

## **INFORMATION RESOURCES**

### **155. What is the Office of the Federal Register?**

The Office of the Federal Register was established in 1935 by the Federal Register Act and is administered by the National Archives and Records Administration. It is responsible for the periodic publication of laws or acts of Congress, Presidential documents, regulations which Federal agencies have issued under authority delegated by Congress, and the U.S. Government Manual (official handbook of the Federal Government). Laws consist of both public laws, which have general applicability in the society, and private laws, which normally affect a particular individual or organization. Each Act of Congress is numbered and published upon enactment in slip law or pamphlet form; and they are cumulated for each session of Congress in the U.S. Statutes at Large. Regulations of Government agencies, Presidential proclamations, and Executive orders having general applicability and legal effect are published in the Federal Register, which appears usually five times a week. All regulations currently in force are published in codified form in the Code of Federal Regulations, which is updated annually. Presidential speeches, statements, messages, and other materials made public by the White House are published currently in the Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents and annually in the Public Papers of the Presidents. The U.S. Government Manual provides information on Federal agencies as well as on quasi-official agencies, on international organizations in which the United States participates, and on boards, committees, and commissions.

### **156. What kinds of documents are published in the Federal Register?**

Four types of documents must be published in the Federal Register before they are considered legally binding: (1) Presidential proclamations and Executive orders of general interest, and any other document the President submits or orders to be published; (2) every document issued under proper authority, which prescribes a penalty or course of conduct, confers a right, privilege, authority, or immunity, or which imposes an obligation relevant or applicable to the general public, members of a class of people, or persons of a locality; (3) documents or classes of documents required by act of Congress to be filed and published; and (4) other documents deemed by the Director of the Office of the Federal Register to be of sufficient interest. These materials are reproduced in the Federal Register under one of the following sections: (1) Presidential Documents; (2) Rules and Regulations; (3) Proposed Rules; and (4) Notices. Al-

though the Federal Register is unknown to many citizens, it constitutes a major means of regulating and governing the United States.

**157. What are the other responsibilities of the National Archives?**

Statutorily chartered in 1934, the National Archives, headed by the Archivist of the United States, maintains the historically valuable records of the Federal Government, including materials dating from the Revolutionary War era to the recent past. Its staff arranges and preserves Federal records and prepares inventories, guides, and other finding aids to facilitate their use by Government personnel, scholars, and the public. Its collections are available for use in research rooms in all of its facilities, and copies may be purchased. Most of the historically valuable records in the agency's custody are maintained in facilities in the Washington, DC, area. Records that are primarily of regional or local interest, however, are maintained in 11 Regional Archives; and there are, as well, nine specialized Presidential libraries which are managed by the National Archives.

**158. What are these Presidential libraries and where are they located?**

The Presidential libraries managed by the National Archives began with President Franklin D. Roosevelt, but the current program was established with the Presidential Libraries Act of 1955. Under the terms of this law, a former President or heirs might purchase land, usually near the former President's birthplace or hometown, erect a library edifice, place his papers and records in it, and deed the facility to the Federal Government. These libraries and their holdings are open to both scholars and the public. Presidential libraries have been established for Herbert Hoover (West Branch, IA), Franklin D. Roosevelt (Hyde Park, NY), Harry S. Truman (Independence, MO), Dwight D. Eisenhower (Abilene, KS), John F. Kennedy (Boston, MA), Lyndon B. Johnson (Austin, TX), Gerald R. Ford (Ann Arbor, MI), Jimmy Carter (Atlanta, GA), and Ronald Reagan (Simi Valley, CA). A Richard M. Nixon Presidential library has been built (Yorba Linda, CA), but it is a private facility and has not been deeded to the Federal Government. The Nixon Presidential records, however, remain in Washington, DC, due to a special 1974 act of Congress placing them in the custody of the Archivist. A library also has been planned for George Bush at Texas A&M University in College Station, TX.

**159. Are there libraries across the United States that regularly receive copies of Federal Government publications as they are produced?**

Many years ago, Congress recognized the desirability of making Government publications available to the public. The depository library program was created by Congress in order to promote the American public's awareness of the activities of their Government. Under this program, which is administered by the Superintendent of Documents of the Government Printing Office, nearly 1,400 libraries throughout the country receive Federal Government publications free of charge, and, in return, pledge to provide free access

to all library patrons. Depository libraries are designated by law, by the Superintendent of Documents, and by Members of Congress. The Superintendent prepares lists of documents that are available to the depositories; and they, on the basis of patron interest, select publications for their collections. A congressional Member's office, a Federal information center, or a local reference librarian can usually help to identify the locations of depository libraries.

**160. What is a Federal information center?**

The Administrator of the General Services Administration, a Federal agency, was authorized by Congress in 1978 to establish a network of Federal information centers for the purpose of providing the public with information about the programs and procedures of the Federal Government. Residents of more than 70 key cities have direct access to a center via local telephone service, and toll-free service is available in a few States. A list of Federal information centers with their addresses and telephone numbers may be found in the U.S. Government Manual.

**161. What special information resources may be found at the Library of Congress?**

Statutorily mandated in 1800, the Library of Congress is both a library for Congress and for the Nation. Its vast multimedia holdings, universal in scope, include books, papers, maps, prints, photographs, motion pictures, and sound recordings. Among them are the most comprehensive collections of Chinese, Japanese, and Russian language books outside Asia and the Soviet Commonwealth of Independent States; volumes relating to science and legal materials outstanding for American and foreign law; the world's largest collection of published aeronautical literature; the most extensive collection in the Western Hemisphere of books printed before 1501 A.D.; and manuscript collections relating to manifold aspects of American history and civilization, and including the personal papers of the Presidents from George Washington through Calvin Coolidge. No introduction or special credentials are required for persons over high school age to use the general reading rooms; special collections, however, may be used only by those with a serious purpose for doing so.

**162. How may someone get access to unpublished Federal records that are still in agency files?**

Enacted in 1966, the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) statutorily established a presumptive right of the people to know about the activities and operations of the Federal departments and agencies. The law provides any person, individual or corporate, regardless of nationality, with access to identifiable, existing agency records without having to demonstrate a need or even give a reason for such a request. The burden of proof for withholding material sought by the public is placed upon the Government. The law specifies nine categories of information, including certain law enforcement records, confidential business information, and properly classified national security documents, that may permissibly be exempted from the rule of disclosure. Disputes over the accessibility of requested records may be ultimately settled in Federal court.

**163. How is a request for records made under the Freedom of Information Act?**

A request for records under the Freedom of Information Act should be made by letter indicating as specifically as possible what is being sought. State that you are using the FOI Act. This letter should be sent to the Federal agency or agencies thought to possess the desired records. The lower left-hand corner of the envelope should be marked "FOIA Request." If a special form is needed to process your request, it will be sent by the agency. An access professional from the agency may telephone to clarify the request or discuss responsive materials. You may also appeal if the original request is denied.

**164. Must a fee be paid to make a Freedom of Information Act request?**

There is no fee to make a FOI Act request. Nonetheless, an individual, who is not making a request for records for commercial, scholarly, or news media use, may be asked to pay reasonable standard charges only for document search and duplication. The law states, however, that in the case of an average individual's request, the first 2 hours of search time or the first 100 pages of duplication shall be provided free of charge. No agency may require advance payment of any fee unless the requester has previously failed to pay fees in a timely fashion, or the agency has determined that the fee will exceed \$250. The law also has a public interest standard allowing the waiving of fees in whole or in part.

**165. Will the Freedom of Information Act allow access to one's own personal records on file with a Federal agency?**

The FOI Act provides any person with presumptive access to topical agency records. Personal access to one's own records is more effectively pursued under the Privacy Act. It provides presumptive access for U.S. citizens and permanent resident aliens to their own personal records on file with most Federal agencies. The law specifies certain categories of information, such as on-going criminal investigation records, that may be exempted from its rule of disclosure. In the event an individual finds such personal records to be erroneous, a supplemental correction may be placed in the file. Access requests under the Privacy Act are made in the same manner as FOI Act requests. The request envelope should be marked "Privacy Act Request."

**166. What kinds of documents and publications are produced by Congress?**

Congress produces various kinds of publications in the course of conducting its work. The daily Chamber activities and events of the House of Representatives and the Senate are recorded and published in the Congressional Record. When the committees and subcommittees of each House of Congress hold hearings on legislation, to examine some matter, or, in the case of the Senate, to consider a nomination or treaty, a transcript of these proceedings is made and is later usually published. Studies and other supplemental materials aiding the hearing process are sometimes published as so-called

committee prints. House and Senate reports, sequentially numbered, usually result when a committee completes action on legislation, concludes an investigation, or, in the case of the Senate, votes on a nomination or treaty. Other auxiliary materials of importance to each congressional Chamber, such as Presidential messages or official submissions by congressional officers, may be published as House or Senate documents, another sequentially numbered series. Finally, proposals introduced by Representatives and Senators are published as bills and resolutions.

The Congress produces many other publications, such as the Congressional Directory, the primary source of information on the Congress. Other include the Congressional Pictorial Directory, How Our Laws Are Made, Our Flag, The Capitol, The Constitution, Rules and Manual of the United States Senate, Jefferson's Manual and the Rules of the House of Representatives, high school and college debate books, and other historical documents.

**167. Where are these congressional publications available?**

All Members receive a limited allotment of most congressional publications and documents. Committees also maintain a limited supply of hearing transcripts, committee prints, reports, documents, bills and resolutions. The House and Senate each have a document room which is open to the public where bills, reports, public laws and certain documents may be where bills, reports, public laws and certain documents may be obtained free of charge. Some congressional publications and documents are available for purchase from the Superintendent of Documents of the Government Printing Office (GPO). Also, the GPO operates 24 regional bookstores in 16 States and the District of Columbia. Original or microform copies of the items may also be found, to varying extents, in major public libraries, Federal depository libraries, and university and law libraries throughout the United States.

**168. How may someone obtain access to unpublished records of Congress?**

The Congress routinely transfers their non-current unpublished official records, consisting mostly of committee files, to the Center for Legislative Archives of the National Archives. Senate records are available there for 20 years after they are created, although some are opened earlier by action of the committee that created them. House records become available 30 years after their creation, with permission from the Clerk of the House. A small group of House and Senate records involving national security or personal privacy issues remain closed for 50 years. The National Archives published guides that provide full descriptions of these valuable collections.

The office files of individual Senators and Representatives are considered their personal property. Most Members donate their papers to a historical research institution in their home state. Guides to the locations of these papers are available from the House and Senate historical offices.

**169. What is the correct form for letters to elected Federal officials?**

**CORRECT FORM FOR LETTERS**

**PRESIDENT**

The President  
The White House  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Very respectfully,

**VICE PRESIDENT**

The Vice President  
Old Executive Office Bldg.  
17th St. & Pennsylvania Ave. NW.  
Washington, DC 20501

Dear Mr. Vice President:

Sincerely,

**SENATOR**

The Honorable —  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator —:

Sincerely,

**REPRESENTATIVE**

The Honorable —  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. (Mrs. or Ms.) —:

Sincerely,