



AGRICULTURAL LAW AND TAXATION BRIEFS

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL AND CONSUMER ECONOMICS, UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

ACCESSING FEDERAL STATUTES AND REGULATIONS FROM THE GPO WEBSITE

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Synopsis: This article describes how to access federal statutes published in the UNITED STATES CODE (U.S.C.) and federal regulations published in the CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS (C.F.R.) using the Government Printing Office Access website.

I. Introduction

Scope. This article describes how to access federal statutes and regulations in the UNITED STATES CODE (U.S.C.) and the CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS (C.F.R.) from the Government Printing Office Access website (<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/>). Accessing and reading the federal statutes and regulations can provide useful information but is not a substitute for legal advice. If any area of the law is of special interest to the reader and legal counsel is needed, the reader should discuss the specific situation with his or her attorney.

General Background. Generally, a bill becomes a public law when proposed legislation is passed by congress and signed by the president. Public laws are compiled in the UNITED STATES CODE, grouped under different “Titles.” For example, laws dealing with “Agriculture” are compiled in Title 7, laws dealing with “Conservation” in Title 16, “tax laws” in Chapter 26 (also known as the Internal Revenue Code), and “Labor” in Title 29.

A statute may be quite specific, providing all the detail sought by the reader, or a statute may be more general and mandate that further details be developed by a federal agency and published in the CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS. As a result, accessing a federal statute may provide all the information the reader is seeking *in some circumstances*. In other circumstances, the reader will need to examine the applicable federal regulations to find the detail desired.

For example, a statute codified in Title 16 (Conservation) of the UNITED STATES CODE (a) directs the Secretary of Agriculture to establish a wetlands reserve program and (b) provides general guidelines for the program. Details about the program (e.g., specific program requirements, application procedures, etc.) were developed by the Secretary and published in the CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS, Title 7 (Agriculture), Part 1467 (Wetlands Reserve Program).

This article provides practical guidance regarding how to access both federal statutes and federal regulations using the U.S. Government Printing Office Access website. Note that both statutes and regulations have the force and effect of law.

Additional Resources. The Government Printing Office Access website provides a portal to a variety of other federal legislative, executive, and judicial resources, including the status of proposed legislation. You can review these resources by browsing the Government Printing Office Access website. Also, the *Thomas* website (<http://thomas.loc.gov/>) of the Library of Congress is an excellent resource for accessing federal legislative information. However, detailed guidance for using these additional resources is beyond the scope of this article.

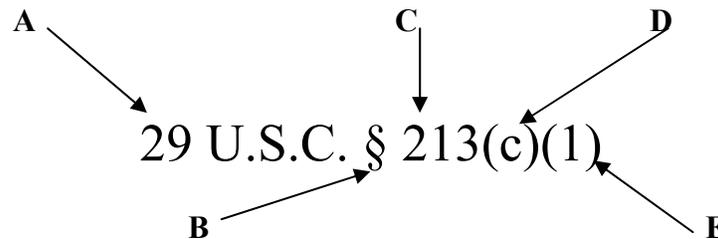


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II. Accessing the United States Code Using the United States Government Printing Office Website

Sometimes a person wants to access a particular statute in the United States Code and has a *specific citation*. Other times, a person may know the *name of the statute* or *key words*. The following two examples illustrate how to find the federal statute in these situations. These examples will use a section of the Fair Labor Standards Act that deals with the exemptions from the child labor provisions of that act [citation: 29 U.S.C. § 213(c)(1)], but first it will be helpful to describe the different components of the citation.



- A (29) is the title number
- B (§) is the symbol for “section”
- C (213) is the section number
- D (c) is the subsection
- E (1) is a further subsection

Example 1: Finding a Statute in the United States Code if you know the Citation:

Step 1: Using your computer, go to the Government Printing Office Access Home Page (<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/>); then click the link for “United States Code” located near the center of the page under “Legislative Resources.”

Step 2: In the search box, enter the citation (title and section only) without spaces or punctuation (in this example you would enter 29usc213), and click “submit.”

Step 3: Click the link for “text” under “29USC Sec. 213. Exemptions”

Step 4: Scroll down to the appropriate subsection (in this example, (c)(1)).

Example 2: Finding a Statute in the United States Code by Name or Key Word:

Step 1: Using your computer, go to the Government Printing Office Access Home Page (<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/>); then click the link for “United States Code” located near the center of the page under “Legislative Resources.”

Step 2: In the search box, enter the name of the Act (in this case “Fair Labor Standards”), and click “submit.”

Step 2ALT [if you only know key words]: enter the key words into the box (in this case you could enter “child labor” AND “agriculture” AND “exemptions”), and then click “submit.”

Step 3: Scroll down to find “29USC Sec. 213. Exemptions” (for the author, it was result #30 for Step 2 and result #2 for Step 2ALT, but it could be different for you) and click the link for “text.”

Step 4: Scroll down to the appropriate subsection (in this case, (c)(1)).



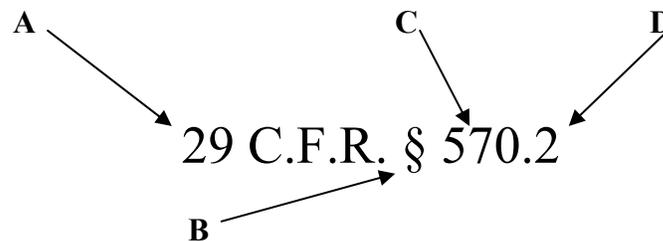
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Important Note: When searching the UNITED STATES CODE by key words, be as specific as possible. Key word searches return a list of statutes that contain the terms searched. The Government Printing Office website limits searches of the UNITED STATES CODE to 40 results. Therefore, a broad search will not likely return the specific statute you are looking for.

III. Accessing the Code of Federal Regulations Using the United States Government Printing Office Website

For the following two examples, we will be using a section of the Child Labor Regulations, Orders and Statements of Interpretation that deals with Minimum Age Standards [citation: 29 C.F.R. § 570.2].



A (29) is the title number

B (§) is the symbol for “section”

C (570) is the part number

D (2) is the section number

Example 3: Finding a Federal Regulation if You Know the Citation:

Step 1: Using your computer, go to the Government Printing Office Access Home Page (<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/>); then click the link for “Code of Federal Regulations” located near the center of the page under “Executive Resources.”

Step 2: Click on “Retrieve CFR by Citation” located under “1996 through current year.”

Step 3: In the appropriate boxes, enter the citation (in this case, 29 under title, 570 under part and 2 under section), and click “go.”

Example 4: Finding a Federal Regulation by Name or Key Words:

Step 1: On the Government Printing office Access Home Page (<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/>), click the link for “Code of Federal Regulations” located near the center of the page under “Executive Resources.”

Step 2: In the search box, type in the name without punctuation (in this case, “Child Labor Regulations Orders and Statements of Interpretation”), and click “submit.”

Step 2ALT [if you only know key words]: Enter the key words into the search box (in this case, “minimum age standards and child labor regulations and agriculture”), and click “submit.”

Step 3: Scroll down to find “29CFR570-- PART 570 CHILD LABOR REGULATIONS, ORDERS AND STATEMENTS OF INTERPRETATION” (for the author, it was result #52 for Step 2 and result #27 for Step 2ALT, but it could be different for you), and click “text.”

Step 4: Scroll down to section 2.



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Important Note: When searching the CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS by key words, be as specific as possible. Key word searches return a list of regulations that contain the terms searched. The Government Printing Office website limited searches of the CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS to 120 results. Therefore a broad search will not likely return the specific regulation you are looking for.

IV. Practice Exercises Using the GPO Website

The following exercises provide an opportunity to practice on your computer the search techniques illustrated in Examples 1-4 above, using the Government Printing Office Access Home Page (<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/>).

Exercise 1: Find the following federal statute – 7 U.S.C. § 228b [This is an example of a statute that provides considerable detail. For example, 7 U.S.C. 228b(a) provides that “[e]ach packer, market agency, or dealer purchasing livestock shall, before the close of the next business day following the purchase of livestock . . . , deliver to the seller . . . the full amount of the purchase price”]

Exercise 2: Find the provision in the United States Code that requires packers and stockyards to hold funds in a statutory trust to assure payment to the livestock producer. [Suggestion: Use the key words “packers and stockyards” AND “statutory trust” in your search. After browsing, you will find a statute, 7 U.S.C. § 196(b), that provides considerable detail.]

Exercise 3: Find the following Regulation – 7 C.F.R. § 658.1 [You will see that the regulation sets out the criteria developed by the Secretary of Agriculture as required by section 1541(a) of the Farmland Protection Policy Act, 7 U.S.C. 4202(a). The regulation also requires federal agencies to use the criteria to identify and take into account the adverse effects of their programs on the preservation of farmland.]

Exercise 4: Using key words, find the Federal Regulation defining a “cash lease” for purposes of sharing direct and counter-cyclical payments of the farm program between a landlord and a tenant. [Suggestion: Use the key words “cash lease” AND “direct and counter-cyclical payments” AND “sharing contract payments” in your search. After completing your search, you will see that the key definition is found at 7 C.F.R. § 1412.504(a)(2).]

V. Accessing State Statutes, Etc.

What if I’m looking for a state law, rather than a federal statute? Many states have websites that provide access to state statutes, etc. For guidance about how to access the Illinois Compiled Statutes, see http://www.farmdoc.uiuc.edu/legal/articles/ALTBs/ALTB_05-03/ALTB_05-03.pdf.

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