



William Taylor Muse Law Library
University of Richmond School of Law

Research Guide : Virginia Materials

Introduction

The Law Library has an extensive collection of materials specific to the Commonwealth of Virginia. Most of these resources are shelved with the state materials on the first floor of the library under the KfV call number. This guide briefly addresses resources involving Virginia case law, statutory law, administrative materials and legislative history. For more detailed information, please see *A Guide to Legal Research in Virginia* (6th ed. 2008) [available at the Circulation Desk at KfV2475 .G84 2008].

Virginia Case Law

Published opinions can be located using the following resources:

Virginia Reports [KfV2445 .A2]

- official reporter for Virginia Supreme Court decisions

Virginia Court of Appeals Reports [KfV2448 .A2]

- official reporter for decisions of the Virginia Courts of Appeals

South Eastern Reporter (1st and 2d series) [with National Reporter System]

- unofficial or regional reporter containing decisions for the Virginia, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and West Virginia courts of appeals and supreme courts

Virginia Circuit Court Opinions [KfV2451.1957 .V57]

- collects certain cases of first impression and additional cases in the areas of procedure, corporation law, environmental law, and the Uniform Commercial Code.
- selected opinions of the general jurisdiction trial courts
- circuit court opinions are of limited precedential value and typically unpublished

Federal Supplement and Federal Reporter

- federal courts may apply Virginia state law or discuss issues of unresolved Virginia law
- such opinions, while not binding authority, may be used as persuasive authority
- federal cases are generally found in the *Federal Supplement*, which reports cases of the United States District Courts and the *Federal Reporter*, which reports cases of the United States Courts of Appeals

Virginia Lawyers Weekly [Journal .V5795 1]

- weekly legal newspaper, helpful for up-to-date coverage of Virginia law
- available online at <http://valawyersweekly.com/>

West's Virginia and West Virginia Digest [KFV2457 .V5]

- topical arrangement of legal issues settled in Virginia and West Virginia court cases

Shepard's Virginia Citations [KFV2459 .S5 1995] and ***Shepard's South Eastern Reporter Citations*** [shelved with the South Eastern Reporters]

- may be used to verify if reported Virginia cases are still good law and to locate other cases which have discussed or interpreted a certain opinion

Michie's Jurisprudence [KFV2465 .M5]

- Virginia and West Virginia legal encyclopedia providing references to case law.
- text includes a summary of the law on a particular subject and footnotes refer the researcher to source material

Virginia Statutory and Constitutional Law

The Virginia Constitution is the primary source of authority for all Virginia state law. The most recent revision of the 1776 constitution was ratified by voters in 1970 and became effective on July 1, 1971. The text of constitution is most easily located in volume 1 of the Virginia Code.

Code of Virginia 1950 [KFV2430 1950 .A25] or ***West's Annotated Code of Virginia*** [KFV2430 1950 .A4]

- the best resources for locating Virginia statutory law
- statutes arranged by subject matter into titles and sections
- sections followed by case annotations, a brief explanation of the legislative history of the original statute and amendments and cross references to related statutes and law review articles

Acts of the General Assembly [KFV2425 .A21]

- contains the official language of all Virginia statutes
- upon the conclusion of each session of the General Assembly all enacted legislation is compiled into the *Acts of the General Assembly*, arranged by chapter number in order of passage
- *Acts* include indexes to new acts by subject and code provision affected

Legislative History

Compiling a legislative history of a Virginia law is a difficult task. No official or comprehensive publication collecting materials such as the text of bills, committee reports, or transcriptions of legislative debates for Virginia legislation exists. It is often not possible to compile a complete legislative history. The Virginia Division of Legislative Services Legislative Reference Center's guide to Virginia legislative history materials at <http://dls.state.va.us/lrc/leghist.htm> is often the best starting point.

Virginia Administrative Law

The General Assembly empowers a number of state agencies, departments, boards and commissions to implement and enforce state law with the promulgation of rules and regulations.

Virginia Register [KFV2436 .V5]

- published bi-weekly including proposed and final state rules and regulations
- useful for tracking the history of a regulation or updating regulations modified since the date of the administrative code's most recent supplement

Virginia Administrative Code [KFV2435 .A2]

- official compilation of all rules and regulations presently in effect
- organized by subject matter into 24 titles
- updated bi-annually
- specific regulations located using either the code's comprehensive index or a conversion table providing references from the *Virginia Register*
- includes historical notes about each regulations adoption and amendment, citations to cases and Attorney General Opinions interpreting or applying the regulation, cross-references to related statutes and regulations and references to relevant legal encyclopedia or law review articles
- must be updated by checking (1) main volume of *Administrative Code*, (2) latest supplement of *Administrative Code* and (3) *Virginia Register*
- *Virginia Administrative Code* at <http://leg1.state.va.us/000/srr.htm>

Opinions of the Attorney General. [KFV2840.A553]

- official written advisory opinions on issues of Virginia law when formerly requested by the governor, a member of the General Assembly, a state court judge, the State Corporation Commission, a Commonwealth's Attorney or county attorney or other designated government officer
- *Annual Report of the Attorney General of Virginia* compiles such opinions
- recent opinions are available on the Internet at <http://www.oag.state.va.us/>

Workers' Compensation Opinions: [KFV2735.W6]

- collected in the *Opinions of the Virginia Workers' Compensation Commission* (formerly the Opinions of the Industrial Commission of Virginia)
- claimant and defendant indexes as well as a subject index-digest to reported opinions in each volume

Virginia Websites

The following websites are available to the public at no charge. They contain both full text of documents and abstracts that may be useful in researching Virginia issues.

Virginia Constitution: <http://legis.state.va.us/Laws/search/Constitution.htm>

Code of Virginia: <http://legis.state.va.us/Laws/CodeofVa.htm>

Virginia Administrative Code: <http://leg1.state.va.us/000/srr.htm>

Virginia Register of Regulations:
<http://legis.state.va.us/codecomm/register/regindex.htm>

Virginia Judicial System: <http://www.courts.state.va.us/main.htm>

Virginia Lawyers Weekly: <http://valawyersweekly.com/>

Fourth Circuit: <http://www.ca4.uscourts.gov/>

Virginia General Assembly: <http://legis.state.va.us/>

Virginia Attorney General: <http://www.oag.state.va.us>

Virginia State Agencies, Boards, Commissions and Councils:
<http://www.agencydirectory.virginia.gov/>

State Corporation Commission: <http://www.scc.virginia.gov/>

Secondary Sources

The following materials are Virginia-specific secondary sources and are recommended as a starting point for research endeavors.

Annual Survey of Virginia Law: <http://lawreview.richmond.edu/archive/>

General Assembly in Review: <http://rjolpi.richmond.edu/archive.php>

Virginia Forms Series [KFV2468 .G68] and **Virginia Practice Series** (at the Circulation Desk)

Revised 5/20/10