



# Primary Sources (Menanteaux)

by Bob Menanteaux

A "primary authority" can be simply defined as a statement of the law made by a branch of government. In the case of the legislative branch, primary authority takes the form of statutes. Cases, on the other hand, emanate from the judicial branch while regulations are the product of administrative agencies which generally come under the executive branch. "Secondary authority," by contrast, offers explanation and commentary on the law by scholars and practitioners. This type of source helps to more fully understand the application of the law to a specific problem.

This guide is designed primarily for non-law students of Seattle University who have an occasional need for a regulation, statute, or case. Using this guide will help you decipher abbreviations, identify materials and locate them in the Seattle University Law Library. Students can also avail themselves of the [Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe](#) option available through Lemieux Library. Click on "Databases" from the Lemieux front page and again on "Lexis-Nexis" to use this service. Selected [federal materials](#) are available on the Web and the law library's Web page is a good place to start. A similar page for [Washington state](#) cases, statutes, and regulations makes them easy to find.

NOTE: The locations provided below are to the Seattle University Law Library. The number and letter locators are to the floor and range (e.g. 2A means floor two, range A). Reserve is located on the second floor.

Questions regarding the content of this page should be directed to Bob Menanteaux.

## Locating Statutes

### Federal Statutes

Most statutes are cited with the number of the title given first, followed by an abbreviation for the set (in this example, the United States Code), and closing with the section, e.g. 33 U.S.C. 1251 (Clean Water Act of 1977). The U.S. Government publishes the *United States Code*. You may, however, find it easier to use one of the commercially-produced versions such as *United States Code Service* or the *United States Code Annotated*. Either one will provide the identical code text plus citations to cases which interpret and apply a specific section.

*United States code annotated*. St. Paul, West Pub. Co., 1927-  
Location: 2B (Abbreviation: U.S.C.A.)

*United States code service*. Charlottesville, VA : Lexis Pub. Co., 1972-  
Location: 2B (Abbreviation: U.S.C.S.)

## State Statutes

Typically, citations to Washington State statutes are given as RCW 23.110.010 with the first number indicating the title, followed by the chapter and section numbers respectively. As with their federal counterpart, the official version exists in the *Revised Code of Washington* (RCW). Two commercially-published sets make it easy to obtain both the statutes as well as the cases which interpret them. The titles and locations of these sets are given below.

*Annotated revised code of Washington*. Charlottesville, Va. : Michie Co., 1994-  
Location: 2A, 3A (Abbreviation: A.R.C.W.)

*West's Revised code of Washington annotated*. St. Paul, Minn. : West Pub. Co., 1961-  
Location: Reserve (Unclassified), 2A, 3A (Abbreviation: R.C.W.A.)

## Locating Cases

### Federal Cases

All case citations are written in a manner similar to this example, 698 F.3d. 982. The first number is the volume of the set (698), followed by the title abbreviation (in this example, Federal Reporter, Third Series) and concluding with a number that represents the first page of the case (982). All federal cases are found on the third floor of the library. The titles and abbreviations of the basic federal sets are given below along with the courts that they cover.

*United States Reports*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1806- .  
Coverage: United States Supreme Court. Additional titles such as *United States Supreme Court Reports, Lawyer's Edition* (L.Ed.) or *Supreme Court Reporter* (S.Ct.) are commercially published and provide the identical text to the official U.S. Reports.  
Location: 3C (Abbreviation: U.S.)

*The Federal reporter*. St. Paul : West Pub. Co., 1880- .  
Coverage: Case law of the United States Court of Appeals for all circuits (Washington is included in the ninth circuit). It is now in its Third Series.  
Location: 3B (Abbreviation: F.)

*Federal supplement*. St. Paul : West Pub. Co., 1933- .  
Coverage: Decisions of the United States District Courts. This title recently began its Second Series.  
Location: 3A (Abbreviation: F. Supp.)

### State Cases

The vast majority of state courts only publish cases decided by their intermediate and highest appellate courts. The officially published case sets for Washington are given below. A national system of regional reporters also reprints our state cases. For example, Washington State cases

are found in the Pacific Reporter in addition to the official sets. The table of abbreviations for the regional reporters located at this end of this guide will help you decipher these citations.

*Washington Reports*. Seattle: Bancroft-Whitney 1889- .  
Coverage: Decisions of the Washington State Supreme Court.  
Location: 2B, 3A (Abbreviation: Wash.)

*Washington appellate reports*. [Olympia], 1969- .  
Coverage: Decisions of the Washington State Court of Appeals.  
Location: 2A, 3A (Abbreviation: Wash. App.)

*The Pacific reporter*. St. Paul : West Pub. Co., 1884- .  
Coverage: This is one of a series of regional reporters. This particular title includes Washington as well as the appellate case law of the contiguous states. It is now in its second series.  
Location: 3D (Abbreviation: P.)

## **Locating Administrative Regulations**

Regulatory agencies are created by a delegation of authority from a legislative body. This authority gives the agency the power to issue regulations which govern the discharge of their day to day responsibilities. Examples of such agencies include the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Washington State Department of Ecology. Regulations issued by agencies have the force of law.

### **Federal Administrative Regulations**

*Code of federal regulations*. Washington, D.C. : Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Service, General Services Administration ; distributed by U.S. G.P.O. This set represents the codification of Federal administrative law. Citations to this set are given as 23 C.F.R. Part 583.1 where the first number is the title, followed by the abbreviation for the set and closing with the specific part (or section) number.  
Location: 2C (Abbreviation: C.F.R.)

### **State Administrative Regulations**

*Washington Administrative Code*. [Olympia, Wash.] : Statute Law Committee. This is Washington's counterpart to the Code of Federal Regulations. Citations are given as WAC 173-170-010, where 173 represents the title, 170 the chapter, and 010 the section .  
Location: 2A, 3A (Abbreviation: W.A.C.)

## Table of Abbreviations

(\* Number denotes series)

Abbreviation	Title
A., A. 2d.*	Atlantic Reporter
ARCW	Annotated Revised Code of Washington
Cal. Rptr., Cal. Rptr. 2d.	California Reporter
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
F., F.2d., F.3d.	Federal Reporter
F. Supp., F. Supp. 2d.	Federal Supplement
N.E., N.E. 2d.	North Eastern Reporter
N.W., N.W. 2d.	North Western Reporter
N.Y.S., N.Y.S. 2d.	New York Supplement
P., P.2d.	Pacific Reporter
RCW	Revised Code of Washington
RCWA	Revised Code of Washington Annotated
S.E., S.E. 2d.	South Eastern Reporter
S.W., S.W. 2d., S.W. 3d.	South Western Reporter
So., So. 2d.	Southern Reporter
U.S.	United States Reports
U.S.C.	United States Code
U.S.C.A.	United States Code Annotated
U.S.C.S.	United States Code Service
WAC	Washington Administrative Code
Wash., Wash. 2d.	Washington Reports
Wash. App.	Washington Appellate Reports

*Updated: January, 2007*