Research Guide to DC LAW

This guide provides users with information on selected resources on DC legal research available at the Judge Kathryn J. DuFour Law Library or publicly accessible through the Internet. The Library’s online Catalog, Columbia, Maryland and Virginia, 2d ed. (Reference and Reserve KFD1275 C47 2000). Please note that LexisNexis® and Westlaw® provide full-text coverage of many of the resources listed below. L and W indicate availability on these databases respectively.

1. DC Case Law
The DC judicial system includes the DC Court of Appeals and the DC Superior Court. Reported decisions of the DC courts are collected in the following publications:

- **Atlantic Reporter** (4th floor)1943-present: An unofficial reporter for DC Court of Appeals (also included are cases from other regional state courts, e.g. Delaware, Maryland, etc.) W
- **Daily Washington Law Reporter** (4th floor) (KFD1269.D3)1960-present: An unofficial reporter for the DC Superior Court that selectively publishes DC Superior Court and DC Court of Appeals decisions. L
- Lexis has DC Court of Appeals cases from Nov.1942 and DC Superior Court cases from 2001. L
- DC Court of Appeals web site. DC Court of Appeals decisions from mid-1998 are available in PDF on the Internet at [http://www.dcappeals.gov/dccourts/appeals/opinions_mojs.jsp](http://www.dcappeals.gov/dccourts/appeals/opinions_mojs.jsp)
- Note: Because DC did not gain home rule until 1971, DC cases from 1802 until 1971 were adjudicated in various Federal courts. For more information on court names and how to locate cases prior to 1971 please consult Legal Research in the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia, 2d ed. (Reference and Reserve KFD1275 C47 2000)

2. Case Indexes and Digests:
The following publications can be used to locate DC case law:

- **District of Columbia Digest 2d (West)** (KFD1257 D4) (4th floor): This Key Number product provides indexing to cases interpreting DC Law. W
- **Atlantic Digest 2d (West)** (1943- )4th floor: This Key Number digest includes DC cases as well as those in nearby jurisdictions, e.g. Delaware, Maryland, etc. W
- **Shepard's District of Columbia Citations** (KFD1259.S55) (4th floor): Use this source to check DC case history and treatment. L
- **DC Official Code** (West) (KFD1230 2001.A22) (multiple locations): Provides references to cases interpreting or discussing DC law. See discussion of this source below. W
- **Daily Washington Law Reporter**: Provides a digest for the selected cases it publishes. The digest provides the case name, a brief description, and a DWLR page citation.

3. Court Rules, Forms, Jury Instructions:

- **DC Court Rules Annotated (Lexis)** (KFD1729.A193) (Multiple locations): This annual publication includes rules for the various state and federal courts in DC. L
- **DC Court Rules Service (Rules Service Company)** (KFD1729.A2 D57) (Multiple locations): A one-volume manual containing rules and forms for state and federal DC courts.
- **DC Rules of Court (West)** (KFD1230.A22) (Multiple locations): This annual 2 vol. set includes rules and forms for the DC Superior Court and DC Court of Appeals. W
- Internet: DC Court of Appeals current, proposed and superseded rules and selected court forms are available at [http://www.deca.state.dc.us/dccourts/superior/civil/forms.jsp](http://www.deca.state.dc.us/dccourts/superior/civil/forms.jsp) and DC Superior Court rules and forms are available at: http://www.dcs.gov/dccourts/superior/admin_order/rules.jsp
- Selected DC forms can be purchased at the Washington Law Reporter Company (202) 331-1700.
- **Standardized Civil Jury Instructions for DC** (Reserve KFD1742.6.A65 B37): Includes forms. L
- **Criminal Jury Instructions for DC** (Reserve KFD1783.A65 B3): Includes forms. L
4. The Constitution and Statutory Law of The District of Columbia

The first DC constitution was adopted in 1776. In 1982 The Constitution of The State of New Columbia was ratified and in 1987 it was enacted into law. The current version can be found in the District of Columbia Official Code (KFD1230 2001.A22 v.1) (Multiple locations). However, because DC has not yet been granted statehood, this Constitution is not yet in effect. L W

The District of Columbia Official Code (KFD1230 2001.A22) (multiple locations): This multi-volume set includes a subject arrangement of all the laws currently in effect and provides case annotations, basic legislative history of the original statute and its amendments, and references to relevant law review articles. This set is updated by pocket parts and The Advance Code Service. The un-annotated version is available at http://www.dccouncil.washington.dc.us/dcofficialcode.

District of Columbia Statutes- at- Large (3rd Floor Media Center) contains the official language of all DC session laws from 1975-1986. Session laws or statutes are Acts arranged chronologically rather than in a subject or code arrangement. All session laws are initially published in the DC Register. For most recent DC statutes, see The DC Register or the DC Council website http://www.dccouncil.washington.dc.us (1990 – present). Another source for statutes is the District of Columbia Session Law Service (KFD1230 2001.A22) (4th floor). DC statutes are also available in full text through HeinOnline (1986-present). L W

5. Legislative History

Compiling the legislative history for a state law is much more challenging than at the federal level. The best sources for DC Legislative History are as follows:
• The DC Official Code (KFD1230 2001.A22) (multiple locations): This set provides an historical and legislative history note at the end of each section. Superseded code volumes are available on the 4th floor in the superseded section. W
• The DC Council Legislative Services Division: This office keeps many useful documents, including bill files, committee reports and taped hearings. The office is open to the public Monday through Friday from 9:00AM to 5:30PM. Researchers are advised to call in advance to set up an appointment (202) 724-8050.
• DC Council web page at http://www.dccouncil.washington.dc.us: this site provides bill tracking, full text bills, videos of hearings and other useful materials for legislation dating from 1999 to present.
• Lexis and Westlaw offer bill histories, committee reports and voting records from 1999 to present. L W

6. Administrative Law of DC

The following publications can be used to locate DC regulations:
• D.C. Municipal Regulations (DCMR): This is the official version of the 31 titles of the DC administrative Code. The DCMR is available at http://www.os.dc.gov.
• DC Administrative Code (Weil) (Reserve KFD1235.A23): This unofficial edition is better indexed, easier to use and updated more often than the official paper version. L W
• DC Register, List of Sections Amended (KFD12335.A2) (1971-2008) (4th floor): Issued weekly, this title publishes proposed regulations as well as changes or updates to existing regulations. Please note: regulations issued or changed after 2008 are available online at http://www.os.dc.gov. L W

7. Secondary Sources of DC Law

The District of Columbia Practice Manual (DC Bar Association) (Reserve KFD 1281.D522): Organized by practice area, this is an essential resource on all aspects of legal practice in DC. L W


Law Reviews and periodicals: The DuFour Library periodical collection includes a large number of titles that cover DC law. Unbound current issues are shelved on Reserve; bound issues are shelved on the main floor (aisles 214-234). To locate articles within periodicals use Legaltrac® or Index to Legal Periodicals® (both are available on our home page). Many journals are also available through HeinOnline and L and W.