

BOOK REVIEW

Sources of Compiled Legislative Histories: A Bibliography of Government Documents, Periodicals and Books, 1st Congress—94th Congress. (AALL Publication Series No. 14.) NANCY P. JOHNSON, Fred Rothman & Co., Colorado, 1979. 143 Pp. (Looseleaf).

*Review by Ronald L. Brown**

There is hardly a lawyer, law librarian or anyone else who works regularly with federal legislation who has not had the experience of spending numerous hours putting together the details of a legislative history only to find at the end of the search that someone else has already done this leg work. If only one had known beforehand!! This scenario should now be a thing of the past with the publication of Nancy P. Johnson's, *Sources of Compiled Legislative Histories*. . . . The author is the Assistant Law Librarian at the University of Illinois at Urbana—Champaign, College of Law Library.

The need to search legislative background to understand the purposes or intent of a piece of legislation, although controversial among some scholars, is commonplace in most courts and simply cannot be ignored.¹ This volume considers existing works which have already digested and organized the primary documents describing the legislative process behind a federal statute. It also provides information concerning sources that even the most diligent researcher would at times be unable to find. A quick check in this work should be the starting point before one turns to either the primary sources of the Congressional process or their finding aids.

The compiled legislative histories covered in the book come from a broad array of sources, as one can see from the title. The government documents are for the most part committee prints and major studies (reproduced on microfilm) of the Legislative Reference Service/Congressional Research Service, while the books covered range from collections of legislative histories² to those with a single chapter or appendix with legislative source material for a federal law. Thus, it provides a unified index to the contents of multiple legislative histories as well as to the valuable material in this area tucked away in numerous monographs. Although not apparent from the title, the work also draws from microfilm sets, such as IHS Legislative His-

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¹ See generally, DICKERSON, *THE INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION OF STATUTES* (1975) and SUTHERLAND, *STATUTES AND STATUTORY CONSTRUCTION* (4th ed. by Sands 1973), vol. 2A, ch. 48, *Extrinsic Aids—Legislative History*.

² E.g., SCHWARTZ ED., *STATUTORY HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES: CIVIL RIGHTS* (1970).

tories Microfiche Program, and computerized data bases, such as Lexis' legislative history files in its tax and securities libraries. The earliest law review cited is in the very first entry of the work, Warren, *New Lights on the Federal Judiciary Act of 1789*.³

The growing importance of federal legislation in the 20th century is reflected in both the ever-increasing number of entries and the corresponding development of legal writing pertaining to this area. In order to accommodate this growth, the volume is in looseleaf form to facilitate updating. A supplement covering the 94th—96th Congresses is planned.

The organization is tight and clean, making the book easy to use. Entries are by Congress, and within each Congress, by public law number. In addition to an Author index there is a comprehensive Act index listing each entry by its common name with reference then to public law number, so that the user can go directly to a particular entry.

The bibliographic information is designed to offer easy access to the legislative histories in a variety of library settings or through purchase. The main entry information parallels cataloging in most libraries and is especially helpful for government documents, as are the Superintendent of Documents classification numbers. Microfiche coding information is also given for these collections. Although Library of Congress classification numbers are not included, the data offered should lead most users either directly to a shelf location or to the proper place in the card catalog.

For those interested in purchasing an item, the entries themselves contain prices of hardcover books and microfiche. There is also an appendix with publishers' addresses. Complementing these features is a series of lists prefacing the bibliography describing major compilations of legislative histories arranged by publisher.

With each entry is a succinct set of notations which tells the actual documents in each work and whether they are excerpted or produced in full, and covers reports, hearings and debates. Discussion of the history of an act or texts with citations to the pertinent documents only are also noted in this section.

In summary, what has been produced is not only a much needed work for legal research, but one which exhibits a conscious design to facilitate access to materials in a complicated area and which was carried out with thoroughness and care for detail. It will undoubtedly assume a place as a major reference tool in both law libraries and government document sections of academic and public libraries.

³ 37 HARV. L. REV. 49 (1923).