I. Searching for Congressional Documents Using Search Terms

If you would like to find Congressional documents that include certain search terms or are about certain subjects, you can enter keyword search terms to find relevant documents. To do this, you can use either the Basic Search Form or the Advanced Search Form, depending on how complex you want to make your search.

A. The Basic Search Form

In the Basic Search Form, you can enter keyword search terms in up to two search boxes. If you enter terms in both search boxes, you must select from one of three connectors (i.e., “AND,” “OR,” and “AND NOT”) to either expand or limit the results retrieved.

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• “AND” - Using “AND” will retrieve documents containing the terms in both search boxes.\(^4\)

• “OR” – Using “OR” will retrieve documents containing the terms in either search box.\(^5\)

• “AND NOT” – Using “AND NOT” will retrieve documents that contain the terms in the first search box, but that do not include the terms in the second search box.\(^6\)

• **Using Connectors and Commands to Create A Search**

  You can also use connectors and commands *within* each search box to get results that are more specific.\(^7\) This allows you to include *multiple* search terms within one search box. The most important of these is “\(W/n\)”, which finds search terms within a certain number of words of each other, in any order.\(^8\) A number, up to 255, must be substituted for the “\(n\)” in “\(W/n\)”.\(^9\)

**EXAMPLE:** In the example “housing \(W/5\) discrimination AND case OR lawsuit OR decision \(W/3\) federal,” “\(W/5\)” finds results that contain “housing” within five words.

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of “discrimination” (e.g., “discrimination in housing,” “housing discrimination,” “housing complexes engaging in discrimination,” etc.).

- **Using Truncation and Wildcards in Searches**

  You can also use truncation and wildcards to find variations of words included in the search.\(^{10}\)

  - **Truncation** – To use the truncation function, insert an exclamation point (!) to replace one or more letters at the end of any word in a search.

    **EXAMPLE:** Typing “explor!” will retrieve results containing the words “exploration,” “explorer,” “exploring,” etc.

  - **Wildcard** - To use the Wildcard function, insert an asterisk (*) anywhere within a word included in a search, except for the first letter of the word.

    Asterisks can be used more than once in a word, or at the end of a word. Each asterisk used represents only one character, so you will need to decide whether to use the truncation or wildcard function or both.

    **EXAMPLE 1:** Typing “m*n” will retrieve results containing both “men” and “man.”

    **EXAMPLE 2:** Typing “explor**” will find “explored” or “explorer,” but not “exploration.”

- **Using Index Terms in the Basic Search Form**

  If you are having difficulty picking the terms to include in a search, Congressional provides a list of available subject terms to use.\(^{11}\)

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Clicking on “Index Terms” opens a new box that allows you to select Index Terms by Subject or by Issuing Source. Subject terms, which are the most useful for basic research, are described below.

Within the “Subjects” tab, you can select subject terms from the drop-down box.

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Subject terms can be reviewed by hierarchy, alphabetical order, or through a “Find A Term” search. Once an appropriate subject term is found, click on the box next to the subject term and click “OK – Paste to Search.”

- **EXAMPLE: Subject Term – “Education”**

  As you see below, the major subject heading of “Education” includes more specific subject terms such as “Adult education,” “Agricultural education.” To select a subject term, click on the box next to the subject term and click “OK – Paste to Search.” This will enter the desired term(s) into the form’s search box.
Terms related to “education” can also be found by browsing the terms alphabetically, as seen below. This method shows search terms not shown above, such as “education regulation” and “educational tests.”

Finally, subject terms related to education can be found by entering word into the “Find a term” box. As seen below, entering the word “education” can retrieve different search terms depending on whether the subject term starts with or contains the word “education.”
Restricting the Search Scope in the Basic Search Form

Once you have created your search, you have the option of restricting the scope of the search using the “Restrict by” section of the form. In the Basic Search Form, you can restrict the search either by date or by Congress.

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o **Restrict by Date**

“Restrict by Date” restricts your search to documents published during a specific time period or date.\(^\text{14}\) To select a time period or date, click on the drop-down box and highlight the choice.

\[\text{Restrict by } \begin{array}{c}\text{Date:}\end{array}\]

\[\text{All available dates} \rightarrow \text{1789 to present}\]

\[\text{Previous years} \rightarrow \text{Prior to 1875}\]

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o **Restrict by Congress**

“Restrict by Congress” restricts the search to documents published during a specific Congressional session from 1789 to present.\(^\text{15}\) To select a Congressional session, click on the drop-down box and highlight the choice.
B. Basic Search Form Example

The following example shows how to combine various features of the Basic Search Form. The search process can be repeated with different search terms and restrictions as necessary to retrieve all possible relevant results.

- **EXAMPLE 1:** A researcher wants to enter search terms to find any results about Franklin Roosevelt’s role in the repeal of Prohibition, especially relating to the sale or manufacturing of beer.

1. Because the researcher is interested specifically in Roosevelt’s role, he might want to include a search term that retrieves results containing “Franklin Roosevelt,” “Franklin D. Roosevelt,” or “Franklin Delano Roosevelt.” To do this, the researcher uses the “W/3” proximity connector so that the word “Franklin” will be found within three words of “Roosevelt.”
2. The researcher is also interested in results about the sale or manufacture of beer. However, possible results might use variations on the words “sale” and “manufacture.” Therefore, the researcher includes wildcard characters and truncation to maximize the number of relevant results.

3. The researcher also includes the word “beer” in the search, but wants to make sure that the word “beer” appears close to any variations on the words “manufacture,” “sell,” or “sale.” To improve results, the researcher includes the “W/n” connector again.

4. To narrow the dates of the publications, the researcher decides to seek results after January 1, 1920.
5. Once the researcher has completed all fields, clicking “Search” will begin the retrieval process.

**B. The Advanced Search Form**

In the Advanced Search Form, you can use *three* search boxes for more complex searches. The Advanced Search Form can be accessed by clicking the “Advanced Search” tab on the main Congressional page.

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Creating a Search in the Advanced Search Form

As with the Basic Search Form, Congressional’s Advanced Search Form allows you to create a search using search terms, as well as Index Terms.

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The Advanced Search Form also allows you to use the same connectors and commands, truncation, and wildcard characters as in the Basic Search Form.

- **Searching Within Segments of Congressional Publications**

  The Advanced Search Form allows you to search within specific “segments” of the Congressional publications available through Congressional. Limiting a search to specific segments of the Congressional publications can help you to more easily retrieve records relevant to the search.

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Some common segments of the Congressional publications that can be isolated through the Advanced Search Form are as follows:  

- **“All fields except full text”** – Searches all available parts of the results, except for the full-text of the document, for the search terms.
- **“All fields including full text”** – Searches all available parts of the results, including the full text of the document, for the search terms.
- **“Subject”** – Searches for the search terms in the Index Terms provided through Congressional.
- **“Title”** – Searches for the search terms in the title on the document.
- **“Witnesses”** – Searches for the names of witnesses who have testified in hearings.

### Searching Within Certain Publications Using the Advanced Search Form

The Advanced Search Form also allows you to specifically choose to search within certain types of Congressional materials.

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The types of Congressional materials that can be isolated in the search are described in more detail in the “Types of Congressional Documents” section of this Guide.

- **Restricting the Search Scope in the Advanced Search Form**

  You can restrict your search by date or by Congressional session in the same way allowed by the Basic Search Form. The default date restriction for the Advanced Search Form is “Previous 2 years” from the date of the search. The available date restrictions are fully described [here](#).

- **Using Index Terms in the Advanced Search Form**

  Index Terms in the Advanced Search Form function in the same way as in the Basic Search Form, described [here](#).

### D. Advanced Search Form Examples

The following examples show how to combine various features of the Advanced Search Form. The search process can be repeated with different search terms and restrictions as necessary to retrieve all possible relevant results.

- **EXAMPLE 1: A history student is curious about CRS reports on the Vietnam War between the years 1969 and 1970. The student’s primary concern is retrieving all results that reference the Vietnam War.**

  1. Because the student is seeking CRS reports only, the search can be limited to that specific type of publication. Searching “All fields including full-text” will retrieve all results that contain the phrase “Vietnam War.”

  2. Also, because the student is seeking CRS reports from 1969-1970 only, the student could search by date (“Date is between January 1, 1969 and December 31, 1970”) or by Congress (“91 (1969 – 1970)”). In this case, the student decides to search by Congress.
3. The student retrieves 65 results from the search above.\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{25} Search results are current as of March 2012.
EXAMPLE 2: A 7th grade science teacher would like to find out when Sally Ride has testified before Congress to share this information with her class.

1. First, the teacher searches for the name “Sally Ride” in the Advanced Search Form, limiting the name to a “Witness” search. Congressional has separate boxes for the witness’s first and last name.

2. This search yields five results, as seen below.26

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26 Search results are current as of March 2012.
EXAMPLE 3: An International Relations professor is researching Presidential messages in which North Korea is a major topic. The professor is only interested in messages from the last 2 years.

1. Because the U.S. Serial Set search options in Congressional allows researchers to Search Presidential messages as a separate category, the professor might choose to do an Advanced Search in that category. Since “North Korea” is a geographical term, the professor can use the “Index Terms” option to retrieve the most relevant results. First, the professor clicks on “Index Terms” in the Advanced Search Form, which opens the Index Terms selection box. Then the professor selects “Geographical Terms” as the type and clicks on “N” in the alphabetical list to find the geographical term for “North Korea.”
2. Note that the geographical term option for “North Korea” tells the researcher to use the term “Korea, North” instead. The professor can click the box next to “use Korea, North” and click “OK – Paste to Search” to add that geographical Index Term to the Advanced Search Form.

3. Next the professor must decide what parts of the record to search for the term “Korea, North.” The professor might select “Subject” or “All fields excluding full-text” to get all Presidential messages in which “Korea, North” is listed as a major subject of the message or as a keyword in the message.
4. Next, the professor will decide the types of publication to search within. The “Serial Set” option allows researchers to limit their search to Presidential messages only. Because the default on the Advanced Search Form is to search within all of the publication types, the professor clicks on “Clear all” to clear the options and then clicks the box next to “Serial Set.” Then the professor selects “Presidential messages” from the “Serial Set Only options” drop-down box. Because the professor only wants messages from the last two years, the professor can restrict the search to “Previous 2 years” or can use “Date is between” to select a more specific date range (e.g., January 1, 2010 to January 1, 2012).
5. Once the Advanced Search Form is complete, the professor clicks “Search” to retrieve the result below.\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{27} Search results are current as of March 2012.