Research Tip – Alaska Session Laws

I. What Are Session Laws

Session laws are the body of statutes enacted by a legislature during a particular session. When bills are passed, they are assigned chapter numbers in the chronological order in which they were passed. For example, the first bill to become law in a given year becomes Chapter 1, the second bill becomes Chapter 2, and so on.

At the conclusion of the legislative session, all the session laws of that year are compiled, in chronological order, as the Session Laws of Alaska. When the session laws from all legislative sessions are organized by subject, they become the codified Alaska Statutes.

Session laws are particularly important for legislative history research, because we use the session law to determine the bill number. We can then use the bill number to find the rest of the legislative history materials.

II. Citations

To determine the session law for a given statute, you will first need to look at the statute’s credit line. Session laws are identified by section, chapter, and year.

For example, the credit line for AS 11.41.100 reads: § 3 ch 166 SLA 1978; am § 1 ch 67 SLA 1988; am § 3 ch 54 SLA 1999; am § 3 ch 92 SLA 2002.

“SLA” stands for Session Laws of Alaska and “am” denotes an amendment.

Thus, the credit line for this statute shows that the statute was originally enacted in 1978 in § 3 of Chapter 166 (§ 3 ch 166 SLA 1978). As mentioned above, the chapter numbers are assigned in chronological order over the course of the legislative session, so this was the 166th session laws from the 1978 legislature. The credit line also shows you that the statute was subsequently amended in 1988 (am § 1 ch 67 SLA 1988), in 1999 (am § 3 ch 54 SLA 1999), and most recently in 2002 (am § 3 ch 92 SLA 2002).

III. Where to Find Alaska Session Laws

A. HeinOnline (1913 – previous year)

HeinOnline’s Session Laws Library includes Alaskan session laws back to 1913 and the 1st territorial legislature.

From the homepage, select the “Session Laws Library” and then “State Session Laws” from the expanded menu.
You can then either use the Session Laws Quick Locator if you have a citation.

Or, select Alaska from the list of states to browse all available session laws. From the Alaska-specific page, you can search for keywords within the session laws, navigate directly to a session laws with the Quick Locator, or browse by legislative session.
B. **Westlaw** (1990 – current year)

1. **Current Year**

   Session laws from the current legislative session are available on Westlaw from the “Proposed & Enacted Legislation” database.

   From the homepage, select Proposed & Enacted Legislation then choose Alaska.
To view the session laws, select Enacted Legislation (Session Laws) and then the current year.

You can then run a search or browse all sessions.
2. **Historical** (1990 – previous year)

Westlaw also has historical session laws available, back to 1990. From the Alaska Proposed & Enacted Legislation page, select Alaska Historical Session Laws from the menu on the far right side of the page.

You will then be able to search for the session law.
C. BASIS (1993 – current year)

Session laws from 1993 through the current year are available on the Alaska Legislature’s website through BASIS.

1. Current

To find session laws from the current legislature, go to akleg.gov, hover over Bills & Laws, then hover over Session Laws & Resolves, then select the desired year. Two years will be available due to the timing of the legislative sessions.

You can then browse and view all the session laws from your chosen session.
2. **Historical (1993 – previous year)**

You can view session laws from past legislative sessions on BASIS by hovering over Bills & Laws and then selecting Past Legislatures (Archives).

Select the appropriate legislative session from the list. After selecting the session, you will then be able to view the session laws from those years.
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D. Infobases (1981 – current year)

Session laws from 1981 through the current year are also available from the Alaska Legislature’s website through Infobases.

To get to Infobases, use the Quick Link at the very bottom of the Legislature’s homepage.

Alternatively, you can get to Infobases by hovering over Bills & Laws, selecting Past Legislatures (Archives), and then Infobases (1982-1992).

From Infobases, scroll down to the Session Laws & Resolves section and then select 1981 – Previous Year Session Laws.
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To view session laws, click the plus sign (+) next to the desired year. This will open a list of all session laws from that year. Use the arrow buttons or the page numbers at the top of the screen to navigate.

E. Print

The Session Laws of Alaska are available in print at the Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Juneau Law Libraries. Contact library staff for assistance.

IV. Further Information

For more information, or for assistance with legislative history research, contact Ashley Stewart at astewart@akcourts.us or (907) 264-0583.