Researching Wisconsin Legislative History

Always Start with the Text of the Law...

Wisconsin Statutes (code):
- State laws currently in force arranged by subject matter.
- Where to find: In print (Wisconsin Statutes) or online via WI Legislature*, Westlaw, Lexis

Acts and Laws of Wisconsin:
- When enacted, a law is assigned a sequential act number and is printed in slip form (slip laws).
- After legislative session ends, acts are printed chronologically in Laws of Wisconsin (session laws).
- Where to find: In print (Laws of WI) or online via WI Legislature*, Hein Online, Westlaw, Lexis

...then, Read Legislative History in Reverse

Procedural History:
- Chronology of how bill progressed through legislature.
- Where to find: Online via WI Legislature* (with links) or in print in Bulletin of Proceedings and Journals

Governor’s Veto Message (if applicable):
- Provides governor’s reasons for vetoing bill language.
- Where to find: Online via WI Legislature*

Readings, Floor Debate and Record of Vote:
- Where to find: Readings & Debate – Online via WisEye**; Record of Vote - Online via WI Legislature* (procedural history) or in print Journals

Bills & Amendments:
- Language deleted is struck through; language added is underscored; bills include nonpartisan analysis by LRB.
- Where to find: Online via WI Legislature*, Westlaw, Lexis or in print/microform at UW Law Library

Committee Meetings and Recommendations:
- Where to find: Recordings - Online via WisEye**; Brief report with recommendation for or against the bill - Online via WI Legislature* or in print Journals

Hearings:
- Where to find: Recordings - Online via WisEye**; Appearance list & records submitted - Online via WI Legislature* (with committee proceedings)

Fiscal Estimate:
- Available for each bill affecting revenue or expenditures.
- Where to find: Online via WI Legislature* or in print

Drafting Records:
- LRB’s administrative record of the bill drafting process.
- Where to find: Online via WI Legislature*, UW Law Library***

Joint Legislative Council Documents:
- Special study committees; may propose legislation.
- Where to find: Online via WI Legislature* & on file at LRB

Judicial Council Documents:
- Drafts rules & laws relating to the courts.
- Where to find: Online via WI State Law Library****

Budget Specific Materials:
- Legislative Fiscal Bureau Summary – a summary of the budget at each stage of the process.
- Budget Index Report – index to specific parts of budget.
- Where to find: Online via WI Legislature*

* Wisconsin Legislature - https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/
** WisconsinEye - http://www.wiseye.org/ (very recent only)
*** UW Law Library Drafting Records - http://tinyurl.com/84mngu9

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