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**Workshop Lesson Plan → Researching Laws & Legislation (March 2023)**

**Workshop Description:**

Learn how to go beneath the headlines and current debates to examine the text of laws and/or proposed legislation with a focus on Congress, the Supreme Court, Executive Orders, and state legislatures. This introductory workshop will highlight library resources, open government resources, and search strategies to support researchers across many disciplines and interest areas to navigate legal and legislative history resources.

**ACRL Frames:**

* Research as Inquiry
* Searching as Strategic Exploration

**Learning Objectives:**

* Participants will understand the importance of collecting background information to support searching for laws & legislative history.
* Participants will learn about the pros & cons of library databases versus open government resources.
* Participants will become reacquainted with civics/how government works as they learn to select information resources based on jurisdiction and navigate database limiters that organize information by legislative activity and/or document type.

**Modality & Time Considerations:**

* Zoom or in person
* A whirlwind introduction takes 60 minutes. 75 minutes is better for questions & interaction.

**Workshop Preparation:**

* Scan local and national news for 2 weeks leading up to the workshop. If you are at a university, scan the campus newspaper to see if particular legislative issues are being covered. This may offer ideas about which laws to use as search examples.
* Do your own background research on the examples you will demonstrate in the workshop. Practice the searches and keep notes to assist you. Practice will make the workshop move faster and help build confidence in the presenter to recover from problems and glitches. In each section below, you will find possible search examples and notes.

**Workshop Outline (based on 60-minute workshop)**

1. Welcome & Review of Workshop Objectives (2-3 mins)
2. Background Research Tips (3-5 mins)
3. Congress (15 mins)
4. Try to find the “Voting Rights Act of 1965” on Congress.gov using no limiters. Explain issues with results.
5. Show how using background research helps select limiters to find the original law on Congress.gov. Search for the same law in ProQuest Legislative Insight (Background notes: 89th Congress, “An Act to enforce the 15th amendment to the Constitution of the United States,” became law on 6 August 1965)
6. If there were no questions, search for legislation that was proposed but not passed. Search possibilities:
   1. Federal “Don’t Say Gay” bill (Background notes: 117th Congress, sponsored by Rep. Mike Johnson R-LA, introduced on 18 October 2022, “Stop the Sexualization of Children Act.”)
   2. AR–15 National Gun Act (Background notes: a resolution not a bill; 118th Congress, introduced on 17 February 2023, sponsored by Andrew S. Clyde R-GA, Lauren Boebert R-CO, Marjorie Taylor Greene R-GA, George Santos R-NY.)
7. Supreme Court (15 mins)
8. Show how to find recent information about current cases on the Supreme Court website, especially which page to check for opinions as they are released (Opinions > Opinions of the Court > Term Year).
9. Show multimedia resources on Oyez. Sample cases to search:
   1. Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization
   2. New York State Rifle & Pistol Association Inc. v. Bruen
10. Point out to resources in CSPAN to listen live & options to share to social media
11. Look at older cases via proprietary databases if available (HeinOnline, Supreme Court Insight, or Making of Modern Law: U.S. Supreme Court Records and Briefs, 1832-1978.)
12. Executive Orders (5-8 mins)
13. Show how to find more recent orders (1994 to present) via the Federal Register. Examples to search:
    1. Trump’s EO #13950 “Combating Race and Sex Stereotyping” on 22 September 2020 and how Biden revoked it with EO #13985 on 20 January 2021.
14. Show similar search in Regulatory Insight with additional ways to refine a search.
15. State legislatures (5-8 mins)  
    A. Show New York State Legislature website. Search example:
    1. Humane Alternatives to Long-Term Solitary Confinement Act (HALT), sponsored by Julia Salazar, S2836, 2021-2022 Regular Session).

B. Show how to find session laws and help topics on HeinOnline.

C. Show to how search other state legislature websites using laws currently making news.

D. Show how LegiScan allows searching on a keyword across state legislatures. Sample search terms might be:

a. CRT or critical race theory

b. 1619 Project

c. groomer or grooming

d. woke

E. Make a quick mention of organizations that track laws.

VI. Wrap-up & questions. Stress in closing the importance of background information to search.