CALIFORNIA PRIMARY LAW RESOURCES

California Law

The purpose of this guide is to identify all of the California primary law in the Law Library’s collection, and how to access each type. Primary law includes constitutions and charters, statutes and ordinances, legislative documents, and court opinions (cases) and court rules, and administrative regulations and rulings.

Related Guides:

- California Legislative History
- Reading Citations
- Keycite: Alternative to Shepardizing
- Federal Primary Law
- West Digests
- Using Shepard’s® Citation Service

BASICS

Primary sources are “the law” itself, which we are bound to follow. Secondary sources are materials about the law; they explain and help us to find “the law” in a given situation. Although secondary sources, sometimes called “persuasive authority,” are very useful in legal research, and courts often consider them, no one is legally bound by them.

An example of primary law is *Deering's California Codes Annotated*. This multi-volume set contains California’s statutes, codified (organized by subject) into 29 titles. An example of a secondary source is *A Summary of California Law* by B.E. Witkin, a critical examination of California law. While Witkin’s analysis is highly regarded and often cited by California courts, it is not “the law.”

The Law Library has the majority of California primary law in print or online in *Westlaw and Lexis Advance*, which may only be used in the Law Library.

*Westlaw* content is organized by type of resource and jurisdiction. Start from the Home Page, select the [State Materials] tab and select [California], then select the type of material you need, for example, [California Proposed & Enacted Legislation]. If you have a specific citation, just type it into the search box at the top of the page.

*Lexis Advance* is organized by content type and jurisdiction. Start from the Home Page at the “Explore Content” section, and select the [State] tab and select [California]. All of the current California primary law materials are listed. To start your search, click on the source material you want to search, for example, [All California Statutes and Legislation] and then enter keyword(s) or a citation in the red search box and click on the red magnifying glass.

Many of these sources are also freely accessible from anywhere via the Internet.
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* Search the library’s online catalog for agency materials by agency name, or municipal codes by city or county at: sclhip.saclaw.org/ipac20/ipac.jsp?profile=

STATUTES

California Statutes

California statutes begin as chaptered bills. A bill is "chaptered" by the Secretary of State after it has passed through both houses of the Legislature and has been signed by the Governor, or becomes law without the Governor's signature. These chaptered bills are then bound in the California government’s official publication, *Statutes and Amendments to the Codes of California*.

These chaptered bills, also known as session laws, are published in the order they are passed. The Law Library’s collection covers 1850-2008 at *KFC 30 .A2* (Compact).
Westlaw: Select the tab [State Materials], then [California]. Select [California Proposed & Enacted Legislation], then [Enacted Legislation (Session Laws)]. You may browse the most recent session laws or search all session laws passed during the current or two prior legislative sessions, in the search box provided.

Lexis Advance: From the “Explore Content” section, select the [State] tab and select [California]. Scroll down to the heading “Statutes & Legislation” and select [All California Statutes and Legislation], and then select [CA - California Advance Legislative Service] which contains the full text of laws enacted during a legislative session. Enter keyword(s) or a citation in the red search box, or use the search options in the grey box.

To search for law(s) enacted with any later changes to those laws noted, go back and select [California Full Text Bills] which contains the full text of bills pending in the California state legislature and all prior sessions back to 1991. Specific language may be added to or deleted from existing statutory law as a result of pending legislation and is highlighted. Enter keyword(s) or a citation in the red search box, or use the search options in the grey box. On the left side of the screen a box will appear that allows you to limit your search. To find the enacted statute, click on the [Version] and select [Enacted].

Internet: The California Legislature’s website has the Statutes and Amendments to the Code, known as session laws, from 1993 at: www.legislature.ca.gov/port-statute.html. The California State Assembly Chief Clerk’s Website has the Statutes and Amendments to the Code for most years from 1850 to 2008 on their website clerk.assembly.ca.gov/. At the top of the page, from the drop down menu, click on [Historical Information] and then on [Archived Publications]. In the box on the left side of the page, click on the drop down arrow and select [statutes], then click on apply. Select the year you desire from the results list.

California Codes


Current California Codes

Deering’s California Codes Annotated, published by LexisNexis (formerly Bancroft-Whitney), has approximately 220 volumes, and is shelved at KFC 30 .5 D4 (Compact).

Lexis Advance: In the “Explore Content” section select the [State] tab and [California]. Scroll down to the heading “Statutes and Legislation” and select on [CA – Deering’s California Codes Annotated]. Enter keyword(s) or a citation in the red search box, or use the search options in the grey box.

West’s Annotated California Codes, published by Thomson Reuters (formerly West), has approximately 250 volumes, and is shelved at KFC 30 .W48.
**Westlaw:** Select the tab [State Materials], and then select [California]. Click on [California Statutes and Court Rules] for the current edition of *West’s Annotated California Codes (Statutes, Constitution and Court Rules)*. Search within a title of the code, or within the entire code.

**Internet:** The current un-annotated (just the statutes without editorial analysis by the publishers) code is available from the California Legislature’s website at [leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes.xhtml](http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes.xhtml). Click on the code title you are interested in from the title’s table of contents. Or select a title and search for a section number.

**Historical California Codes**

Shelved in alphabetical order according to title and year, for example, Agriculture Code (KFC 30 .5 .D4 F6) to Water Code (KFC 30 .5 .D4 W35), in the Historical Collection in compact shelving. You may search the library’s online catalog by any of the 29 code titles to identify the publication dates of those code volumes in our collection.

**Westlaw:** Select the Tab [State Materials], and then select [California]. Click on [California Statutes and Court rules], and then on the TOOLS & RESOURCES list on the right click on [California Statutes Annotated Historical] Coverage begins with the 1987 edition.

**Lexis Advance:** From the “Explore Content” page scroll down to the section heading “Archives” and select [Archived code search]. Enter a citation or keyword(s) in the red search box at the top of the page. To limit your search to the California code for a year: under the heading “Narrow by” click to check [Codes]. Then under the heading “Date Year Only” select [in] from the drop down menu, and then enter a year, such as “2010” in the box below. Also, select [Jurisdiction] and select [California]. Coverage begins with the 1991 edition of *Deering’s California Codes Annotated.*

California Legislative Services

California’s legislature meets yearly to pass new laws. Legislative services identify updates to the California codes from the latest enactments of the California legislature. Legislative services also contain such information as senate and assembly bills by chapter, constitutional amendments, selected resolutions, and propositions.

Print access to older legislation may be obtained by contacting the Witkin State Law Library, Stanley Mosk Library and Courts Building, 914 Capitol Mall, Third Floor, Sacramento, CA 95814, (916) 654-0185.

The current editions of *West’s California Legislative Service* are at KFC 30 .W4. The Law Library keeps the past 5 years.

**Westlaw:** Select the tab [State Materials], and then select [California]. Scroll down and click on the heading [California Proposed & Enacted Legislation]. Click on [California Enacted Legislation], the year, and then the [Enacted Legislation (Session Laws)]. You may browse the most recent session laws or search all session laws passed during the current or previous legislative or previous session in the search box provided above.

The current editions of *Advance Legislative service to Deering’s California Codes Annotated* are at KFC 30 .5 D4 (Compact). The Law Library keeps the past 5 years.

**Lexis Advance:** Go to the “Explore Content” section and select [State] and select [California]. Scroll down to the heading “Statutes and Legislation” and select [All California Statutes and Legislation.] On the next page, scroll down to: “Public Laws/ALS” and select [CA-California Advance Legislative
Service]. Enter your keyword(s) or citation search in the red box, or use the fields in the grey box for additional options. The content provided is from Deering’s Advanced Legislative Service.

**Internet**: Current legislative information is available at [leginfo.legislature.ca.gov](http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov). Click on “Bill Information,” and enter the bill number, code section, key words, or other search terms. There are also fields to enter the Session Year, Author, and Code. Click on the search box, then on the results page, click on the bill you are interested in researching. You can read the Legislative Counsel’s Digest and the text of the bill. With a little digging you can find the bill’s history, votes, analysis, and status, compare versions, track the bill, etc.

### California Constitutions

California’s original Constitution of 1849 was replaced by the current Constitution in 1879. However, the 1879 Constitution has been revised and amended several times, most notably in 1966 and 1976, when the state adopted recommendations of the California Constitution Revision Commission.

Volumes including the current edition of the California Constitution are contained in Deering’s California Codes Annotated (KFC 30 .5 .D4 C66 (Compact)), and West’s Annotated California Codes (KFC 30 .W48 Z3).

**Historical**: Older versions of the California Constitution are located in the Historical Collection in compact shelving. The earliest state constitutions are sometimes bound with older editions of the California General Laws, Statutes, at KFC 30 .A2 (Historical).

**Westlaw**: Select the tab [State Materials], and then select [California]. Select [California Statutes and Court Rules] to find links to the Constitution of the State of California 1879, and the Constitution of the State of California 1849, with amendments (superseded by the California Constitution of 1879).

**Lexis Advance**: Go to the “Explore Content” section and select the Tab [State] and select [California]. Scroll down to the heading “Statutes and Legislation” and select [CA-California Constitution]. Contains the Constitution of the State of California as published in the current compilation entitled *Deering’s California Codes Annotated*. For older editions of the California Constitution, on the home page scroll down to the box “Archives” and select [Archived code search]. Enter a citation or keyword(s) search in the red search box at the top of the page. To limit your search to the California Constitution for a year, under the heading “Narrow by” click to check [Constitution]. Then under the heading “Date Year Only” select [in] from the drop down menu, and then enter a year in the box below. Then click on [Jurisdiction] and select [California]. Coverage begins with the *Deering’s California Codes Annotated* Constitution volume from 1991.

REGULATIONS

California Regulations

The California Code of Regulations (CCR), comprised of 28 Titles, contains the regulations of approximately 200 state agencies made available by the Office of Administrative Law (OAL).

The OAL contracts for the official publication of the CCR every five years. Thomson Reuters (West) holds the current contract, and publishes *Barclay’s Official California Code of Regulations*, shelved at KFC 34 .A23 (Ready Reference).

Title 24, the California Building Standards Code, is not published in *Barclay’s Official California Code of Regulations*, but for copyright reasons is published separately by the copyright holder, the California Building Standards Commission (CBSC).

*Westlaw*: Select the tab [State Materials], then [California], then [Regulations], then [California Regulations] for the current CCR. For historical regulations, select on [California Historical Regulations] under the TOOLS & RESOURCES list on the right. Coverage begins in 2002.

*Lexis Advance*: Go to the “Explore Content” section and select the Tab [State] and select [California]. Scroll down to the heading “Administrative Codes & Regulations” and select [CA – Barclays Official California Code of Regulations]. To expand the table of contents, click on the [+] next to the title. To conduct a search of any section(s), click on the search icon on the right and enter keyword(s) or a citation in the red search box at the top of the search page.

*Internet*: The current edition of the CCR (excluding Title 24) is at: ccr.oal.ca.gov.

**California Code of Regulations, Title 24**

The CBSC is the “author” of the various codes (Building, Energy, Fire, Mechanical, Plumbing, etc.) that make up Title 24, the California Building Standards Code. California’s building codes are published in their entirety every three (3) years. These codes are based on Uniform Model Codes that are published (and copyrighted) by the International Conference of Building Officials, the International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials, and other such similar-sounding organizations. California’s official building codes (with the necessary California amendments) are published by the International Code Council (ICC) on a triennial basis.

The current 2016 Code is shelved by the CCR in Ready Reference. Historical editions; back to 1995, are at KFC 35 .A25 (Compact).

*Internet*: The current edition of Title 24 and supplements are available via Internet at: www.bsc.ca.gov.

**California Regulatory Notice Register**

Before an agency can adopt a regulation, the proposed regulation must be published in the California Regulatory Notice Register and a time period for public comment must be provided. The Register contains notices by state agencies to adopt, amend, or repeal regulations, plus public comments and much more. Current and historical issues (6 years) are at KFC 35 .A2 (Compact).

*Internet*: The current year and archives (back to 2009) on the OAL website at: oal.ca.gov/california_regulatory_notice_online/

The Notice Register has been published since 1974. Print access to Notice Registers prior to 2002 may be obtained by contacting the Witkin State Law Library, Stanley Mosk Library and Courts Building, 914 Capitol Mall, Third Floor, Sacramento, CA 95814, (916) 654-0185.

**Lexis Advance:** Go to the “Explore Content” section and select the Tab [State] and select [California]. Scroll down to the heading “Administrative Codes and Regulations” and select [All California Administrative Codes and Regulations]. On the next page, find the heading “California Registers”. Select [CA - California Regulatory Law Bulletin] and to select a year to browse by the table of contents [+], or click on the title and enter keyword(s) or a citation in the red search box at the top of the search page.

## COURT RULES

### California Court Rules

Every court creates its own court rules, which that court must follow. Volumes including the state-wide California Rules of Court are contained in both *Deering's California Codes Annotated* (KFC 30.5 .D4 R8 (Compact), and *West's Annotated California Codes* (KFC 30 .W48 C56). Current editions of federal, state, and local California court rules are kept at the Reference Desk:

**California Rules of Court: State** [KFC 992 .A31](#)

**California Rules of Court: Federal District Courts** [KFC 992 .A32](#)

**Northern California Local Court Rules** [KFC 992 .A21](#)

**Southern California Local Court Rules** [KFC 992 .A2](#)

The Standard California Codes: Rules of Court (includes Rules of Prof. Conduct) [KFC 30.5 .D4 R86](#)

Rules of the Superior Court in and for the County of Sacramento [KFC 993 .A3 S23](#)

Historical: Rules of the Superior Court in and for the County of Sacramento (from 1994) are at [KFC 993 .A3 S23](#)(Compact).

*Deering's California Desktop Code Series*; set includes Rules of Court. Library has 1979-prior year in the Historical Collection in compact shelving at [KFC 30 .5 .D4 C56](#).

**Westlaw:** Select the tab [State Materials], and then select [California]. Under the heading “Statutes and Court Rules” select [California Rules of Court] for current rules. For updates to the court rules, click on [California Rules Update Orders] under the TOOLS & RESOURCES list on the right.

For additional California rules select [California Statutes and Court Rules] for links to current editions of the Bay Area Local Court Rules, Central California Local Court Rules, Los Angeles County Court Rules, Northern California Local Court Rules, and the Southern California Local Court Rules. For Sacramento Superior Court rules, select [Northern California Local Rules] and then under the heading “Sacramento County” click on [Superior Court] to find the local rules and court filing fees.

**Lexis Advance:** Go to the “Explore Content” section and select the Tab [State] and select [California]. Scroll down to the heading “Statutes and Legislation” and select [All California Statutes and Legislation] and scroll down to the heading “Court Rules”. Next select [California Superior Ct. Local Rules] to retrieve a list of California court rules by county. Select the county of interest to browse the table of contents.
For other court rules under the heading, go back to the heading “Court Rules”. Select [CA – Local, State and Federal court rules] to view a list of court rules including the California Rules of Court, Local rules for California District Courts, and the Local and United States Bankruptcy court rules. To search all of these court rules, click on the title and enter keyword(s) or a citation in the red search box at the top of the search page.

Internet: Most current court rules are available on the court’s website. For example, the California Rules of Court are at www.courts.ca.gov/rules.htm, and the Sacramento County Superior Court Local Rules are at www.saccourt.ca.gov/local-rules/local-rules.aspx.

COURT OPINIONS (CASES)

California Supreme Court

California Supreme Court cases are published in three reporters: the official California Reports, and two Thomson Reuters (West) reporters, the California Reporter and the Pacific Reporter.

California Reports is the official reporter. The Library’s collection includes the first series, abbreviated Cal. (1850 - 1934); 2nd series, Cal. 2d (1934 - 1969); 3rd series, Cal. 3d (1969 - 1991); and the 4th series, Cal. 4th (1991 – present), beginning at KFC 45.A21 (Compact).

West’s California Reporter contains West’s headnotes and key numbers, and is tied to West’s California Digest. California Supreme Court cases are reported in the first series, abbreviated Cal. Rptr. (1960 - 1991); 2nd series, Cal. Rptr. 2d (1991 - 2004); and the 3rd series, Cal. Rptr. 3d (2003 - present), beginning at KFC 51.W48 (Compact).

West’s California Digest, covering 1951-1981 KFC 57.W47, and West’s California Digest 2d, covering 1981-present, are located at KFC 57.W471 (Compact).

For information on how to locate a case using West’s Topic and Key Number System in Westlaw, see the “How to Locate a Case Using a Digest” Legal Research Guide on our website at saclaw.org/digests-guide.

Westlaw: Select the tab [State Materials], then select [California], then under the heading “Cases” select [California Supreme Court]. You may browse the most recent cases or search all cases since 1850 in the search box provided above. Once you are in a case, you may choose to view either the official or the National Reporter System version.

Lexis Advance: Go to the “Explore Content” section and select the Tab [State] and select [California]. Scroll down to the heading “Cases” and select [CA Supreme Court Cases since 1850]. Enter keyword(s) or a case citation in the red search box, or use the fields below for other search options.

Internet: The California Appellate Courts Case Information system provides case information for California Supreme Court and Court of Appeal cases. Citable, published, Official Reports Opinions (1850-present) are made searchable online for free by LexisNexis, via a contract with the California Reporter of Decisions at: www.lexisnexis.com/clients/CACourts/.

California Appellate Courts

California Court of Appeals cases are published in the official reporter California Appellate Reports and in West’s California Reporter.

California Appellate Reports is the official reporter. The Library’s collection includes the first series, abbreviated Cal. App. (1905 - 1934); 2nd series, Cal. App. 2d (1934 - 1969); 3rd series, Cal. App. 3d
California Court of Appeals cases are also reported in West's California Reporter in the first series, abbreviated Cal. Rptr. (1960 - 1991); 2nd series, Cal. Rptr. 2d (1991 - 2004); and the 3rd series, Cal. Rptr. 3d (2003 - present), beginning at KFC 51.W48 (Compact).

Westlaw: Select the tab [State Materials], then select [California], then [California Courts of Appeal]. You may browse the most recent cases or search all cases since 1905 in the search box provided. Once you are in a case, you may choose to view either the official or the National Reporter System version.

Lexis Advance: Go to the “Explore Content” section and select the Tab [State] and select [California]. Scroll down to the heading “Cases” and click on [CA Courts of Appeals Cases from 1905]. Enter keyword(s) or a case citation in the red search box.

Internet: The California Appellate Courts Case Information system provides case information for California Supreme Court and Court of Appeal cases. Citable, published, Official Reports Opinions (1850-present) are made searchable online for free by LexisNexis, via a contract with the California Reporter of Decisions at: www.lexisnexis.com/clients/CACourts/.

Advance Sheets or Slip Opinions

The official advance sheets of the California Supreme Court and Courts of Appeal are published by LexisNexis and contain the most recent opinions published by the courts. Often called “slip opinions,” these soft-bound volumes are shelved at the end of the California Reports at KFC 45.A24 (Compact). Published every ten days, the advance sheets are discarded once the appropriate bound volume is received.

Lexis Advance: The California Supreme Court cases are updated regularly as received from the court. The California Court of Appeals cases are updated within 1 day of publication.

The West California Reporter series also includes advance sheets at the end of the set at KFC 51.W482 (Compact). These weekly advance sheets are discarded once the appropriate bound volume is received.

Westlaw is continually updated; occasionally, opinions appear sooner on Westlaw than on the California Court’s official website.

Internet: The official California Courts web site, updated hourly, provides slip opinions from the California Courts of Appeal and the California Supreme Court issued within the last 60 days at www.courts.ca.gov/supremecourt.htm.

ADMINISTRATIVE DECISIONS

Administrative agencies may be established directly by the Constitution, as the Public Utilities Commission, for example, or be created by the Legislature. Agencies may sometimes be called Commissions or Boards. Many California executive and administrative agencies, in addition to promulgating regulations, serve a quasi-judicial function, investigating disputed claims, holding hearings ascertaining facts, making conclusions from the facts as a basis for their official action, and exercising discretion of a judicial nature to reach a binding decision. Most recent agency rulings may be found on the agency’s website.
Westlaw: Select the tab [State Materials], and then select [California]. Click on [California Administrative Decisions & Guidance] to find links to agencies. Then click on the agency name. Approximately 13 agencies are listed. Coverage varies by agency.

Lexis Advance: Go to the “Explore Content” section and select the Tab [State] and select [California]. Scroll down to the heading “Administrative Materials” and select [All California Administrative Materials] to find links to agencies. Then click on the agency name. Approximately 25 agencies are included. Coverage varies by agency.

Internet: In addition to being able to find recent agency rulings on the agency’s website, the Law Library has compiled a list of California agencies with administrative decisions on the Internet at [www.diigo.com/outliner/2qgghl/Administrative-Decisions?key=bxdc9c4319](http://www.diigo.com/outliner/2qgghl/Administrative-Decisions?key=bxdc9c4319). The list is not comprehensive.

**Popular California Agencies**

The Law Library collects the following California agency decisions in print:

**Attorney General Opinions**

Opinions of the Attorney General of California, current and historical.

The Law Library has v. 1 (1944)– current at KFC 780 .A8 C3 (Compact).

**Fair Employment & Housing Commission Decisions**

Precedential Decisions of the California Fair Employment and Housing Commission.


**Legal Ethics Opinions**

Ethics opinions published by the State Bar of California, Committee on Professional Responsibility and Conduct.

The Law Library has the California Compendium on Professional Responsibility and Conduct at KFC 76.5 .C3 C64. The Law Library also has the California State Bar Court Reporter at KFC 76 .5 .A5 (Compact) which contains precedential appellate opinions in California attorney disciplinary and regulatory cases from 1992 to present.

**Decisions of the Public Employment Relations Board (PERB).**

PERB is charged with administering the seven collective bargaining statutes covering California public employees. The Law Library has 2007 to present at KFC 562 .P8 A855 (Compact).

**State Personnel Board Decisions**


**Workers’ Compensation Appeals Board Decisions**

Decisions released by the California Department of Industrial Relations–Workers’ Compensation Appeals Board (WCAB) as well as summaries of petitions for review of WCAB decisions that were denied by the California Court of Appeals.

CALIFORNIA MUNICIPAL CODES

Sacramento City Code
The Law Library has in print at KFX 2263 .A3 S23.

Internet: www.qcode.us/codes/sacramento/
Ordinances passed by the Sacramento City Council from 1921 – present may be researched at: records.cityofsacramento.org/.

Sacramento County Code
The Law Library has the current code in print at KFC 1199 .A35 S215 and some archived copies in Historical.

Internet: www.qcode.us/codes/sacramentocounty/

Center for Sacramento History (CSH):
CSH is a historical research center for the Sacramento region. The Center is the official repository for public documents of enduring value created by the Sacramento City and the Sacramento County governments.

Search the CSH’s online catalog at www.centerforsacramentohistory.org/collections/Catalog or link to public documents from 1849 at www.centerforsacramentohistory.org/collections/public-documents.

Other California Local codes and Charters:
The Law Library has a limited number of other local city and county codes and/or ordinances. To find local codes in print, search the online catalog by the county or city name, for example: enter Yolo county as a general keyword search will retrieve the Yolo County code record in the catalog.

Internet: UC Berkeley maintains a large depository collection of local ordinance codes and charters. Links are provided to electronic versions of these documents, if available, at igs.berkeley.edu/library/california-local-government-documents/codes-and-charters.

Lexis Advance: Has municipal codes published by the Municipal Code Corporation for many, but not all, California counties. Go to the “Explore Content” section and select the Tab [State] and select [California]. Scroll down to the heading “Statutes and Legislation” and select [California Municipal Codes]. On the next page, click on the [+] next to California to retrieve a list of municipal codes. Click on any code of interest to browse or search.

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS GUIDE, OR IF YOU NEED HELP FINDING OR USING THE MATERIALS LISTED, DON’T HESITATE TO ASK A REFERENCE LIBRARIAN