

Legislative History of Wyoming Laws

Prepared by
Legislative Service Office

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LEGISLATIVE HISTORY OF WYOMING LAWS

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The question is often raised regarding the available sources of legislative history in Wyoming. The following are sources of legislative history, which may be helpful to the researcher:

Wyoming Statutes

The official compilation of Wyoming's laws is a multi-volume set entitled "Wyoming Statutes Annotated" currently published by Matthew Bender & Company (of the LexisNexis Group) under the supervision of the Legislative Service Office (LSO). This publication is prepared after each session and incorporates legislation enacted in that session. The entire set is replaced in odd-numbered years and a supplement is issued in even-numbered years. In this compilation, sections of law contained in the enrolled act are "split up" and inserted into appropriate places in the statutes.¹

There is a list at the end of each section in the annotated statutes of all the session laws, which includes the year each section was initially enacted and any year in which it was amended. Using that information, one can locate the applicable enrolled acts and session laws, which can be used to locate bills. The annotated statutes also contain citations to interpretive judicial decisions and, in some cases, other relevant material such as law review articles and legal periodical citations.

It should be noted that in case of a conflict or discrepancy in the wording of a statute, the enrolled act rather than the annotated statute is controlling.

The Wyoming Statutes (text only) and the Wyoming Statutes Annotated are available on the Wyoming Legislature's website, <https://www.wyoleg.gov/StateStatutes/StatutesConstitution>.

Session Laws of Wyoming

The final version of each bill enacted into law by the Legislature is published annually after each session in the "Session Laws of Wyoming, 20__". Session Laws contain the entire enrolled act other than the signatures and certification. This includes the text of the law enacted, showing changes to existing law in strike and underline format.

¹ Bills contain section headnotes and numbering inserted by the LSO. The LSO is authorized to change these headnotes and section numbering and neither are considered part of the law.

In many cases, a number of "noncodified" sections are found in the Session Laws but not in the "annotated statutes". "Noncodified" sections generally include time-limited information such as funds appropriated and other directions necessary to carry out the law and the date the new law will take effect. These are still part of the law but are not printed in the annotated statutes.

House and Senate Journals

The official record of action taken on legislation during the session by the House and Senate can be found in the House and Senate Journals. While the Journals are not a verbatim record of the proceedings, they do contain:

1. Names of bill sponsors and co-sponsors;
2. Names of committees that considered the bill during the session;
3. Dates of all actions taken;
4. Text of all adopted and failed amendments;
5. All roll call votes;
6. On rare occasion, a legislator's statement read to the House or Senate regarding the intent or explanation of the bill, as understood by the legislator;
7. Conference committee actions;
8. Governor's action.

The official journals are stored with the Office of the Secretary of State. At the close of the legislative session, digests of the journals are published in bound volumes entitled "Journal of the Senate" (or House) and are available at the state and county libraries and the LSO. Digests of the journals beginning with the first Territorial Legislative Session that was convened in 1869 through the present are available on the Wyoming State Library's digital collection website, <https://wyominglegislation.wyo.gov>. Digests of the journals from 2007 to the present are also available on the legislative website, <https://www.wyoleg.gov/>.

Recorded Proceedings

Since 1996 in the Senate and 1997 in the House, the audio of the floor proceedings of the Legislature have been recorded. Beginning with the 2020 Special Session, videos of the floor proceedings of the Legislature have been streamed. These audio and video recordings are not transcribed or indexed in detail, however, using the House or Senate Journal as a date reference, one may locate the appropriate recording to listen to the floor debate on a given bill.

Audio recordings from 1997 through the 2020 budget session are available on the Wyoming State Library's digital collection website, <https://wyominglegislation.wyo.gov>. Audio recordings from 2005 through the

2020 budget session are also available on the legislative website, <https://www.wyoleg.gov/Legislation/audioArchive>. The video recordings of floor proceedings and many interim and standing committee meetings may be accessed through the Legislature's YouTube channel, <https://www.youtube.com/@WyomingLegislature>.

When the Legislature is in session, streaming video of the live floor debate in the House and Senate can be accessed from the Legislature's website. Most standing and interim committee meetings are also live-streamed and can be accessed from the Legislature's website.

Both House and Senate rules specify that neither the recorded proceedings nor the streamed video of floor proceedings shall be construed to supersede the journal.

Bills Drafting Folders

All bills (and resolutions) introduced in the Wyoming Legislature are drafted by the LSO at the request of a legislator or a legislative committee. When the LSO receives a bill request, a drafting file is opened. Research materials used in the drafting of the bill are placed in the drafting file. Bill drafting files are maintained by the LSO and may contain background information regarding the request for the bill, drafts leading up to the final introduced version of the bill, and model legislation that may have been used by the drafter. The bill drafting files contain confidential materials that are not available for public inspection unless the legislative sponsor of the bill waives confidentiality or the materials are made public during a committee meeting.² The LSO maintains bill drafting files from 1977 to the present.

Numbered Bills

Once a bill is approved by its sponsor, it is assigned a bill number and, if approved in a timely fashion, may be prefiled before the Legislature convenes. The Supreme Court Law Library has all numbered bills in bound volumes listed numerically by year through 2017. The LSO maintains paper or electronic copies of all numbered bills from 1971 to the present, indexed by subject, sponsor, bill number, and various other ways.

Digitized numbered bills beginning with the first Territorial Legislative Session that was convened in 1869 through 2000 are available on the Wyoming State Library's digital collection website, <https://wyominglegislation.wyo.gov>. Bills from 2001 to the present are also available on the legislative website, <https://www.wyoleg.gov>.

² See W.S. 28-8-116.

Bill Jackets

Once a bill is enacted into law, the original bill and all amendments thereto, including failed amendments, are retained in a bill jacket, which is stored with the Office of the Secretary of State for five years and then sent to State Archives. The bill jacket also contains a copy of the enrolled act signed or vetoed by the governor.

Interim Committee Records and Recordings

LSO maintains interim committee records from 1971 to the present. The records generally consist of a summary of the interim committee proceedings (meeting minutes), memoranda, correspondence, committee handouts, and reports. The committee records are limited to interim studies on bills sponsored by the interim committee and do not include action taken by standing committees on bills.

Beginning with the 2020 special session, interim committees began streaming and recording their meetings. These proceedings are streamed and archived through the Legislature's YouTube channel, <https://www.youtube.com/@WyomingLegislature>.

Standing Committee Records and Recordings

Standing committee meetings, which occur during the session, were historically not recorded. Other standing committee records may be available, including standing committee reports, records of votes, confirmation appointment recommendations, and materials or handouts provided to standing committees.

Beginning with the 2020 Special Session, standing committees began streaming and recording their meetings. These proceedings are streamed and archived through the Legislature's YouTube channel, <https://www.youtube.com/@WyomingLegislature>.

Other Resources

There are several other resources which may be helpful when researching legislative history:

A. Governor's messages

Messages to the Legislature from the Governor often reflect relevant historical information. The Governor's address to the Legislature at the beginning and end of each session may be found verbatim in the House and Senate

Journals. The Governor's action in approving or vetoing a bill constitutes part of the legislative process and may be a valuable source of legislative history. Messages approving or vetoing bills are filed with the bill and may be retrieved from the Secretary of State's Office. The LSO also has veto messages from 1975 to present. Veto messages are also generally available on the Wyoming State Library's digital collection website, <https://wyominglegislation.wyo.gov>.

B. Attorney General Opinions

Attorney General Opinions often provide an interpretation of a specific statute and, in doing so, may review legislative history.

C. Law Review Articles and Court Opinions

In-depth analysis and legislative history of specific laws are often explored in law review articles published by the University of Wyoming College of Law. Decisions rendered by a court of law interpreting a statute may review legislative history as well.

D. Information from Individual legislators

It may also be helpful to directly contact the legislator who sponsored the bill. The legislator may provide helpful insight into his intent and may have retained unique information relating to the bill.³

E. Miscellaneous Sources

- Media accounts of a bill's progress may contain unofficial accounts of legislative floor debates and standing committee debates and testimony.
- A lobby group involved with the bill may have compiled information on the bill or a particular issue.
- Contacting the administrative agency charged with implementing and enforcing a law may be helpful as well since agency personnel may have testified before a legislative committee and the agency may have developed interpretive policies, procedures, and rules.

³ While insight and further leads may be garnered in talking with legislators it should be noted that courts have generally held that affidavits by legislators and legislative staff regarding the enactment of a statute are not a proper source of legislative history. Independent Producers Marketing Corp. v. Cobb, 721 P.2d 1106 (Wyo. 1986).

WYOMING COMPILED STATUTES GUIDE FOR LSO STAFF

May 2024

All compiled statute book sets and volumes noted in this guide are available in print in the LSO Main Office, with miscellaneous additional sets in various rooms in the Capitol. Additional versions are available at the State Law Library and the State Library. Staff may currently access HeinOnline by connecting to the internet through the Wyo-Guest Wi-Fi. LexisNexis code service may be accessed by staff with a LexisAdvance login. Westlaw versions of the statutes and online access is excluded from this guide but is available at the State Law Library.

Wyoming Statutes, Wyoming Constitution, Rules, and Title 99

Contains the text of the Wyoming Statutes without annotations. Prepared by the Legislative Service Office

Date Range	Publisher	Electronic Access	Notes
2007- Current	LSO	SharePoint (LSO Staff Only)	Must use Folio Views.
2020- Current	LSO (Rocket NXT)	LSO Website	

Wyoming Statutes Annotated

The modern Wyoming Statutes Annotated ("Green Books") contained in Volumes 1-12 & Court Rules were compiled in 1997. The set is republished biennially in its entirety after each general legislative session. Cumulative supplement books are printed after each budget session. Advance Annotation Service pamphlets also printed yearly in tow cumulative pamphlets containing new decisions of state and federal courts.

Date Range	Publisher	Online Access	Notes
1997- Current	Michie (Acquired by LexisNexis)	LexisNexis (1991- Current)	LexisNexis by subscription only.
Current	LexisNexis	Current Statutes Annotated (Public)	Current year only.

Wyoming Statutes, Annotated, 1977 Republished Edition & Supplements

Contained in Volumes 1-10 with additional Volumes 2A, 4A, 5A 6A, 7A, & 7B. Prepared under the supervision of the Legislative Service Office by the editorial staff of the publishers.

Date Range	Publisher	Online Access	Notes
1977-1996	Michie	Print Only (1977-90) LexisNexis (1991-Current)	Multiple cumulative pocket supplements organized by title (not volume) were printed yearly.* LexisNexis by subscription only.

*In 1981, the Wyoming State Bar passed a resolution whereas "strong objection was made to the binding system and the method of replacement of amended statutes [of 1977] owing to the greatly increased potential for error in the updating of the existing system." Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Wyoming State Bar," Land & Water Law Review: Vol. 17: Iss. 1 (1982).

Wyoming Statutes (Annotated), 1957 & Supplements

Annotated statutes contained in Volumes 1-10 with a Volume 2A (court rules) added in 1971 and Volume 7A in 1967. Kept up to date by cumulative pocket supplements, and recompiled volumes and interim supplement. Prepared under the supervision of the Wyoming Compilation Commission.

Date Range	Publisher	Online Access	Notes
1957-1976	Michie	Print only	LSO has 1975 and miscellaneous other print supplements.

Wyoming Compiled Statutes, 1945 & 1957 Cumulative Pocket Supplements

Contains the general laws of Wyoming annotated. The 1957 Cumulative Pocket Supplements contain all laws of 1946 through 1957 with citations to applicable decisions of the Wyoming Supreme Court.

Date Range	Publisher	Online Access	Notes
1945	The Bobbs-Merrill Company	HeinOnline Volume 1 Volume 2 Volume 3 Volume 4 Volume 5	

1946-1957 Supplements	The Mills Company	HeinOnline Volume 1 Supp. Volume 2 Supp. Volume 3 Supp. Volume 4 Supp. Volume 5 Supp.	LSO has print 1957 cumulative pocket supplement to Volume 4 only.
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Wyoming Revised Statutes 1931, Annotated & Supplements

The 1931 Wyoming Revised Statutes contains all laws of a general nature to and including those passed at the 1931 Session of the Legislature. The 1934 supplement contains all laws of a general nature since the termination of the legislation in the 1931 Revised Statutes and annotations to decisions of all cases since the publication of the 1931 revision. The 1940 supplement contains all laws of a general nature to and including those passed at the 1931 session of the Legislature.

Date Range	Publisher	Online Access	Notes
1931	S.E. Boyer & Co	HeinOnline	
1934 Supplement	W.H. Courtright	HeinOnline	
1940 Supplement	Courtright Publishing	HathiTrust	

Wyoming Compiled Statutes Annotated 1920

Includes the Magna Charta, Declaration of Independence, Articles of Confederation, Ordinance of 1787, Constitution of the United States, Act Organizing Wyoming Territory, Act of Admission, Constitution of Wyoming, Rules of the Supreme Court, rules governing admission to the Bar, and all the laws of the state, of a permanent nature, in force and effect on March 10, 1919, or made effective thereafter by the special session of the Fifteenth Legislature convened on January 26th, 1920.

Date Range	Publisher	Online Access	Notes
1920	Mills Co	HeinOnline	

Wyoming Compiled Statutes Annotated 1910

Includes all laws of the state, of a permanent nature, in force and effect on March 10, 1909, or made effective thereafter, according to terms of enactment.

Date Range	Publisher	Online Access	Notes
1910	Laramie Republican	HathiTrust HeinOnline	

Revised Statutes Wyoming in Force December 1, 1899

Includes the Magna Charta, Declaration of Independence, Articles of Confederation, Organic Act of Territory of Wyoming, Act of Admission of the state of Wyoming, Constitution of the United States and of Wyoming, and the rules of the Supreme Court.

Date Range	Publisher	Online Access	Notes
1899	Chaplin, Spafford & Mathison	HathiTrust HeinOnline	HeinOnline by subscription only.

Revised Statutes of Wyoming (Territory), 1887

Includes all laws in force January 1, 1887, including the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, the Constitution of the United States, the organic act of Wyoming, and all laws of Congress affecting the territorial government.

Date Range	Publisher	Online Access	Notes
1887	The Daily Sun Steam Printing House	HathiTrust HeinOnline	HeinOnline by subscription only.

Compiled Laws of Wyoming, 1876

Includes all the laws in force in the Wyoming Territory at the close of the fourth session of the Legislative Assembly, together with such laws of the United States as are applicable to the territory, and treaties made with the Sioux and Shoshone tribes in the year 1868.

Date Range	Publisher	Electronic Access	Notes
1876	H. Glafcke	HathiTrust HeinOnline	HeinOnline by subscription only.