



# HOW TO SEARCH FOR BILLS ON THE LEGISLATIVE WEB PAGE

Legislative Information Center  
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# Searching for Bills on the Legislative Web Page

This tutorial is designed to help you search for and find current and historical bills and bill documents on the Legislature's web site.

There are five basic ways to search for bill histories and documents on the Legislative Web Page:

1. Search by Bill Number
2. Search by Topical Index
3. Search by Keyword
4. Search by RCW Cross Reference
5. Search by Sponsor

All of these methods will return the bill history page which shows where the bill is in the legislative process, as well as a listing of all the documents associated with the bill. For purposes of this document we will assume that you are searching for a bill for the current 2 year biennium although you can search for bills back to 1985.

## FIRST STEP – GET TO THE BILL INFORMATION PAGE

From the Legislature's Home Page ([www.leg.wa.gov](http://www.leg.wa.gov)) click on "Bill Information" in the left hand menu.



This will bring up the Bill History and Information Page as shown below.



## SEARCH BY BILL NUMBER

In the search box on the bill information page enter the 4 digit bill number. There is no need to enter the alphabetic prefix such as SB5200. Then click on the search button and the appropriate bill history page will be returned.

## SEARCH BY KEYWORD

On the bill information page, click on “Search the full text of a bill”. This will open the search engine page as shown below:

Select the database you want to search—in this case the bills from the most current biennium as indicated in the drop-down box—by clicking in the check box next to the database in the green box. You can search multiple biennia by holding down the Ctrl key and clicking on each desired biennium. For general searches of bill information click on “All Bills, memorials, and resolutions”. This will automatically set all the various bill options. If you just click in the “Bills” box you will get all versions of bills except the versions that passed the legislature and the versions that the Governor signed (Session Law). The “Session Law” or “Passed Legislature” boxes must be selected to see these version of the bills.

After selecting the documents and biennia you want to search, enter the keyword(s) you want to search for in the “Search Terms” box and then click on the search button. The search engine uses Boolean logic (combinations of “and”, “or”, “not” and other logic terms) and you can specify a number of Boolean operators in your search (huh?)

Let's work with some examples. Let's say you wanted to find all the bills that had the term **school bus** in them. If you enter **school bus** in the box and then click on search, the search engine treats the space as the Boolean term "AND" and would return every bill that had the term **school** somewhere in it and the term **bus** somewhere in it, although they might not be next to one another. You could also enter **school + bus** and get the same result.

If you only wanted the term **school bus** (with school and bus next to one another) you would place the phrase in quotes—"school bus"

If you wanted only the bills that had the term **school** and not the term **bus** you would enter the phrase **school -bus**

If you wanted bills that had either the term school or the term bus you would enter the the term **School or Bus**

There are also things called wild cards-- the symbols \* and ?. If you wanted to make sure you got the term **buses** as well as **bus** you could enter the term **bus\***. This would tell the search engine to list all the documents that had a word in them that started with **bus** and ended with whatever. This would give us the terms **bus** and **buses**. But it also might give us the term **business**. To avoid this you can use the other wild card and enter **bus??** This tells the search engine to return documents that have words that start with **bus** and has just two more letters and we don't care what those two letters are.

So to Review:

Function	Operator	Example
AND	(space) between words	school bus
OR	Or	school or bus
NOT	(minus) before word	school -bus
Exact phrase	(quotes) around words	"conflict of interest"
Wildcards	(single character) ? (multiple characters) *	bus?? bus*

Totally confused? Just play around with these various combinations and see what results you get back. After a little practice you should get the hang of it. Remember, keyword searches are an art and not a science.

After entering your key words and clicking on the search button, the search engine will return a list of bills meeting the criteria you entered. Scroll down to see the list of bills. At the bottom will be a link to more bills if there are any. They will either be in numerical order or ranked order based on a frequency of occurrence (kind of like Google does) depending on how your preferences are set up. Click on a bill number to open the document. If you open the bill document, the search words will be highlighted in red and you can click on "next term" or "previous term" at the top of the page to navigate your way through the document.

The list can be confusing as every version of every bill will be listed. For example, you may see:

5540; 5540-S; 5540-S.E; 5540-S.E.PL; 5540-SE.SL

Once you learn the scheme it isn't that confusing. In the example above we have:

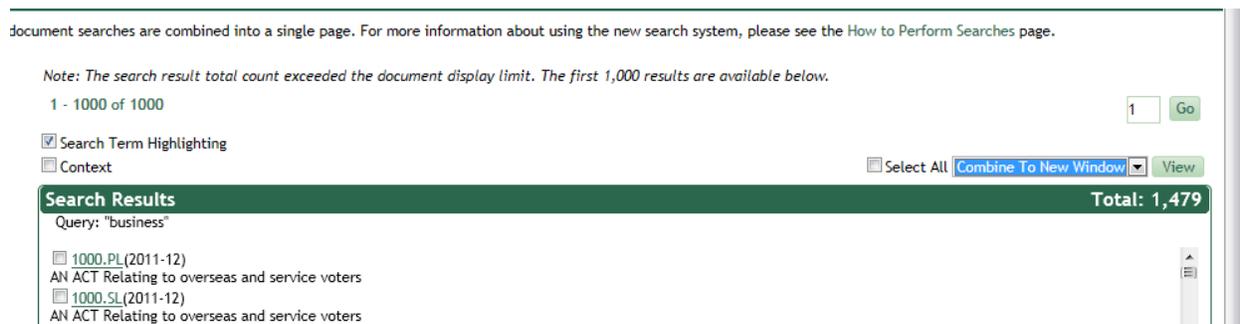
The original bill, the first substitute bill(-S), the substituted and engrossed bill (-S.E), the substituted and engrossed bill that passed the legislature (-S.E.PL), and finally the substituted and engrossed bill that became session law (the version signed by the governor)(-S.E.SL). For more help with this terminology see the following links:

[Help with Abbreviations](#)

[Glossary of Legislative Terms](#)

Also at the top of this page are boxes that turn off the highlighting and set the view to "context" which list the sentences just before and after the keyword you entered. This is useful for really large bills. You can also click the link that takes you to the next document or the previous document. To go back to you list of bills, just click on that link.

If you want to copy the text to a word processing file click in the check box for the bill or bills you want to copy then click on the view button on the right side of the page. This will open up a new window with the text in it. Just right click in anywhere in the window and click on "select all" then right click in the window again and click on "copy". Go to your word processor and paste the text you copied into the word processing document.



You can also print the new window you created by clicking on the print icon on your browser by pressing the Ctrl key and the letter P at the same time on your keyboard.

## PREFERENCES

The preferences section of the search engine allows you to set the list size per page for the returned data, and to limit the number of documents returned. The maximum number of documents that can be returned is limited to 1000 in order to make the search engine operate faster. If the number of documents matching your search is greater than 1000 this will be displayed at the top of the returns page and is an indication that you need to make your search more specific.

ocument searches are combined into a single page. For more information about using the new search system, please see the [How to Perform Searches](#) page.

*Note: The search result total count exceeded the document display limit. The first 1,000 results are available below.*

1 - 1000 of 1000

1 Go

Search Term Highlighting

Context

Select All

**Search Results**

Query: "business"

**Total: 1,479**

The preferences section also lets you list the returned data numerically or by rank and allows to set the word spacing for proximity searches. Proximity searches allow you to search for two different words or phrases within a defined number of words of each other. For example, if I wanted to search for all occurrences of the words school and bus within 5 words of each other, I would set the proximity search in the preferences section to 5 and in the search term I would enter the two word in brackets separated by a space [school bus].

## ZONES

Zones allow you to limit your search to certain pre-defined area of the documents. Some zone areas are effective dates, titles, rcw citation numbers. One example of how you might use the zone relates to the RCWs. If you want to search the RCW for a key word, you would select the RCW database and enter your keyword and click search. But if you wanted to limit that search to just Title 59 of the RCWs you could either include RCW 59 in you keywords or you could open the zones, select citations from the dropdown box and enter 59, then click on search.

## HELP WITH ADDITIONAL SEARCH ENGINE FEATURES.

The Legislature's search engine has many more features and for a more thorough explanation of the features, please click the link below to go to the help manual or call our office at 360-786-7573

[Legislative Help Manual](#)

## SEARCH BY TOPICAL INDEX

From the Bill Information page, click on the Bills by Topical link to get the page below:

Bill Information > Bills By Topic

### Bills By Topic

Select a Search Method:

By Bill Number  By Subject

1000  
1001  
1002  
1003  
1004

By Letter: **ALL #** [A](#) [B](#) [C](#) [D](#) [E](#) [F](#) [G](#) [H](#) [I](#) [J](#) [K](#) [L](#) [M](#) [N](#) [O](#) [P](#) [Q](#) [R](#) [S](#) [T](#) [U](#) [V](#) [W](#) [X](#) [Y](#) [Z](#)

Continue

With the “By Bill Number” button selected, if you select a bill number and click continue, the resulting page will list all the topical headings associated with that bill. Generally, however, you are going to want to press the “By Subject” button to begin searching all the topics in the index.

You can do this one of three ways:

1. Click the down button on the scroll bar until you find the topic you are interested in.
2. Click on the letter in the list to open the topical index at that letter then scroll down until you find the topic you are interested in.
3. Begin typing a subject name. As you type, the topic choice will be the first one that matches what you have typed so far. As you add more letters the topic will continue to match the letters. When you see the topic you want just click on it to go to that topic in the topical index. When you have found what you want be sure to scroll down just a few to make sure there isn't another topic spelled similarly.

TIP #1: Once you are in a topic, you can use the find feature on your browser (or CTRL F or CMD F) to enter a keyword or two and then click on the find arrows to browse through the results until you find the bills you are interested in

TIP #2: If you can't think of a topic the bill might be listed under, you can click on the word “ALL” where the letters of the alphabet are listed and this will return the entire topical index. You can then use the find function on your browser to search for key words. It may take a minute or so for the entire topical index to appear.

Within the topical index bills are listed alphabetically by title with the bill numbers underlined. Clicking on the underlined bill number will take you directly the bill history page for that bill. Bill numbers that are bolded and having an asterisk indicate that the bill has become a law and will also have the appropriate chapter number indicated. For example, \* **SHB 1485, CH 199 (2011)**.

## SEARCH BY BILL/RCW CROSS REFERENCE

If you know that the bill you are searching for will most likely codified into a specific RCW you can search by RCW. For example, most bills about public schools will be codified into RCW 28A. Public meeting laws will be part of RCW 42.56. So if you want to find all the bills that pertain to public meetings, simply click the Bill/RCW Cross Reference on the bill information page, select the RCW to Bill tab, then enter the RCW citation (in this case 42.56)

Bill Information > Bill to Law Cross Reference

### Bill/RCW/Session Law Cross Reference - 2011-12

[All Cross Reference Tables](#)

**Bill to RCW**   **RCW to Bill**   **Bill to Session Law**

RCW Citation:   
Full (1.08.010) or beginning of citation (1.08. or 1)

All Bills  Passed  Not Passed   
Partial Veto:  Vetoed:  Signed:

You can also narrow down your choices by selecting all bills, bills that passed the legislature, bills that had partial vetoes and so forth.

## SEARCH BY SPONSOR

If you know who the sponsor is of the bill you are looking for but don't remember the bill number, you can get a list of all the bills for an individual sponsor and then visually look through the list for the bill you are interested in. The get bills by sponsor start from the bill information page, and click on Detailed Legislative Reports. From the resulting page click on "bills by sponsor" and then fill out the resulting form as shown below:

WASHINGTON STATE LEGISLATURE  
**Detailed Legislative Reports - Bills by Sponsor**  
DLR Home | Legislature Home | Senate | House of Representatives | Basic Search | Help

Home | Bill History | Bill Tracking | Docs | Bill Sponsors | Roll Calls | BI/OC | Topical Index | Selected Step

**Quicklinks Current Session**

- \* Schedules/Agendas
- \* Cutoff Calendar
- \* House Floor Activity Rpt.
- \* Senate Floor Activity Rpt.

**Documents**

- \* Prefiled Bill Lists
- \* House Introduction Lists
- \* Senate Introduction Lists
- \* Initiatives
- \* Standing Committee Reports
- \* Ethics Opinions

**External Links**

- \* Attorney General Opinions
- \* Executive Orders
- \* OFM Fiscal Notes

**Select Sponsor Type:**  
 House  Senate  Committee  Requester

**Type or Select a Sponsor:**  
Asay  
Ahern  
Alexander  
Anderson  
Angel  
Appleton

**Select a Report Type:**  
 Primary Bills  Secondary Bills  All Bills

Show only those bills by the selected sponsor that have companion bills.

Select House or Senate or Requester., scroll down to the person you want, select primary, secondary or all bills and press "Continue".

The list of bills for that sponsor and their current status will be displayed as shown below. The data can be sorted by the various headings by clicking on the heading, and can be printed or exported to an Excel or Word file.



 WASHINGTON STATE LEGISLATURE  
**Detailed Legislative Reports - Bills by Sponsor**  
[DLR Home](#) | [Legislature Home](#) | [Senate](#) | [House of Representatives](#) | [Basic Search](#) | [Help](#)

[Home](#) | [Bill History](#) | [Bill Tracking](#) | [Docs](#) | [Bill Sponsors](#) | [Roll Calls](#) | [BI/OC](#) | [Topical Index](#) | [Selected Step](#)

[New Search](#)
[Print List](#)
[Export Data](#)
[Log in to use Custom Report Views](#)

Date Options

**Primary Sponsored Bills by Brown: (2011)**

Page 1 (Rows 1-13 of 13)    Page Size

<input type="checkbox"/>	Bill	Flags	Title	Status	Veto	Date	Original Sponsor
<input type="checkbox"/>	SB 5172	Docs	Child care for employees	C 78 L 11		04/15/2011	Brown
<input type="checkbox"/>	ESSB 5449	Docs f	Stolen info technology	S Rules 3		04/22/2011	Brown
<input type="checkbox"/>	SB 5494	Docs f	Plan 3 retirement systems	S Rules 3		04/22/2011	Brown
<input type="checkbox"/>	ESSB 5749	Docs f	College tuition GET program	C 12 L 11 E1	PV	06/06/2011	Brown
<input type="checkbox"/>	SSB 5795	Docs	Higher ed child care grants	S Rules X		03/16/2011	Brown
<input type="checkbox"/>	SSB 5846	Docs f	Retired public employees	S Rules 3		05/25/2011	Brown
<input type="checkbox"/>	SJM 8008	Docs a	Unemployment tax relief	S Filed Sec/St		04/22/2011	Brown
<input type="checkbox"/>	SCR 8401	Docs	Adjourning SINE DIE	S Filed Sec/St		04/22/2011	Brown
<input type="checkbox"/>	SCR 8402	Docs	Bills/house of origin	S Filed Sec/St		04/22/2011	Brown
<input type="checkbox"/>	SCR 8403	Docs	Bills/house of origin	S Filed Sec/St		05/25/2011	Brown
<input type="checkbox"/>	SCR 8404	Docs	Adjourning SINE DIE	S Filed Sec/St		05/25/2011	Brown
<input type="checkbox"/>	SR 8623	Docs	YMCA	S Adopted		02/28/2011	Brown
<input type="checkbox"/>	SR 8625	Docs	Senator Margarita Prentice	S Adopted		02/22/2011	Brown

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Total count: 13

a Amended. \$ Appropriation bill. f State fiscal note on file. d Department.  
 e Governor. b Joint Legislative Audit & Review Committee. o Other. # Local fiscal note on file.

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**Options for Checked Items:**

Combine to Browser (HTM)     Combine to Acrobat (PDF)  
(Official Copy)

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[Legislative Home Page](#) | [DLR Help](#) | [Help with Abbreviations](#)

## RESEARCHING BILLS FROM PREVIOUS BIENNIA

All the tools described above for searching for bills from the current session can be used for searching the two previous bienna (4 years worth). It is simply a matter of selecting the appropriate tab on the Bill Information Page:

WASHINGTON STATE LEGISLATURE  
Legislature Home | Senate | House of Representatives | Contact Us | Search | Help

Bill Information Print Version | PDF

**Bill Information**

Historical bill information from 1991 to 2006 can be accessed from [Detailed Legislative Reports](#).

2011-12      2009-10      2007-08

**Search by Bill Number**  
[Search] [Search] [x]

[Search the full text of a bill](#)

**Standing Committee Reports**  
Retrieve daily lists (during session) of bills reported out of standing committees.

**Bill/RCW/Session Law Cross Reference**  
Retrieve tables that cross reference bills with RCW sections and Session Law chapters.

**Bill Status Report (formerly Daily Status)**  
Retrieve a list of all bills and their current status.

**Detailed Legislative Reports**  
Find bills and related information by [sponsor](#), [committee](#), [RCW citation](#), [roll call](#), and [stage](#) in the legislative process.

**Legislative Digests**  
Retrieve summaries of the bills introduced and amended on the selected day.

**Prefiled Bills**  
Retrieve lists of the bills prefiled in the House and Senate. Available in December.

**Bill Tracking**  
Create personalized lists of bills you wish to track through the 2011-12 legislative process.

**Bills By Topic**  
Find bills by subject as organized in the Topical Index prepared by the Code Reviser's Office.

**Senate Floor Activity Report**  
Retrieve the Senate Calendar and link to bill text, amendments, bill histories, and roll call votes.

**House Floor Activity Report**  
Retrieve the House Calendar and link to bill text, amendments, bill histories, and roll call votes.

**Senate Introductions (latest) All Intros**  
Lists the bills to be introduced in the Senate today.

**House Introductions (latest) All Intros**  
Lists the bills to be introduced in the House today.

## SEARCHES FOR BILLS PRIOR TO THE LAST TWO BIENNIA

For bills by number, bills by sponsor, or bills by topic you can get data back to 1991 by using the Detailed Legislative Reports from the Bill Information Page

From the Bill Information page click on Detailed Legislative Reports and then select “Bill Summary” if you know the bill number, “bills by sponsor”, or “topical index” for bills by topic. On the resulting page select the biennium you want from the far right hand side of the screen, then enter the other requested information as required.

WASHINGTON STATE LEGISLATURE  
Detailed Legislative Reports - Bill Summary  
Legislature Home | Senate | House of Representatives | Basic Search | Help

Home | Bill History | Bill Tracking | Docs | Bill Sponsors | Roll Calls | BIOC | Topical Index | Selected Step

Bill Number: [ ] [Continue]

List documents before history  
 Open documents in a new window

Biennium: 2011  
2009-10  
2007-08  
2005-06  
2003-04  
2001-02  
1999-00  
1997-98  
1995-96  
1993-94  
1991-92

For keyword searches on bills back to 1985, click on Detailed Legislative Reports on the Bill Information page and then select “Search (Documents)”. This will take you the search engine that searches by keyword as described beginning on [page 3](#). You can enter previous years in that search engine back to 1985.