Court Records and Briefs in the Law Library

When a party appeals to a higher court from a decision made by a trial court, or one made by an intermediate court of appeals, the attorneys for each side submit written briefs presenting the reasons why the lower court's decision should be upheld or overruled. If available, the record of the trial court is also submitted. The record frequently contains the facts of the case, examination and cross-examination of witnesses, instructions to the jury, opinions of the lower court and various other exhibits. Appellate records and briefs are valuable resources because they provide examples of legal reasoning which may help formulate arguments for similar future cases.

The Kathrine R. Everett Law Library maintains records and briefs for the following courts:

- United States Supreme Court
- United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit
- North Carolina Supreme Court
- North Carolina Court of Appeals

Electronic copies of records & briefs for some federal and state appellate cases decided in recent years are available full-text online at various legal websites. Print copies of records and briefs are located on the first floor of the law library. At the reference desk there are indexes to the print copies. To find most records and briefs you will need to provide the official reporter citation for the appellate decision. To view microfiche or microfilm copies, use viewers on the 3rd, 2nd, & 1st floors. Microcard versions may be checked out for several hours and taken to Davis Library, which has a microcard reader.

United States Supreme Court

Print Access

The Law Library's collection of Supreme Court records and briefs covers 1792 to the present and is available in several forms. Record and brief resources are listed below by date, beginning with the earliest available. Various indexes for U.S. Supreme Court records, briefs and oral arguments on micro-formats (microfiche, microfilm, or microcard) are shelved on the library's third floor above the microfiche cabinets (call numbers KF 101.6 & KF 101.9). 1792-1831: Appellate Case Files of the Supreme Court of the United States (Microfilm: KF101.9 .U54 1962; 2nd floor microfilm collection). These files consist chiefly of transcripts of records of the cases in lower courts. There are a few briefs in these case files but the materials are mostly agreements of counsel, motions, orders, decrees, judgments, mandates and correspondence. Cases in this set are arranged by the order in which they were filed with the court. Index: (call # KF 101.9.U54 1963; Shelved on 3rd floor above microfiche cabinets).

1832-1896: U.S. Supreme Court Records and Briefs (Microfilm: KF101.9 .U54; 3rd floor cabinet near video tapes).

The earlier cases in this title (1832-1860) are arranged in the order filed with the court. There is an alphabetical list of cases in the first volume for each term. From 1860 to 1871 cases were arranged in a rough alphabetical sequence for each term; beginning in 1872 the arrangement on the reels follows that of U.S. Reports.

Index: (call # KF101.6.S36 1976; Shelved on 3rd floor above microfiche cabinets). This paper index to this set gives U.S. Reports citations for cases as well as reel locations.

1895-present: U.S. Supreme Court Records and Briefs (Microfiche or Microcard: KF101.9 .U54; 3rd floor cabinets and catalog drawers).

Beginning with 168 U.S. 1, the library has Supreme Court records and briefs in microfiche (with some of the materials for 1946

and 1956-66 on microcard).

Index: Located on the shelves above the microfiche cabinets for the records and briefs, there are printed finding aids volumes (classification number: KF 101.6) for some of the years from 1931 to 1979.

1793-present: Landmark Briefs and Arguments of the Supreme Court of the United States: Constitutional Law (KF101.8 .K87; 1st floor)

This multi-volume set provides arguments and briefs for significant or well-known Supreme Court cases. For the earliest cases, only a summary of the oral arguments is given; later cases have fuller records and briefs.

1952-1968: Oral Arguments of the Supreme Court; 1968-present: Complete Oral Arguments of the Supreme Court (Microfiche: KF101.9 .O65; 3rd floor microfiche cabinets)

Many of the oral arguments for cases argued from 1952 to 1968 were never transcribed; however, beginning in 1968 all oral arguments were transcribed and most are available in the set.

Index: The library has printed indexes (call number: Microfiche Index KF 101.9.065) indicating which cases have oral arguments available for the years 1953-1983 only.

Electronic Access

To find out where to get copies of United States Supreme Court records and briefs that may not yet be available at our law library go to the Supreme Court website. Click on the "Oral Arguments" tab and then choose "Where to Find Briefs". Note: you will need to have an Adobe Acrobat Reader to access that information.

1956-present: OYEZ: A Northwester University website publishes audio recordings of oral arguments of selected major constitutional law cases heard by the U.S. Supreme Court.

1979-present: Lexis: Briefs: (US Supreme Court Briefs) BRIEFS or USPLUS file; Oral Arguments: GENFED; USTRAN file.

Lexis' database contains briefs and transcripts of oral arguments filed in the cases argued since October 1979. Briefs are available within six weeks of publication. Access to Lexis is limited to authorized users.

1990-present: Westlaw: Briefs: U.S. Supreme Court Briefs (SCT-BRIEF) file. Oral Arguments: Transcripts of U.S. Supreme Court Oral Arguments (SCT-ORALARG) file.

Westlaw has oral arguments and appellant and respondent briefs available beginning with the 1990 - 91 Term. Amicus briefs are available beginning with the 1995 - 96 Term.

On the Docket: To get information on the current court docket and scheduled oral arguments go to On the Docket, a Northwestern University website, at http://www.medill.northwestern.edu/.

U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit

The Law Library has copies of records and briefs for many cases heard by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit. This court hears cases on appeal from U.S. district courts in North Carolina, West Virginia, Maryland, South Carolina and Virginia. Earlier case records and briefs are indexed by docket number rather than case citation.

Note: The law library has not yet received any records and briefs from the Fourth Circuit for the years 1995 to present.

The library has received microform copies of only some records and briefs for the years 1992-1995.

1892-1987: U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit. Briefs and Records (KF 112.9 4th.A3)

These print volumes contain the briefs and records for cases docketed in the Fourth Circuit from 1892 to 1987. Records and briefs for the years 1987 to 1992 are available on microfiche. Records and briefs for 1995 to the present are still not available.

But see microfiche files mentioned above for some records and briefs from 1993-1995.

Index: The Law Library has an index to Fourth Circuit briefs and records available at the reference desk. Briefs and records are indexed in chronological order by court docket number or reporter citation. The index indicates which briefs, records and other papers from each case are available in the bound volumes located on the first floor of the library. *Note*: If you only have the citation for an early case or only know the approximate year and party names, you can find the court docket number by looking the case up on Lexis' Academic Universe product, or on Lexis or Westlaw. Once you have a docket number, you can use the index to determine if the library has copies of the briefs and record.

In addition to the bound volumes listed above, the library has duplicate copies of the Fourth Circuit briefs and records for the years 1975-79 on microfilm (Microfilm classification # Br-f-12; on 1st floor shelves along brick wall as you come out of the elevator entryway).

Index: (call number: Law Microfiche Index KF112.9 4th .I53) This paper index to the reels is located on the 3rd floor above the microfiche cabinets. The index lists cases by name and by docket number.

1984-1995: **U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit. Records and Briefs** (Microfiche: KF112.9 4th .A3 1st floor microfiche cabinets near elevator.)

The Law Library has the more recent Fourth Circuit materials in microfiche. Coverage for years 1992-1995 is incomplete.

Index: (call number: MFR/Br-m/12; 3rd floor above the microfiche cabinets) This printed cumulative table of cases for 1986-1989 does not indicate which materials are included for each case.

North Carolina Supreme Court & North Carolina Court of Appeals

The North Carolina Supreme Court has both civil and criminal jurisdiction and hears cases on appeal from the N.C. Court of Appeals. The earliest records available in the Law Library date from 1874 and are available in printed format. An index to each of the courts' records and briefs is available at the library reference desk. In addition, an index to the print volumes of the North Carolina Court of Appeals from 1871 (volume 65) to present is located on the first floor at the very end of the print volumes. A partial index to N.C. Supreme Court briefs and records is shelved at the end of those volumes.

Print Access

1874-present: North Carolina Supreme Court. North Carolina Appeal Records (KFN 7445.9.A3 on first floor of library). This print collection begins with volume 70 from the year 1874.

1968-present: North Carolina Court of Appeals. (Call Number: KFN 7448.9.A3) The Law Library has records and briefs for most cases heard by the North Carolina Court of Appeals.

1982-date: North Carolina Supreme Court. North Carolina Appeals Record (Microfiche: KFN 7445.9.A3; 1st floor cabinets directly in front of elevator).

Electronic Access

To view electronic copies of some of the more recent North Carolina appellate court records and briefs (from the year 2000 to present) visit the NC appellate court website and click on the "browse" option or the "search" option in the upper left corner of the page.

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