

A KCLL Research Guide

Sources of the Law – Federal, State & Local

	LEGISLATIVE (Statutory law)	EXECUTIVE (Administrative law)	JUDICIAL (Case or common law)
FEDERAL	<p>United States Statutes at Large</p> <p>USCCAN (West)</p> <p>United States Code (updated every 6 yrs. – current 2006, with supps.) http://uscode.house.gov/search/criteria.shtml</p> <p>U. S. Code Annotated (West) U. S. Code Service (Lexis)</p>	<p>Treaties</p> <p>Executive Orders http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/orders/ (current – CFR and FR for old ones) Cabinet & admin. agencies: Federal Register http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/index.html</p> <p>Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) http://www.gpoaccess.gov/cfr/index.html</p> <p>Admin. agency decisions (quasi-judicial function) Search at: http://www.usa.gov/</p>	<p>U.S. Supreme Court U.S. Reports www.supremecourtus.gov/ or http://supct.law.cornell.edu/supct/index.html Supreme Court Reporter Lawyers Edition</p> <p>U.S. Courts of Appeal Federal Reporter</p> <p>U.S. District Court Federal Supplement</p> <p>Court rules – Federal http://www.uscourts.gov/ (Plus links to court decisions and local rules)</p>
STATE	<p>Laws of Washington</p> <p>Revised Code of Washington – RCW http://search.leg.wa.gov/pub/textsearch/default.asp or www.legalwa.org</p> <p>West's revised code of Washington annotated</p> <p>Annotated revised code of Washington (Lexis Publishing)</p>	<p>Washington State Register http://search.leg.wa.gov/pub/textsearch/default.asp</p> <p>Washington Administrative Code http://search.leg.wa.gov/pub/textsearch/default.asp</p> <p>Admin. agency decisions (quasi-judicial function) Washington Attorney General opinions http://www.atg.wa.gov/AGOpinions/default.aspx</p> <p>Independently published agency manuals and procedures Search at: http://access.wa.gov/</p>	<p>Supreme Court of Washington Washington Reports www.legalwa.org</p> <p>Washington Court of Appeals Washington Appellate Reports www.legalwa.org</p> <p>West's pacific reporter</p> <p>Court rules - State http://www.courts.wa.gov/court_rules/</p>
LOCAL	<p>King County Code http://www.kingcounty.gov/council/legislation/kc_code.aspx</p> <p>Seattle Municipal Code http://clerk.ci.seattle.wa.us/~public/code1.htm other county and city codes Search at: www.mrsc.org/codes.aspx</p>	<p>Independently published department manuals and procedures</p> <p>Search at: http://www.kingcounty.gov/</p>	<p>Superior, district & municipal courts (Trial courts, no published opinions) Court rules – local (Superior court) http://www.kingcounty.gov/courts/Clerk/Rules.aspx (District court) http://your.kingcounty.gov/kcdc/lrtoc.htm (Seattle municipal court) www.cityofseattle.net/courts/general/rules.htm</p>

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Bold = official source

Web sources listed are usually the official government web site but not always

Important concepts:

PRIMARY / SECONDARY

- *Primary* sources publish the law itself, i.e., the rules that local, state, and federal governments will enforce. Sources of primary law include ordinances, statutes, treaties, court decisions, court rules, administrative rules and regulations, administrative agency decisions, and executive orders and decrees. Example: U.S. Statutes at Large.
- *Secondary* sources of law are materials that help find the law, or explain or comment on it, but are not "the law itself." Law review articles, treatises, legal encyclopedias, digests, and loose-leaf reporters are secondary sources. Example: Corpus Juris Secundum (CJS).

OFFICIAL / UNOFFICIAL

- *Official* sources are those publications sanctioned by a government or court as the authoritative text of the law. Courts generally require citation to "official" sources of law. Example: United States Reports.
- *Unofficial* sources are commercially published and usually more timely. They are editorially enhanced to improve usefulness as a research tool. Example: Supreme Court Reporter (West publication, unofficial). Commercially published sources are sometimes designated as the "official" texts to be cited to courts. Example: Washington Reports (LexisNexis publication designated as official).

ANNOTATED / UNANNOTATED

- *Annotated* sources publish the text of the law with additional information. The text of the law is primary material; the annotations are secondary material. Annotations can include case summaries, citations to cases interpreting the law, referrals to relevant periodical articles, legislative history, editorial notes, and analysis. Example: West's revised code of Washington annotated.
- *Unannotated* sources publish the bare text of the law. Example: Revised Code of Washington.

CHRONOLOGICAL RECORD / CODE: Codes extract the laws and regulations in force from the chronological record and bring them together in broad subject areas (e.g., civil code, criminal code, labor code, probate code). Chronological Record Example: Session laws of the State of Washington. Code Example: Revised code of Washington.

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