Title: Minnesota Legislative History Research

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Summary:

When was this particular phrase added to the criminal code, and why? Why did the Legislature remove this word from statute, only to reinstate it the next year? When was the first time the Legislature introduced a bill to legalize sports betting, and what happened that year?

The Legislative Reference Library regularly receives these kinds of questions, and legislative history research can help answer them. But this research process can be time consuming and complex. In this presentation, reference librarians from the Legislative Reference Library break down the process with real-life examples, and outline how research methods and tools vary across years.

Agenda/Outline:

Introduction – 5 minutes

• Library’s role in legislative history
• Librarian’s expertise in legislative history

Why legislative history matters – 5 minutes

• Who does legislative history research and why?
• Legislative intent statutes
• House and Senate Rules

Getting started – 5 minutes

• Navigating the legislative website
• Overview of resources
• Common questions and starting points
• Basic structure of the research process
• Starting with a statute and finding a session law

Example bill – 20 minutes

• Bill status page
• Journals capture the action of the chamber
• Committee minutes and meeting materials
• Summaries from nonpartisan research offices
• Fiscal notes
• Effective ways of using bill text version lists
• Audio and video
• Companion bill research
• Parallel process of research through companion bill
• Conference committee materials
Research variations – 15 minutes

- Online resources overview
- Brief example bill from 2023
- Print resources overview
- Brief example bill from 1981
- Caveats and tips
- Dead ends

Secondary sources – 5 minutes

- Legislative publications
- Specialized, curated collections
- Mandated reports
- Minnesota news sources
- State Law Library and Minnesota Historical Society Library resources
- More at the Legislative Reference Library

Closing and questions – 5 minutes
Minnesota Legislative Reference Library
Legislative History: Location of Materials

Research Locations

Legislative Reference Library (LRL)
645 State Office Building; (651) 296-8338; library@lrl.mn.gov
LRL Legislative History Guide

Minnesota Historical Society Library (MNHS)
345 W. Kellogg Blvd.; (651) 259-3300;
Legislative History Guide

Statutes, Laws, and Journals

Statutes
1851-present Archived Statutes; Current Statutes
1849-present Paper at LRL, MNHS, MN State Law Library

Session Laws
1849-present Minnesota Session Laws
1849-present Paper at LRL, MNHS, MN State Law Library

House Journal
1994-present Journal of the House
1858-present Paper at LRL, MNHS, MN State Law Library
1849-1990 LLMC House Journals (incomplete)

Senate Journal
1996-present Journal of the Senate
1973-1996 Journal of the Senate
1858-present Paper at LRL, MNHS, MN State Law Library
1849-1990 LLMC Senate Journals (incomplete)

Committee Minutes

House
2005–present House committee minutes (partial and unofficial)
1999–present Paper at LRL (current in committee offices)
1919–1998 Paper at MNHS Library
Prior to 1919 Contact MNHS to determine if they exist
1883–1918 Judiciary committee only: contact MNHS
1957–1988 Microfilm/fiche at LRL

Senate
2005–06 & 22-23 Senate committee minutes (official)
1999–present Paper at LRL (current in committee offices)
1911–1998 Paper at MNHS Library
Prior to 1911 Contact MNHS to determine if they exist
1883–1910 Judiciary Committee only: contact MNHS
1973–1988 Microfiche at LRL

Conference Committee Materials
2015-present Conference Committee Activity
1999-present Paper at LRL (if available)
Pre-1999 Paper at MNHS Library (if available)

Legislative Multimedia and Floor Logs

Multimedia:
Not all meetings are available in audio and video.

House
1991–present Audio
1998–present Video
Copies from House Public Info: (651) 297-1338; $12.50 per item produced

Senate
1991–present Audio
2001–present Video
Senate Media does not provide copies.

Floor Logs:
1991–present Senate floor logs

Last Updated 1/23/2024 by LRL
Bills and Bill Status Indexes

**House Bills:**
- Present: Paper copies at **Chief Clerk’s Office**
  211 Capitol; (651) 296-2314
- 1995–present: Bill status index online
- 1957–2008: Microfilm/fiche at LRL
- Prior to 1957: Contact MNHS Library

**House Bill Status Indexes:**
- 1995–present: Bill status index online
- 1975–1996: Microfilm/fiche at LRL

**Senate Bills:**
- Present: Paper copies at **Secretary of the Senate’s Office**
  231 Capitol; (651) 296-2344
- 1995–present: Bill status index online
- 1957–2010: Microfilm/fiche at LRL
- Prior to 1957: Contact MNHS Library

**Senate Bill Status Indexes:**
- 1995–present: Bill status index online
- 1995–1996: Bill author index only on microfiche at LRL
- 1987–1992: Microfilm/fiche at LRL

**Summaries**

**Session Publications**
- 1849–present: Session notebooks at LRL
- 1849–present: Time Capsule
- 2004–present: Session Daily (House)
- 1984–2012: Session Weekly (House)
- 1985–2009: Senate Briefly (Senate)
- 1975–present: Fiscal Review (Senate)
- 1999–present: House Research Bill Summaries
- 1999–present: House Research Act Summaries
- 1990–present: New Laws (House)
- 1979–1984: Session ... New Laws (House)
- 1979–1989: Session Summary (House)
- 1977–1978: Summary: Session (House)
- 1973–1980: Legislative Summary (DFL House and Senate)
- 1951–1982: Actions of the ... Minnesota Legislature

**News**

**Clippings for Each Legislator by District Number**
- 2000–present: Online on Capitol computers in LRL’s News Archive
- 2000–2009: Print in LRL’s file cabinets
- 1972–1999: Microfilm at LRL

**Fee-Based Legislative History Research Services**
- Legal Research Center, Inc.: (612) 332-4950
- Legislative Intent Service, Inc.: (800) 666-1917
- MNHS Library: (651) 259-3300

**Online Link**
Scan for a webpage with these links:
Basic Structure of the Research Process

- **Statute**
- **Session Law**
- **Bill Number**
- **Journal**
- **Minutes**
- **Recordings**