

COMPILING A NEW HAMPSHIRE LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

Revised 2012 by Mary S. Searles, Law Librarian
New Hampshire Law Library

Below are the steps involved in compiling a New Hampshire legislative history. The process starts from the end – the statutory code – and works backwards to the bill as it was first introduced.

You will need:

1. *New Hampshire Revised Statutes Annotated* (NH RSA)¹
2. *Laws of the State of New Hampshire* (NH Laws)² or pre-1955 statutory compilations³
3. *Journals of the House and Senate*⁴
4. House and Senate Committee files⁵
5. House and Senate bills as introduced⁶

- Using the *New Hampshire Revised Statutes Annotated* (NH RSA), locate the relevant section of the statute.

RSA _____ : _____

- Find the History note immediately after the RSA section.⁷ Read the notes (if any) to determine which year of the law and/or which amendment is relevant to your research. If the notes don't tell you which year you need, you'll have to check each year of the statute to find out when the relevant language was introduced.

Year _____

- Look at the Source note (part of the History note) to find the citation to the session law or the statutory compilation.⁸

Citation: _____

- Identify the House or Senate bill number (see the next page for the various ways to do this)⁹.

HB/SB: _____

- Locate the New Hampshire House and Senate Journals for the appropriate year¹⁰. Check the indexes at the back of the House and Senate Journals for pages citing your bill. Note the name of the Committee to which the bill was referred. Read the relevant Journal pages.

House Committee: _____

Senate Committee: _____

- Locate the records of Committee hearings.
- Locate the “as introduced version” of bill.

You may also want to review actions in earlier sessions of the General Court. It can take several tries for a bill to be enacted and much of the relevant discussion may have taken place in earlier sessions. Also, check the subject index in the Journals for the year of your bill to see if any other bills were introduced on your topic.

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¹ You'll find the NH RSAs in print at the [Law Library](#), the [State Library](#), the [State Archives](#), and some local public libraries. The [Revised Statutes Online](#) is the free, online version of the NH RSAs.

² The *Laws of the State of New Hampshire* is a chronological publication of NH's session laws. In 1984, the legislature switched from biennial to annual sessions and the NH Laws are now issued annually. A session law may contain a preamble, a statement of purpose, or a "findings and declaration" section that is not included in the NH RSAs but which may clarify legislative intent. NH Laws may be found at the [Law Library](#), the [State Library](#), the [State Archives](#), and many public libraries. The online session laws (1989 to present), called Chaptered Final Versions, are at the [General Court's website](#). Digitized versions of some volumes are available at the [Internet Archive](#) and the [HathiTrust](#) or use the [list](#) on the Law Library's website.

³ These statutory compilations may be found at the [Law Library](#), the [State Library](#), and some public libraries. Some volumes are online at the [Internet Archive](#) and the [HathiTrust](#) (search by title). They are cited as follows:

RS - Revised Statutes 1842

PS - Public Statutes 1891

CS - Compiled Statutes 1853

GL - General Laws 1878

GS - General Statutes 1867

PL - Public Laws 1926

RL - Revised Laws 1942

RSA - Revised Statutes Annotated (refers to the original 6-volumes published in 1955, not the current RSAs)

⁴ Some Journals have been digitized and are online at the [Internet Archive](#). (Type Journal New Hampshire and the year in the Search box.) Audio files of the Senate and House are available [online](#) back to 2003/2004. Debate on the floor of the House is not usually transcribed in the Journal and the audio files are the only way to find out what was said there. You will also need to use the audio files if you are researching a recent bill because there's a time lag of about a year in the publication of the permanent Journals.

⁵ If a study committee was established, there will usually be a report. Print versions of study committee reports from 1995 to present are kept at the [State Library](#). Some Study Committee information is [online](#).

Committee files may contain transcripts of oral testimony, written submissions, the bill as introduced, voting records, and other information. Committee files and minutes are available as follows:

- Microfiche of the following committee hearings are available at both the [State Library](#) and the [Law Library](#): House Judiciary, 1935 – 1979; Senate Judiciary, 1951 – 1979; House (all committees) 1981
- Minutes for all other Committee hearings are available at the [State Archives](#).
- The current year or so of committee files are at the House and Senate Clerks' offices
- A limited number of committee files (from 1995 to 2006) have been scanned and are available online at [www.nh.gov](#). Use the Advanced Search or Quick Bill Search to find your bill. If the committee files have been scanned, you'll see a link to Bill History.
- Audio files of some committees are online. If there are audio files, links will be on the committee web pages or in the bill search results.
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⁶ Find as introduced bills at the [Law Library](#), the [State Library](#), and the [State Archives](#). You may want to call ahead to see how complete the collections are.

⁷ Notes about amendments are not available in the [Revised Statutes Online](#).

⁸ A session law reference looks like this: Year, chapter:section (1973, 145:3).

⁹ Modern bills have bill numbers; the earlier bills do not. For all years, you can use the subject indexes of the Journals to follow the path of the legislation through the Journals.

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- For laws after 1979, the bill number appears next to the chapter number in the print version of the session laws.
 - For laws 1989 to present, go online to [Advanced Bill Status Search](#). Enter the relevant year and chapter number (the session law chapter number NOT the RSA chapter number) and click “Search.”
 - For laws 1965 to present, use the Final Disposition of Bills and Resolutions table (found at the [State Library](#) and the [Law Library](#)). A Final Status/Disposition of Bills also appears in the last volume for each Senate and House Journal between 1955 and 1967.
 - Prior to 1955, no numerical indexes are available to identify bill numbers. Use the subject indexes to follow the path of the bill through the Journals.
 - For laws 1977 to present, the New Hampshire House and Senate Journals have chapter to bill tables.

¹⁰ All Senate floor debates from 1973 to the present are transcribed in the Senate Journal. Floor debates for the House or Senate are online from 2003 to the present. Some committee hearings are also online.

Contact Information and Websites

New Hampshire Law Library
One Charles Doe Drive
Concord, NH 03301
www.courts.state.nh.us/lawlibrary
lawlibrary@courts.state.nh.us
603-271-3777

New Hampshire State Library
20 Park Street
Concord, NH 03301
<http://www.nh.gov/nhsl/>
603-271-2144

New Hampshire State Archives
71 South Fruit Street
Concord, NH 03301
archives@sos.state.nh.us
<http://www.sos.nh.gov/archives/>
603-271-2236

New Hampshire General Court
<http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/default.htm>

New Hampshire General Court Advanced Bill Search
http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/bill_Status/

New Hampshire House of Representatives Clerk’s Office
Room 317, State House
107 North Main Street
Concord, NH 03301
(603) 271-2548
<http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/house/staff/clerksoffice.htm>

New Hampshire Senate Clerk’s Office
107 North Main Street
Concord, NH 03301
603-271-3420
http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/Senate/About_Senate/staff.aspx