)	Introduced in Senate (No.) Star Print
(lth)	Laid on Table in House
(lts)	Laid on Table in Senate
(oph)	Ordered to be Printed House
(ops)	Ordered to be Printed Senate
(pch)	Placed on Calendar House
(pcs)	Placed on Calendar Senate
(pp)	Public Print
(rah)	Referred w/Amendments House
(ras)	Referred w/Amendments Senate
(rch)	Reference Change House
(rcs)	Reference Change Senate
(rdh)	Received in House
(rds)	Received in Senate
(re)	Reprint of an Amendment
(reah)	Re-engrossed Amendment House
(renr)	Re-enrolled
(res)	Re-engrossed Amendment Senate
(rfh)	Referred in House
(rfhr)	Referred in House—Reprint
(rfh_s)	Referred in House (No.) Star Print
(rfs)	Referred in Senate
(rfsr)	Referred in Senate—Reprint
(rfs_s)	Referred in Senate (No.) Star Print
(rh)	Reported in House
(rhr)	Reported in House—Reprint
(rh_s)	Reported in House (No.) Star Print
(rih)	Referral Instructions House
(ris)	Referral Instructions Senate
(rs)	Reported in Senate
(rsr)	Reported in Senate—Reprint
(rs_s)	Reported in Senate (No.) Star Print
(rth)	Referred to Committee House
(rts)	Referred to Committee Senate

(sas)	Additional Sponsors Senate
(sc)	Sponsor Change House
(s_p)	Star (No.) Print of an Amendment

## **Congressional Bills Glossary**

### **Definitions of Types of Legislation**

#### **Bills**

H.R.	House Bill
S.	Senate Bill

A bill is a legislative proposal before Congress. Bills from each house are assigned a number in the order in which they are introduced, starting at the beginning of each Congress (first and second sessions). Public bills pertain to matters that affect the general public or classes of citizens, while private bills pertain to individual matters that affect individuals and organizations, such as claims against the Government.

#### **Joint Resolutions**

H.J.Res.	House Joint Resolution
S.J.Res.	Senate Joint Resolution

A joint resolution is a legislative proposal that requires the approval of both houses and the signature of the President, just as a bill does. Resolutions from each house are assigned a number in the order in which they are introduced, starting at the beginning of each Congress (first and second sessions). There is no real difference between a bill and a joint resolution. Joint resolutions generally are used for limited matters, such as a single appropriation for a specific purpose. They are also used to propose amendments to the Constitution. A joint resolution has the force of law, if approved. Joint resolutions become a part of the Constitution when three-quarters of the states have ratified them; they do not require the President's signature.

#### **Concurrent Resolutions**

H.Con.Res.	House Concurrent Resolution
S.Con.Res.	Senate Concurrent Resolution

A concurrent resolution is a legislative proposal that requires the approval of both houses but does not require the signature of the President and does not have the force of law. Concurrent resolutions generally are used to make or amend rules that apply to both houses. They are also used to express the sentiments of both of the houses. For example, a concurrent resolution is used to set the time of Congress' adjournment. It may also be used by Congress to convey congratulations to another country on the anniversary of its independence.

#### **Simple Resolutions**

H.Res.	House Simple Resolution
S.Res.	Senate Simple Resolution

A simple resolution is a legislative proposal that addresses matters entirely within the prerogative of one house or the other. It requires neither the approval of the other house nor the signature of the President, and it does not have the force of law. Most simple resolutions concern the rules of one house. They are also used to express the sentiments of a single house. For example, a simple resolution may offer condolences to the family of a deceased member of Congress, or it may give "advice" on foreign policy or other executive business.

## Reports

H.Rpt. House Report  
S.Rpt. Senate Report

A report is a document that presents a committee's explanation of its action regarding legislation that has been referred to it. Each House and Senate report is assigned a number that includes the number of the Congress during which it is published (e.g., "H.Rpt. 105-830" refers to a report created in the House during the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress). Conference reports are numbered and designated in the same way as regular House and Senate reports. Most reports favor a bill's passage, although a bill can be reported without recommendation. When a committee report is not unanimous, the dissenting committee members may file a statement of their views (minority views) in a minority report. A reported version of a bill references the applicable report number.

**Note:** Reports may be found in the [Congressional Reports](#) database on *GPO Access*.

## Definitions of Common Versions of Bills

(ath) Agreed to House  
(ats) Agreed to Senate

This phrase describes concurrent or simple resolutions. These types of legislation are not "passed" in the manner of a regular bill; rather they are "agreed to" in the House or Senate.

(cdh) Committee Discharge House  
(c ds) Committee Discharge Senate

This phrase describes a motion to discharge a committee from considering a bill. The motion requires a majority vote from that committee.

(cph) Considered and Passed House  
(cps) Considered and Passed Senate

This phrase indicates that, after being debated, a bill has been voted on and passed by one of the two houses.

(eah) Engrossed Amendment House  
(eas) Engrossed Amendment Senate

This phrase accompanies the final copy of a bill that has been passed by one house and certified by the Clerk of the House or the Secretary of the Senate. It includes the amendments to the text from floor action.

(eh) Engrossed in House  
(es) Engrossed in Senate

This phrase accompanies the final copy of a bill that has been passed by one house and certified by the Clerk of the House or the Secretary of the Senate.

(enr) Enrolled Bill

This phrase accompanies the final copy of a bill that has been passed in identical form by both houses. It must be certified by an officer of the house of origin (the Clerk of the House or the Secretary of the Senate) and then sent on for the signatures of the Speaker of the House, the President of the Senate, and the U.S. President. An enrolled bill is printed on parchment.

- (ih) Introduced in House
- (is) Introduced in Senate

This phrase indicates that a bill has been introduced in either the House or the Senate. In the Senate, any number of senators may introduce a single bill; in the House, a limit of 25 representatives may co-sponsor a bill. Many bills are actually committee bills and therefore are introduced under the name of the (sub)committee's chairperson as a formality.

- (pch) Placed on Calendar House
- (pcs) Placed on Calendar Senate

This phrase accompanies a bill that is pending before committees of either house. The bill is assigned a calendar number, which determines when it will be considered by that house.

- (rah) Referred w/Amendments House
- (ras) Referred w/Amendments Senate

This phrase indicates that an engrossed bill has been passed from one house to the other, requesting concurrence.

- (rch) Reference Change House
- (rcs) Reference Change Senate

This phrase indicates a change in the referral of a bill, which requires the unanimous consent of the members of the house in question.

- (rdh) Received in House
- (rds) Received in Senate

This phrase indicates that a bill has been accepted for consideration in one house.

- (rfh) Referred in House
- (rfs) Referred in Senate

This phrase indicates that, after being introduced, a bill has been directed to the committees that have jurisdiction over the subject with which the bill is concerned. (Bills are referred by the Speaker in the House and the Presiding Officer in the Senate.)

- (rh) Reported in House
- (rs) Reported in Senate

This phrase accompanies a committee's report of its findings and recommendations to the parent house after it has examined a bill. The version of the bill as reported includes changes, if any, that have been recommended by the committee.

## Footnotes

[1] Users with the free Adobe Acrobat Reader software can view documents as they appear in the printed version. This software is available from Adobe's Web site at the following URL:  
<http://www.adobe.com/prodindex/acrobat/readstep.html>.

[2] The results of these sample searches are described as they appear on the Web interface. The display of the results may vary for users of the WAIS client and SWAIS software.

[3] A star print is a new, revised, and/or corrected version of a Congressional document. Its name comes from the star that is printed on the lower left-hand corner of the title page or cover. When a star print is released, it replaces the original version of the document.

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[Questions or comments](#) regarding this service? Contact the **GPO Access User Support Team**  
by Internet e-mail at [gpoaccess@gpo.gov](mailto:gpoaccess@gpo.gov);  
by telephone at **1-202-512-1530** or **toll-free at 1-888-293-6498**;  
or by fax at **1-202-512-1262**.