



HOW TO SEARCH FOR BILLS ON THE LEGISLATIVE WEB PAGE

Legislative Information Center
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Searching for Bills on the Legislative Web Page

There are five basic ways to search for bill histories and documents on the Legislative Web Page:

1. Search by Bill Number
2. Search by Topical Index
3. Search by Keyword
4. Search by RCW Cross Reference
5. Search by Sponsor

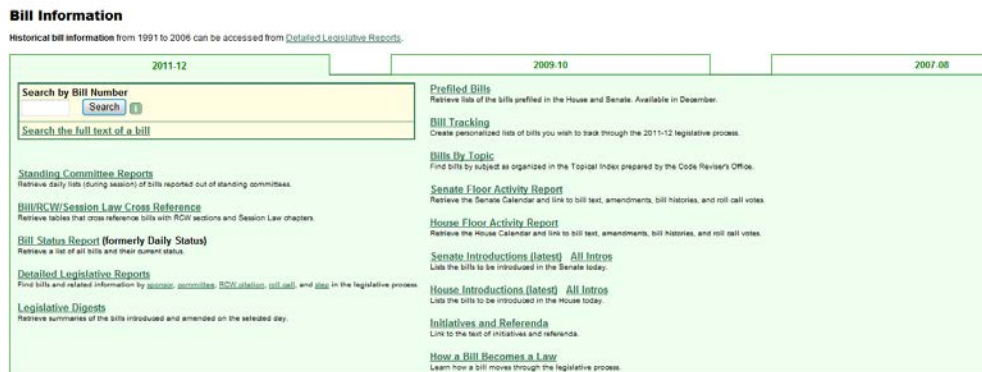
All of these methods will return the bill history page which shows where the bill is in the legislative process, as well as a listing of all the documents associated with the bill. For purposes of this document we will assume that you are searching for a bill for the current 2 year biennium although you can search for bills back to 1985.

FIRST STEP – GET TO THE BILL INFORMATION PAGE

From the Legislature’s Home Page (www.leg.wa.gov) click on “Bill Information” in the left hand menu.



This will bring up the Bill History and Information Page as shown below.



SEARCH BY BILL NUMBER

In the search box on the bill information page enter the 4 digit bill number. There is no need to enter the alphabetic prefix such as SB5200. Then click on the search button and the appropriate bill history page will be returned.

SEARCH BY KEYWORD

On the bill information page, click on “Search the full text of a bill”. This will open the search engine page as shown below:



Select the database you want to search—in this case the bills from the most current biennium—by clicking in the check box next to the database in the green box. Then enter the keyword(s) you want to search for. The search engine uses Boolean logic (combinations of and, or, not and other logic terms) and you can specify a number of Boolean operators in your search (huh?)

Let’s work with some examples. Let’s say you wanted to find all the bills that had the term **school bus** in it. If you enter **school bus** in the box and then click on search, the search engine treats the space as the Boolean term “AND” and would return every bill that had the term **school** somewhere in it and the term **bus** somewhere in it, although they might not be next to one another. You could also enter **school and bus** and get the same result.

If you only wanted the term **school bus** (with school and bus next to one another) you would place the phrase in quotes—“**school bus**”

If you wanted only the bills that had the term **school** and not the term **bus** you would enter the phrase **school not bus**

So to Review:

School and bus or **School bus** returns documents that have both terms in them but not necessarily next to one another

“**School Bus**” returns documents that have both terms together in a phrase.

School or bus returns documents that have either term in them.

School not bus returns documents that just has the one term but not the other.

There are also things called wild cards-- the symbols * and ?. If you wanted to make sure you got the term **buses** as well as **bus** you could enter the term **bus***. This would tell the search engine to list all the documents that had a word in them that started with **bus** and ended with whatever. This would give us

the terms **bus** and **buses**. But it also might give us the term **business**. To avoid this you can use the other wild card and enter **bus??** This tells the search engine to return documents that have words that start with **bus** and has just two more letters and we don't care what those two letters are.

Totally confused? Just play around with these various combinations and see what results you get back. After a little practice you should get the hang of it. Remember, keyword searches are an art and not a science.

After entering your key words and clicking on the search button, the search engine will return a list of bills meeting the criteria you entered. Scroll down to see the list of bills. At the bottom will be a link to more bills if there are any. They will not be in numerical order but rather ranked order based on a frequency of occurrence (kind of like Google does). Click on a bill number to open the document or click on the bill summary link on the far right to open the bill history page for the bill. If you open the bill document, the search words will be highlighted in red and you can click on "next term" or "previous term" to navigate your way through the document.

The list can be confusing as every version of every bill will be listed. For example, you may see:

5540; 5540-S; 5540-S.E; 5540-S.E.PL; 5540-SE.SL

Once you learn the scheme it isn't that confusing. In the example above we have:

The original bill, the first substitute bill(-S), the substituted and engrossed bill (-S.E), the substituted and engrossed bill that passed the legislature (-S.E.PL), and finally the substituted and engrossed bill that became session law (the version signed by the governor)(-S.E.SL). For more help with this terminology see the following links:

[Help with Abbreviations](#)

[Glossary of Legislative Terms](#)

SEARCH BY TOPICAL INDEX

From the Bill Information page, click on the Bills by Topical link to get the page below:

Bill Information > Bills By Topic

Bills By Topic

Select a Search Method:

By Bill Number By Subject

1000
1001
1002
1003
1004

By Letter: [ALL # A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z](#)

With the “By Bill Number” button selected, if you select a bill number and click continue, the resulting page will list all the topical headings associated with that bill. Generally, however, you are going to want to press the “By Subject” button to begin searching all the topics in the index.

You can do this one of three ways:

1. Click the down button on the scroll bar until you find the topic you are interested in.
2. Click on the letter in the list to open the topical index at that letter then scroll down until you find the topic you are interested in.
3. Begin typing a subject name. As you type, the topic choice will be the first one that matches what you have typed so far. As you add more letters the topic will continue to match the letters. When you see the topic you want just click on it to go to that topic in the topical index. When you have found what you want be sure to scroll down just a few to make sure there isn't another topic spelled similarly.

TIP #1: Once you are in a topic, you can use the find feature on your browser (or CTRL F or CMD F) to enter a keyword or two and then click on the find arrows to browse through the results until you find the bills you are interested in

TIP #2: If you can't think of a topic the bill might be listed under, you can click on the word “ALL” where the letters of the alphabet are listed and this will return the entire topical index. You can then use the find function on your browser to search for key words. It may take a minute or so for the entire topical index to appear.

Within the topical index bills are listed alphabetically by title with the bill numbers underlined. Clicking on the underlined bill number will take you directly the bill history page for that bill. Bill numbers that are bolded and having an asterisk indicate that the bill has become a law and will also have the appropriate chapter number indicated. For example, * **SHB 1485, CH 199 (2011)**.

SEARCH BY BILL/RCW CROSS REFERENCE

If you know that the bill you are searching for will most likely codified into a specific RCW you can search by RCW. For example, most bills about public schools will be codified into RCW 28A. Public meeting laws will be part of RCW 42.56. So if you want to find all the bills that pertain to public meetings, simply click the Bill/RCW Cross Reference on the bill information page, select the RCW to Bill tab, then enter the RCW citation (in this case 42.56)

Bill Information > Bill to Law Cross Reference

Bill/RCW/Session Law Cross Reference - 2011-12

[All Cross Reference Tables](#)

Bill to RCW | **RCW to Bill** | Bill to Session Law

RCW Citation:
Full (1.08.010) or beginning of citation (1.08. or 1)

All Bills Passed Not Passed
Partial Veto: Vetoed: Signed:

You can also narrow down your choices by selecting all bills, bills that passed the legislature, bills that had partial vetoes and so forth.

SEARCH BY SPONSOR

If you know who the sponsor is of the bill you are looking for but don't remember the bill number, you can get a list of all the bills for an individual sponsor and then visually look through the list for the bill you are interested in. The get bills by sponsor start from the bill information page, and click on Detailed Legislative Reports. From the resulting page click on "bills by sponsor" and then fill out the resulting form as shown below:

WASHINGTON STATE LEGISLATURE
Detailed Legislative Reports - Bills by Sponsor
DLR Home | Legislature Home | Senate | House of Representatives | Basic Search | Help

Home | Bill History | Bill Tracking | Docs | Bill Sponsors | Roll Calls | BI/OC | Topical Index | Selected Step

Quicklinks Current Session

- * Schedules/Agendas
- * Cutoff Calendar
- * House Floor Activity Rpt.
- * Senate Floor Activity Rpt.

Documents

- * Prefiled Bill Lists
- * House Introduction Lists
- * Senate Introduction Lists
- * Initiatives
- * Standing Committee Reports
- * Ethics Opinions

External Links

- * Attorney General Opinions
- * Executive Orders
- * OFM Fiscal Notes

Select Sponsor Type:

House Senate Committee Requester

Type or Select a Sponsor:

Asay
Ahern
Alexander
Anderson
Angel
Appleton


Select a Report Type:

Primary Bills Secondary Bills All Bills

Show only those bills by the selected sponsor that have companion bills.

Select House or Senate or Requester., scroll down to the person you want, select primary, secondary or all bills and press "Continue".

The list of bills for that sponsor and their current status will be displayed as shown below. The data can be sorted by the various headings by clicking on the heading, and can be printed or exported to an Excel or Word file.


WASHINGTON STATE LEGISLATURE
Detailed Legislative Reports - Bills by Sponsor
DLR Home | Legislature Home | Senate | House of Representatives | Basic Search | Help

[Home](#) | [Bill History](#) | [Bill Tracking](#) | [Docs](#) | [Bill Sponsors](#) | [Roll Calls](#) | [BI/OC](#) | [Topical Index](#) | [Selected Step](#)

[New Search](#)
[Print List](#)
[Export Data](#)
[Log in to use Custom Report Views](#)

Date Options

Primary Sponsored Bills by Brown: (2011)

Page 1 (Rows 1-13 of 13)
Page Size

<input type="checkbox"/>	Bill	Flags	Title	Status	Veto	Date	Original Sponsor
<input type="checkbox"/>	SB 5172	Docs	Child care for employees	C 78 L 11		04/15/2011	Brown
<input type="checkbox"/>	ESSB 5449	Docs f	Stolen info technology	S Rules 3		04/22/2011	Brown
<input type="checkbox"/>	SB 5494	Docs f	Plan 3 retirement systems	S Rules 3		04/22/2011	Brown
<input type="checkbox"/>	ESSB 5749	Docs f	College tuition GET program	C 12 L 11 E1	PV	06/06/2011	Brown
<input type="checkbox"/>	SSB 5795	Docs	Higher ed child care grants	S Rules X		03/16/2011	Brown
<input type="checkbox"/>	SSB 5846	Docs f	Retired public employees	S Rules 3		05/25/2011	Brown
<input type="checkbox"/>	SJM 8008	Docs a	Unemployment tax relief	S Filed Sec/St		04/22/2011	Brown
<input type="checkbox"/>	SCR 8401	Docs	Adjourning SINE DIE	S Filed Sec/St		04/22/2011	Brown
<input type="checkbox"/>	SCR 8402	Docs	Bills/house of origin	S Filed Sec/St		04/22/2011	Brown
<input type="checkbox"/>	SCR 8403	Docs	Bills/house of origin	S Filed Sec/St		05/25/2011	Brown
<input type="checkbox"/>	SCR 8404	Docs	Adjourning SINE DIE	S Filed Sec/St		05/25/2011	Brown
<input type="checkbox"/>	SR 8623	Docs	YMCA	S Adopted		02/28/2011	Brown
<input type="checkbox"/>	SR 8625	Docs	Senator Margarita Prentice	S Adopted		02/22/2011	Brown

Page 1 (Rows 1-13 of 13)
Page Size

Total count: 13

a Amended. \$ Appropriation bill. f State fiscal note on file. d Department.
 e Governor. b Joint Legislative Audit & Review Committee. o Other. # Local fiscal note on file.

Options for Checked Items:

Combine to Browser (HTM) Combine to Acrobat (PDF)
(Official Copy)

Legislative Home Page | DLR Help | Help with Abbreviations

RESEARCHING BILLS FROM PREVIOUS BIENNIA

All the tools described above for searching for bills from the current session can be used for searching the two previous biennia (4 years worth). It is simply a matter of selecting the appropriate tab on the Bill Information Page:

The screenshot shows the Washington State Legislature website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for "Legislature Home", "Senate", "House of Representatives", "Contact Us", "Search", and "Help". Below this is the "Bill Information" section. A "Search by Bill Number" box is visible, with a "Search" button. To the right of the search box are three tabs for the biennia: "2011-12", "2009-10", and "2007-08". Below the tabs are several sections of information, including "Standing Committee Reports", "Bill/RCW/Session Law Cross Reference", "Bill Status Report (formerly Daily Status)", "Detailed Legislative Reports", "Legislative Digests", "Prefiled Bills", "Bill Tracking", "Bills By Topic", "Senate Floor Activity Report", "House Floor Activity Report", "Senate Introductions (latest)", and "House Introductions (latest)". Blue arrows from the text above point to the search box and the 2009-10 and 2007-08 tabs.

For key word searches you simply need to check the database for the year you want when that box comes up.

The screenshot shows the "Search Legislative Documents" section. It includes a search box with a "Search" button and links for "Help" and "Advanced Search". Below the search box is a section titled "Select the area(s) you wish to search:" with a list of checkboxes. The options are: "Amendments 2011-12", "Bills 2011-12", "Bill Reports 2011-12", "Bill Information 2009-10", "Bill Information 2007-08", "Ethics", "RCW & Dispositions - As of November 2, 2011", "RCW Supplement - As of September 28, 2011", "WAC - As of October 5, 2011", "Washington Constitution", "State Register 2011", "State Register 2010", and "State Register 2009". A blue circle highlights the "Bill Information 2009-10" and "Bill Information 2007-08" options. A blue arrow from the text above points to the search box.

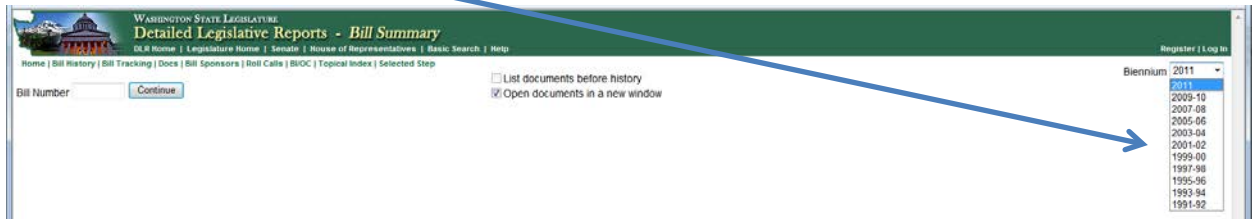
SEARCHES FOR BILLS PRIOR TO THE LAST TWO BIENNIA

For Bills by number or bills by sponsor you can get data back to 1985 by using the Detailed Legislative Reports from the Bill Information Page

For searches for bills by keyword, you can use our advanced search engine.

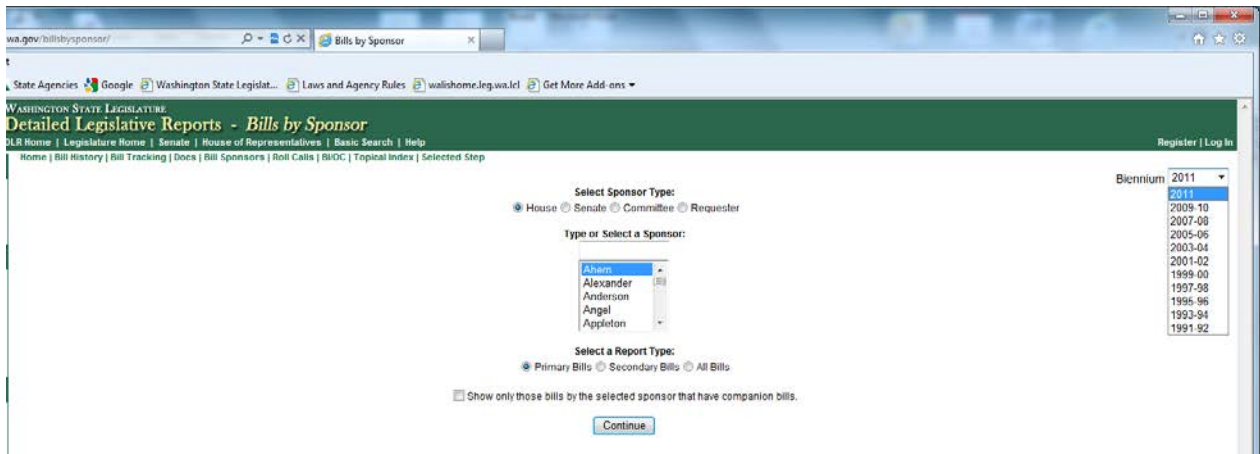
Searches for Old Bills using Detailed Legislative Reports

From the Bill Information page click on Detailed Legislative Reports and then select "Bill History". From the resulting page enter the bill number and then from the right hand side of the screen select the biennium you want.



Then click continue and the bill history page will be displayed for the bill number and year you selected.

You can also find bill sponsorships from years past using the same method. From the Bill Information page click on Detailed Legislative Reports and then select "Bills by Sponsor". From the resulting page enter the name of the sponsor and the other desired information and then from the right hand side of the screen select the biennium you want.



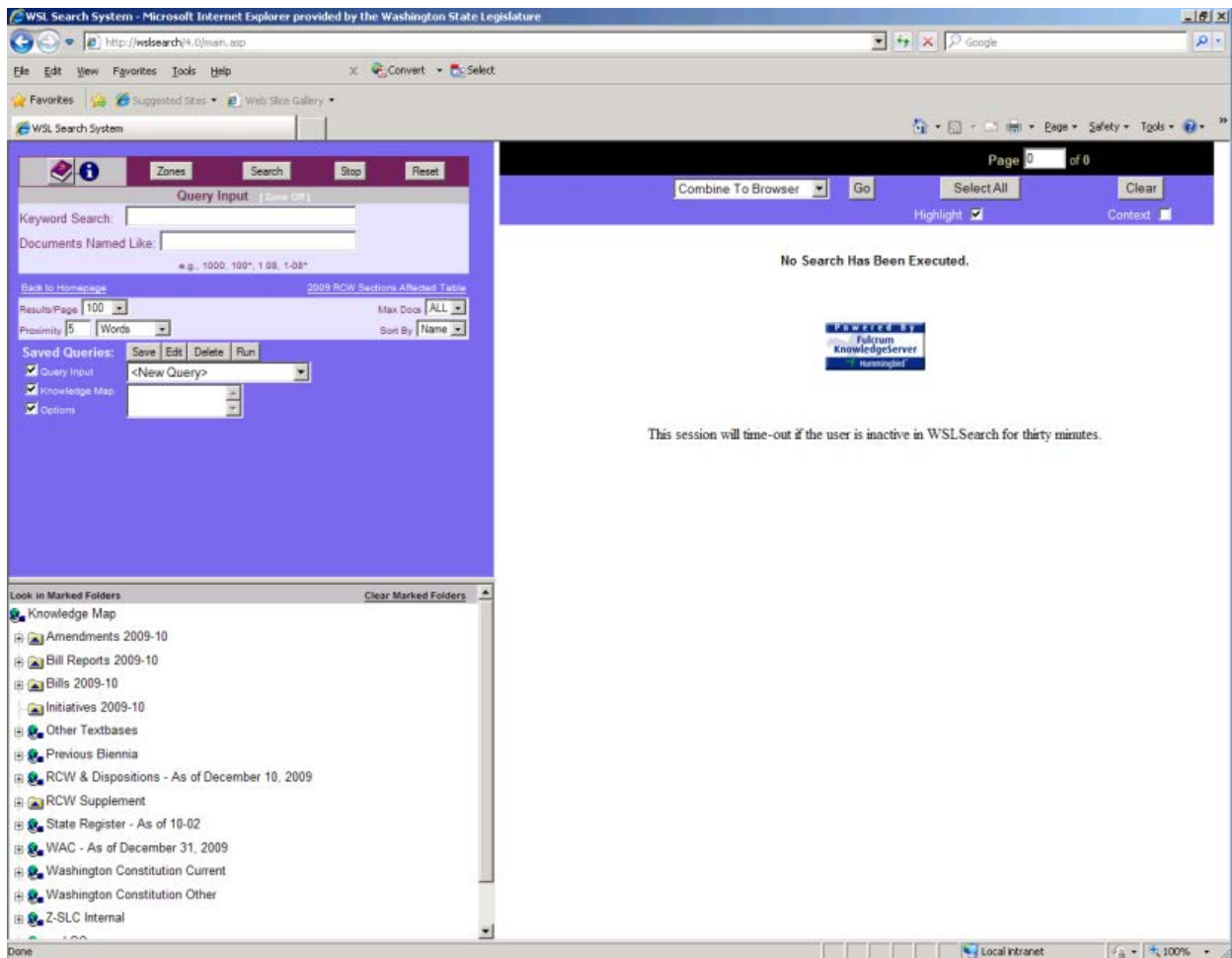
ADVANCED SEARCH ENGINE

Using the Legislature’s advanced search engine allows you to search bills, RCWs, and WACs back to 1985. It operates very similarly to the keyword search engine described earlier but has a number of more powerful features. In essence it requires you to select a database to search and then to enter a keyword(s). It also uses wildcards and logical operators (And/Or/Not) to refine your search.

To get to the Advanced Search Engine, begin on the Bill Information page and then click Detailed Legislative Reports, then select “Advanced Search”

Accessing WSL Search

- From the WALIS Home Page, click the **WSL Search** link.
- From the Online Reports menu, click the **WSL Search** link.



The WSL Search window frames on the left provide fields and choices for establishing the criteria of your search—search terms, options, query features, and databases. The results of your search are displayed in the right frame.

Creating a Basic Query



Setting up a basic query involves two steps: selecting the category(s) to search, and entering the term(s) you want to search against.

Selecting a Database

The databases available for searching appear in the bottom left frame and are referred to as the "Knowledge Map." The following databases can be searched:

- Amendments Current Session
- Bill Reports Current Session
- Bills Current Session
- Initiatives Current Session
- Other Databases
 - Ethics
 - Journals
- Previous Biennia (back to 1985)
- Revised Code of Washington (RCW)
- Revised Code of Washington Dispositions
- Revised Code of Washington Supplements
- State Register
- Washington Administrative Code (WAC)
- Washington Constitution Current
- Washington Constitution Other
 - Amendments
 - Certificate
 - Preamble
 - Sources
 - Articles and Amendments Combined
 - Table of Contents
- Z–SLC Internal (reserved for use by the Code Reviser’s Office)
- Z-LSC (HelpPage 7000 index)

Selecting an Entire Database

1. To select an entire database, click the icon next to the name. For instance, if you click the  icon next to **RCW & Dispositions**, your search will be executed against all sections in the RCW. A red magnifying glass  appears next to each database selected.



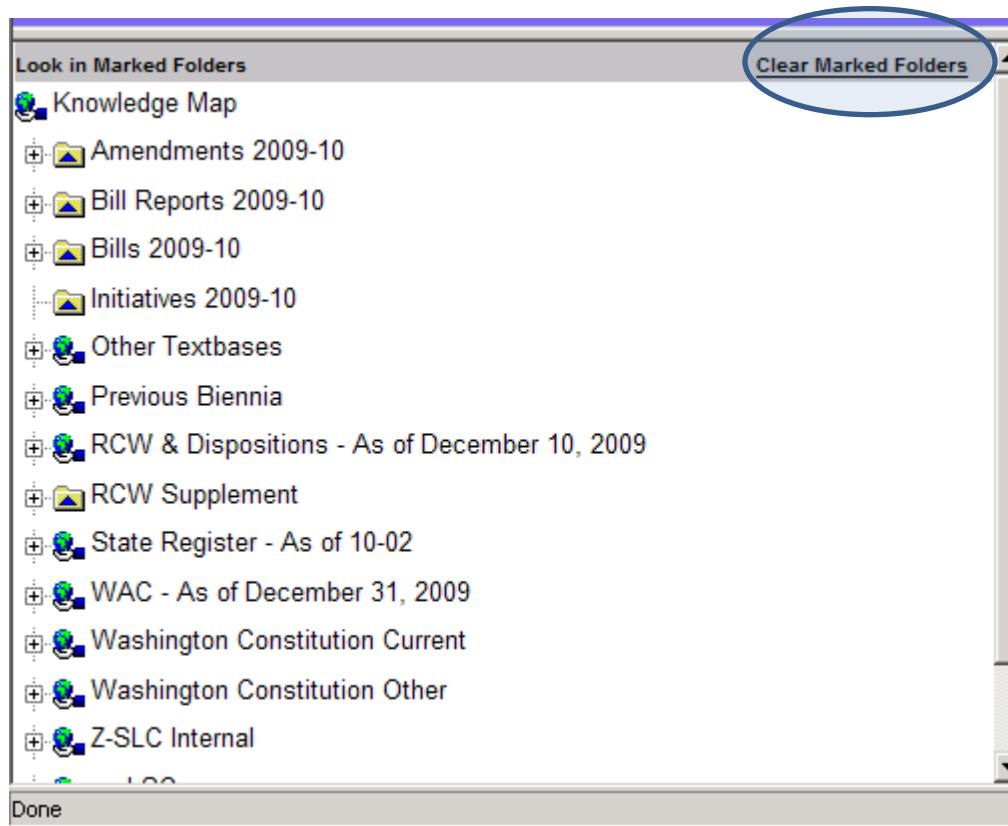
2. Repeat the process to include other databases in your search. A red magnifying glass appears next to each database selected.

☞ You can search more than one database at a time. For example, you can search RCW's and WAC's at the same time. The more databases selected, the longer your search takes

☞ Later versions of WSL Search display a "file folder" icon instead of the globe. The purpose is the same between the two icons.

3. Click the folder again if you decide not to include the database in your search. The red magnifying glass disappears on the first click. If a database has no magnifying glass beside it, the database won't be searched.

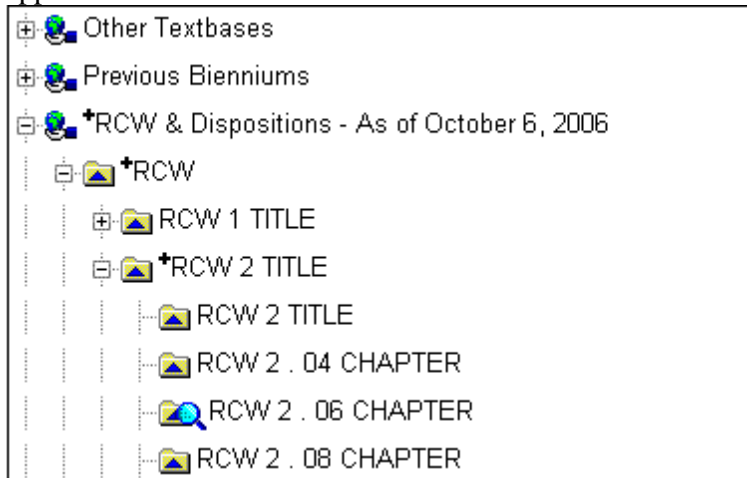
☞ You can clear all Knowledge Map selections from the databases by clicking the **Clear Marked Folders** link located at the top-right corner of the Knowledge Map.



Selecting a Part of a Database

The Knowledge Map is a collapsible and expandable table of contents for the available databases. It resembles the folder list you see in Outlook and Explorer. A plus sign (+) indicates that there are subfolders; a minus sign (-) indicates that subfolders are displayed.

1. To limit your search to a particular title, chapter, or set of bills, click the plus sign (+) next to the desired folder to expand the database. It may take some time for the subfolders to appear.



☞ The RCW and the WAC subfolders are titles and chapters. Bill subfolders are bill types, such as House Bills, Initiatives, or Senate Concurrent Resolutions.

2. Click the desired subfolder(s). A blue magnifying glass appears on the selected subfolder.

☞ If you click the subfolder again, the magnifying glass turns blue. The color change indicates that the folder is selected but none of the subfolders will be searched.

3. Repeat for other desired folders and subfolders.


4. Click the folder again if you wish to remove a folder or subfolder from the search.

☞ If a major database, such as Bills 2009-10, is selected with the red magnifying glass, all of its subfolders are also selected, as indicated by a blue magnifying glass. You cannot click these subfolders a second time to remove them. If you want to use only selected subfolders in your search, click the **Clear Marked Folders** link. You may then select the subordinate folders one at a time.

Entering Your Search Terms

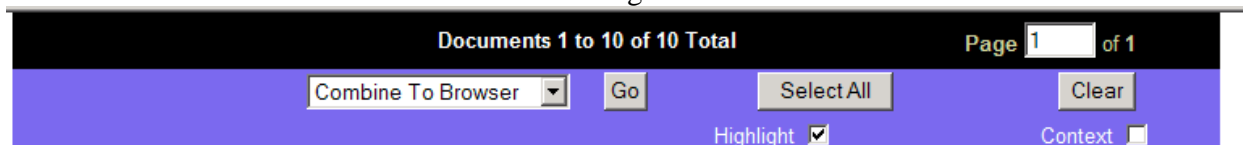
The Keyword search is searching the content of the documents for the word, words, or phrase contained within the documents. The Documents Named Like field searches for document names that match your criteria. All searches may include bill, RCW, or WAC numbers or file extensions in the **Documents Named Like** field to further refine the results.

1. After selecting the database(s), click in the **Keyword** field and/or **Documents Named Like** field.
2. Type your search term(s) and/or bill number or extension. WSL Search is not case-sensitive.

☞ Click the **Information** icon  to see valid search term operators, symbols, and examples. For specific information about entering your search terms, see **Appendix A, Search Terms and Operators**.

Performing Your Search

1. Click the **Search** button. The list of documents retrieved appears in the right frame. Above the result list, the system displays the number of documents that fit your search criteria. The screen looks similar to the following.



The screenshot shows a search results interface. At the top, it displays "Documents 1 to 10 of 10 Total" and "Page 1 of 1". Below this, there is a search bar with a dropdown menu set to "Combine To Browser", a "Go" button, a "Select All" button, and a "Clear" button. There are also checkboxes for "Highlight" (checked) and "Context" (unchecked).

Query: (CONTENT contains salmon)&(TITLE contains *-s2)

- [1484-S2](#) (2009-10)
AN ACT Relating to habitat open space
- [1484-S2.PL](#) (2009-10)
AN ACT Relating to habitat open space
- [1484-S2.SL](#) (2009-10)
AN ACT Relating to habitat open space
- [1580-S2](#) (2009-10)
AN ACT Relating to establishing a pilot local water management program in one qualified jurisdiction
- [1580-S2.PL](#) (2009-10)
AN ACT Relating to establishing a pilot local water management program in one qualified jurisdiction
- [1580-S2.SL](#) (2009-10)
AN ACT Relating to establishing a pilot local water management program in one qualified jurisdiction
- [1951-S2](#) (2009-10)
AN ACT Relating to creating a program for public-private partnerships for the operation and management of salmonid hatcheries now closed or scheduled for closure by the department of fish and wildlife during the 2009-2011 biennium
- [1951-S2.PL](#) (2009-10)
AN ACT Relating to creating a program for public-private partnerships for the operation and management of salmonid hatcheries now closed or scheduled for closure by the department of fish and wildlife during the 2009-2011 biennium
- [1951-S2.SL](#) (2009-10)
AN ACT Relating to creating a program for public-private partnerships for the operation and management of salmonid hatcheries now closed or scheduled for closure by the department of fish and wildlife during the 2009-2011 biennium
- [2016-S2](#) (2009-10)
AN ACT Relating to campaign contribution and disclosure laws

Viewing a Document from the Results List

1. Click the document link to view the contents. The document appears on the screen, and your terms are highlighted in red. Hypertext links to other documents appear in blue underlined text.

☞ You can view the entire document or the context of search term(s) (10 words before and after the term). To see terms in context, click the **Context** check box above the result list.

Read first time 01/10/2001. Referred to Committee on Natural Resources.

1 AN ACT Relating to hunting and **fishing license** transaction

...on Natural Resources. 1 AN ACT Relating to hunting and **fishing license** transaction 2 fees; and amending RCW 77.32.050. 3 BE IT ...

Navigating through the Retrieved Document

After clicking the document link, a navigation bar appears above the blue document identification bar. Click one of the following navigation links to move within the document.

- Previous Term
- Next Term
- Previous Document
- Next Document
- Back to Result List

☞ You can also move within the document by clicking in the document once, then pressing the **Pg Up** or **Pg Dn** key on the keyboard.

☞ When you click the **Back to Result List** link, you are returned to your previous location within the list. The document link will also change colors to indicate which documents have been previously viewed.

Printing in WSL Search

Printing the Result List

1. Perform your search.
2. When the result list appears, click anywhere in the list frame to select it. This makes it the active frame for subsequent actions.
3. Click the **Print** button on the browser toolbar, or press **Ctrl+P**.

Printing a Document

1. Perform your search, then click a document link from the result list.
2. When the document appears, click anywhere within the document frame.
3. Click the **Print** button on the browser toolbar, or press **Ctrl+P** or right click on your mouse and select **Print**.
4. Or alternatively, right click on your mouse and click on **Select All**, then right click again and click on **Copy**. Open a word processing document and right click on your mouse and click on **Paste** to copy the data to the word processing file. Finally, you can print the document directly from your word processing file. Although this is more cumbersome than the other methods listed above, it does give you better control over margin settings and helps avoid “cutting the edges off” the document as can sometimes happen when you print directly from your browser.

Printing Multiple Documents

1. Perform your search.
2. When the result list appears, click the document check boxes to select the documents to combine.
3. Click the **Go** button to combine the selected documents for viewing or printing from the browser;
4. Print your combined documents as described above for printing a single document.

☞ *The List of RCW Selections and RCW Pull choices are used by the Code Reviser's office.*

☞ *Clicking the **Select All** button reverses your selection of documents to be combined. For example, your query returned five documents and you clicked the check boxes for documents 1, 3, and 5. You realize you have marked the opposite of the desired set. Clicking **Select All** unmarks 1, 3 and 5 then marks 2 and 4. The **Select All** button name changes to **Unselect All**. Clicking the button again reverses the selection back to the original selection.*

☞ *Click **Clear** to remove all check marks from all documents.*

Using Hypertext Links

Many of the searchable documents contain links to other documents. For example, bill titles list the RCW sections being affected by the bill; WAC sections contain the statutory authority for the administrative code section. If such a reference appears in underlined blue text, you can click the link to move to that document. Click **Back** on the browser toolbar to return to the original document.

☞ *Links are only activated when using the browser.*

Appendix A: Search Terms and Operators

Basic Search Terms

Single Word Search—To execute the most basic search in WSL Search, select the database(s), type a single word, and click the **Search** button. WSL Search retrieves any document in the chosen database(s) containing that search term.

Phrase Search—You may type multiple words in double quotes to execute a phrase search. A phrase search retrieves only those documents in which the search terms occur together and in the order you typed them. If you type "commercial fishing license", the documents retrieved contain that exact phrase. To search for several words that may or may not occur together, use Boolean operators.

Wildcards—The characters * and ? are called wildcards. The asterisk (*) signifies multiple occurrences of any numbers, letters or characters. For example, "bus*" could return the word "bus", "buses", or even "business". The question mark signifies just a single occurrence of any number, letter, or character. For example, "bus??" could return the word "buses" or even "busch"

Boolean Operators

When you want to search for several words that may or may not occur together, you must add a connector that tells WSL Search the relationship you are seeking between the terms. These connectors, called Boolean operators, are listed below and are followed by examples of their functions. To access a help screen of Valid Operators in WSL Search, click the — to the left of the Zones button. &	And	Documents must contain both words.
	Or	Documents must contain either or both words.
& ^	Not	Exclude documents if they contain a word. Both symbols are required.