

5 Things You Can Find in a Legislative Journal

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Related Categories: Legislative process

[Texas Constitution art. III § 12](#) directs each chamber of the legislature to keep a journal of its proceedings for each legislative day during session. Daily journals are compiled and indexed following a session, and these bound volumes become what we know as the House and Senate Journals.

House and Senate journals can be a valuable source of information for research. Though they usually do not contain a transcript of debate, they do have other information that's helpful. Here are five examples:

1. Reason for vote or statement of legislative intent: On some occasions, a reason for vote or a statement of legislative intent will be recorded in the journal. A reason for vote is usually listed in the index as "Vote, reason for, by" or "Reasons for Vote, By." A statement of legislative intent can usually be found as "Legislative intent, statement of." [Here's an example](#) of a reason for vote from the Senate Journal for the 31st Legislature (see pg. 7 of the pdf). To see what a statement of legislative intent looks like, see pg. 14 of [this pdf](#).
2. Record votes - If you want to see how a legislator voted on a particular bill at a particular stage in the legislative process, check the bill history to see if a record vote was taken. A record vote is a list of each member's vote on a particular motion or measure.
3. Speeches - Sometimes the text of speeches will be included in the journals. As an example, see pg. 11 of [this pdf](#) for the text of a speech by Ross Perot when he visited the Legislature in 1971. To find speeches, look in the index for "Address by, text of" or a variation of that.
4. Bill authors and bill histories: The standard appendices in most journals will include a list of bills by author as well as the history of bills and resolutions in the House and Senate. The history contains a list of actions on a bill and is helpful if you want to see if a record vote was ever taken.
5. Messages from the Governor - Governors submit a variety of messages to the legislature during the course of a session. You can usually find these listed in the index under "Governor, Messages From."

The Library has a [large collection of House and Senate journals on its website](#), as well as a comprehensive collection of the hardbound volumes. We've also made all of the journals of the Republic of Texas [available online](#). For help finding information in a journal, please contact the library at (512) 463-1252.