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From Abbeville to Zebulon: Resources for the Georgia Legal Researcher

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**From Abbeville to Zebulon:
Resources for the Georgia Legal Researcher**

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From Abbeville to Zebulon: Resources for the Georgia Legal Researcher

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From Abbeville to Zebulon: Resources for the Georgia Legal Researcher

I. Introduction

Georgia legal researchers have an impressive array of useful law-related materials available on the web. This paper focuses on freely-available material, but a few especially useful fee-based resources also merit inclusion.

II. Georgia Statutes and Legislative Materials

Researchers can easily access free current versions of the Georgia code along with current and past legislative documents. This section points researchers to reliable resources for these materials along with tools for tracking pending legislation.

Current Georgia Code

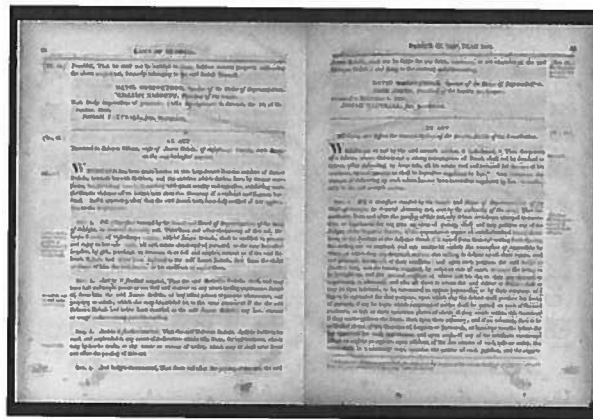
<https://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/gacode/>

Lexis provides free access to an unannotated version of the current Georgia Code. The Code is arranged by title and is also searchable. Note that the search box defaults to search Titles only, but researchers may search full text as well. Both “natural language” and “terms and connectors” searching are available. The site works with most current browsers but does require that cookies, Java script and pop-ups be enabled.

Historic Georgia Digests and Codes

http://digitalcommons.law.uga.edu/ga_code/

The Alexander Campbell King Law Library provides this digitized collection of the laws of Georgia beginning "from its first establishment as a British province" through the Code of 1933 which remained in effect until 1981.



Screen shot from *1812 Compiled Laws*

Georgia Legislation

<http://www.legis.ga.gov/Legislation/en-US/Search.aspx>

The Georgia General Assembly provides access to legislation, whether enacted or not, from the 1995-1996 legislative session to the current session. The site's advanced search capability is available from the 2001-2002 session to present. This allows the researcher to search in a variety of ways, including by legislator name, committee, Georgia Code Title, bill type, bill number and by keyword. The "Signed by Governor" link in the left column provides access to legislation signed

by the governor from 2000 to present. Also useful is the “General Statutes Summary” dating back to 2003. This contains a summary of the general statutes of state-wide application which were enacted during each session of the General Assembly of Georgia. No resolutions, local Acts, or uncodified population Acts” are included. The document also includes a table of Code sections amended and enacted during each session.

Historic Georgia Legislative Documents

The Digital Library of Georgia provides access to historic enacted legislation in two separate collections:

- **Georgia Legislative Documents**

(<http://www.galileo.usg.edu/express?link=zlg1>) This site includes a nearly comprehensive collection of digitized Acts and Resolutions from **1799-1999**. The collection is searchable by keyword, publication date, and type of act or resolution. Researchers who possess a citation to session laws in the official publication *Georgia Laws* can also search by session year and page number.

- **Georgia Government Publications**

(<http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/ggp/?Welcome>) The PDF versions of Acts and Resolutions from 2000 to present are included in this site which also serves as a digital repository of publications released by agencies of Georgia's executive branch. Look for the “Georgia Laws, 2000-present” linked in the lower right column.

Bill Tracking

- **Georgia General Assembly**

<http://www.legis.ga.gov/Legislation/en-US/default.aspx>

The “Tracking A Bill Through the General Assembly” site explains the legislative process in Georgia, which can be useful in determining which documents a researcher should seek.

- **Georgia Legislative Navigator**

<http://legislativenavigator.myajc.com/>

Provided by the Atlanta Journal Constitution, the Legislative categorizes bills by topic, and the AJC staff highlight legislation deemed to have the most significant impact on the general public. Links to lawmakers show bill sponsorship, recent votes, committee assignments and top campaign donors. Information in the tool is updated daily during the 40-day legislative session. An admitted work-in-progress, the Georgia Legislative Navigator is working on a “Predict-A-Bill” tool, which calculates the chances that a bill will pass.

- **Open States**

<http://openstates.org/ga/>

Open States allows researchers to follow bills, track lawmakers and stay up to date on legislative activity in all 50 states. The site is free, but bill tracking requires a quick registration process.

Legislative History

The Georgia General Assembly does not publish transcripts of its floor debates or committee reports, although the Georgia Archives includes some committee reports (see http://www.georgiaarchives.org/research/legislative_intent for accessing legislative materials at the state archives). A few resources do exist, however, to assist researchers seeking to compile a legislative history on Georgia legislation:

- **Georgia General Assembly**

<http://www.legis.ga.gov/Legislation/en-US/default.aspx>

Look for amendments to a piece of legislation as it moves through the legislative process. Similarly, review the session laws: often, a bill's preamble will include a statement of purpose. Comparing versions of the statute if it has been amended may be useful.

- **Georgia State University Law Review's Peach Sheets**

http://scholarworks.gsu.edu/do/search/advanced?q=document_type%3Apeachsheet&start=0&context=806485&sort=score

Georgia State University Law Review covers selected Georgia legislation in peach-colored pages in every fall issue. The "Peach Sheets" include analysis of the bills, relevant floor debate, personal interviews, and newspaper articles.

- **Lawmakers**

<http://www.gpb.org/lawmakers>

Georgia Public Broadcasting's GPTV provides detailed analysis of each day's legislative sessions on the program "Lawmakers." Archived versions of the television show are available from the site, 2009 – present.

- **Georgia House and Senate Journals**

<http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/ggp/>

The Georgia Government Publications database provides access to the Georgia House and Senate Journals (look for links to both in lower right column). The Journals do not include transcripts or the text of bills, but they do provide the text of *amendments* to bills, which might be instructive. In addition, the Journals provide votes, committee actions, amendments, and sponsors.

III. Georgia Case Law

- **Georgia Supreme Court**

<http://www.gasupreme.us/>

The Court provides access to its opinions from the current and prior year only and includes the following disclaimer regarding the online version: "These opinions are subject to the parties' motion for reconsideration, the Court's reconsideration, and editorial changes made by the Reporter of Decisions."

The court also posts videos of oral arguments for the current term only at <http://www.gasupreme.us/court-information/oral-arguments/> but will sell DVDs of archived oral arguments.

- **Georgia Court of Appeals**

<http://www.gaappeals.us/>

The Court of Appeals makes some of its opinions available via its Search Docket database at <http://www.gaappeals.us/docket/index.php> where researchers can search by party name, docket number, lower court case number, or date range.

The docket database currently contains case information for cases from 2003 to present with opinions and orders available from mid-2012 to present.

- **Google Scholar**

<https://scholar.google.com/>

Currently, Google Scholar allows you to search and read published opinions of US state appellate and supreme court cases since 1950, US federal district, appellate, tax and bankruptcy courts since 1923 and US Supreme Court cases since 1791. In addition, it includes citations for cases cited by indexed opinions or journal articles which allows you to find influential cases (usually older or international) which are not yet online or publicly available. Google Scholar's case law database also provides a citator function by providing links to all cases citing the subject case.

- **Public Library of Law**

<http://www.plol.org/>

In addition to providing cases from the U.S. Supreme Court and Courts of Appeals, this free database includes cases from all 50 states back to 1997.

IV. Georgia Court Rules

<http://www.gasupreme.us/rules/>

The Georgia Supreme Court provides a one-stop shop for Georgia court rules here, with access to its own rules along with those of the Georgia Court of Appeals and the uniform rules of the Georgia Superior, State, Juvenile, Probate, Magistrate and Municipal courts.

V. Georgia Regulatory Materials

- **Current Regulations**

<http://rules.sos.state.ga.us/home.aspx>

The Secretary of State posts the current Georgia regulations on its site. The rules database can be browsed by title or can be searched by citation or keyword. Per the site, it is “updated continuously as new and amended rules are filed with the Office of the Secretary of State of Georgia.”

The site also sets forth a fee schedule for scanning and certifying copies as well as an hourly research fee (payable in advance).

- **Proposed Regulations**

Georgia eliminated the print version of the *Georgia Register* in 2006, when it directed the Georgia Technology Authority to provide an electronic version of the *Georgia Register* containing notices of proposed rules, agency meetings, all rules adopted during the period, executive orders, summary of state contracts and RFPs, all Attorney General Opinions, and more. See O.C.G.A. 50-25-6. As of

publication of this paper, no such register could be found; however, the Secretary of State does offer for sale the *Monthly Bulletin*, which is a compilation of all rules filed and all rules effective in any particular month.

At present, the best way to identify proposed regulations is to check the relevant agency sites. A list of state agencies with links to their individual sites is available at <http://georgia.gov/agency-list>. Note that not all agencies post information about proposed rules and regulations; however, for an example of Georgia state agency providing excellent access to information about proposed regulations and its rulemaking process, see the Georgia Environmental Protection Division at <https://epd.georgia.gov/proposed-rules>, which provides the text of the proposed rules along with dates for hearings and board actions, public comments deadlines, responses to comments, and final board action.

VI. Georgia Attorney General Opinions

- **Georgia Attorney General site**

<http://law.ga.gov/opinions/official>

The Georgia Attorney General's site provides both official and unofficial opinions dating back to 1993. The opinions are arranged in reverse chronological order and can also be searched by opinion number or by word in the full text.

- **Georgia Government Publications in the Digital Library of Georgia**

<http://www.galileo.usg.edu/express?link=ggpd>

Some older Georgia Attorney General opinions are available in the Digital Library of Georgia. Use the Advanced Search function, entering “Georgia. Office of the Attorney General” in the author field. Select Annual Reports from the faceted results as the Annual Reports included opinions issued during that year for many years.

VII. Local Codes

- **Municode**

<https://www.municode.com/library/ga>

Many Georgia county and city codes can be accessed in Municode. Free access allows the researcher to search one code at a time. Searching across multiple codes simultaneously requires a subscription. Check the “updated date” in the banner information for each code to determine currency.

- Individual municipalities may provide online access to their own codes, or information about recent updates that might not have been provided yet to Municode.

VIII. Forms

- **Georgia Administrative Office of the Courts**

<http://www.georgiacourts.org/georgia-courts/court-forms?menu=main>

This site provides forms for use in the:

- Superior Courts

- Juvenile Courts
 - Probate Courts
 - Inmate/Habeas actions
 - Domestic Violence/Protective Order actions
 - Statewide Domestic Relations cases
- **Georgia Superior Court Clerks' Cooperative Authority**

<https://www.gsscca.org/file>

The GSSCCA site provides many forms, including the following:

- civil reporting
- fines & fees
- family violence
- UCC

Researchers should also check individual court and agency sites for additional approved forms.

IX. Other Helpful Sites

- **Fastcase**

<http://fastcase.com>

The subscription database Fastcase is included here because it is currently available without charge to all members of the Georgia Bar. Fastcase contains primary law, including cases, statutes, regulations, court rules and constitutions,

from all 50 states and the federal government. Georgia Bar members can also use Fastcase to access archives of the *Georgia Bar Journal*, select law journals from Georgia law schools, and federal agency administrative decisions.

Access Fastcase through the state bar at <http://www.gabar.org/>, then choose Attorney Resources. The site also provides information about training for the database. Mobile apps for iPhone, iPad and Android phones are all available.

- **Georgia Government Portal**

<http://georgia.gov>

The Georgia.gov site links to sites for state agencies, counties and local governments. Under the Popular Topics tab, look for information on how to perform a number of common tasks, including “Applying for A Business License” and “Changing Your Name.”

- **Open Georgia**

<http://www.open.ga.gov/>

With the motto “Transparency in Government,” Open Georgia provides access to information and key documents about how the State of Georgia spends tax dollars and other revenues to provide services to Georgians. The information maintained on this site comes from various state agencies and is updated annually. Look here to find:

- salaries and travel reimbursements paid to state employees;
- payments, obligations and professional services expenditures made by state organizations;
- key reports related to the State of Georgia’s budget and finances;

- performance reviews of state entities; and
- SPLOST reports.
- **Georgia Secretary of State Corporations Division**
<http://sos.ga.gov/> (follow Corporations link at top of page)
This site provides online registration and filing, forms and filing fees.
Use the Business Search database (<https://ecorp.sos.ga.gov/BusinessSearch>) to access a Georgia entity's information of record with the Secretary of State.
- **Georgia Superior Court Clerks' Cooperative Authority**
<https://www.gscca.org/search>
This well-organized and useful site provides access to UCC, real estate and lien filings from all Georgia counties. Access to the database requires setting up an account and payment, for a monthly fee, a one-time fee or for free limited use. The monthly fees currently are \$11.95 for a regular account and \$24.95 for a premium account providing additional searching options. The one-time fee is \$5.00 for four consecutive hours of use. The no-fee limited use account allows researchers to search the Deed, Lien, Plat, and UCC indexes and view summary information for each instrument; however, limited use account holders cannot view or print images.