



Records of the U.S. Congress Relating to Private Claims

Private claims, both received and created by Congress beginning in 1789, document congressional actions on submitted claims covering a wide range of topics, such as compensation for military service; land disputes; damages to persons or property caused by representatives of the American government, foreign governments, or Native Americans; and the removal of political disabilities imposed on former citizens of the Confederate States following the Civil War.

Types of Records

Private claims can include the claimant's petition, supporting affidavits, a bill introduced on the claimant's behalf, a committee report, and correspondence from the appropriate Federal agency as well as interested individuals.

Information Required for a Search

Researchers interested in locating private claims must know the name of the claimant, the Congress into which the claim was introduced, the chamber that considered the claim (either the House of Representatives or the Senate), and the committee(s) to which the claim was referred. Claims brought before the House of Representatives are in Records of the U.S. House of Representatives (Record Group 233); those brought before the Senate are in Records of the U.S. Senate (Record Group 46). The records are in the custody of the Center for Legislative Archives at the National Archives Building in Washington, DC.

Finding Aids

Congress printed special indexes to private claims as part of the U.S. Congressional *Serial Set*. Each index is arranged alphabetically by surname of the claimant and shows the nature or object of the claim, the Congress and session into which the claim was introduced, the committee to which it was referred, the nature and number of any committee reports, the number and disposition of any bills, the dates when the bills passed both chambers, and the date the President approved the bill.

The *Journals* of the House and Senate as well as the indexes to the *Congressional Record* and its predecessors can help identify and track claims considered by Congress for the dates not covered by the special indexes to private claims. For the years prior to 1817, consult the *American State Papers* for information pertaining to private claims.

Private relief bills were frequently the result of private claims. Most of the names or recipients of private relief and related congressional reports found in the U.S. Congressional *Serial Set* and the *American State Papers* are indexed in the "Finding List" volumes of the Congressional Information Service's *CIS U.S. Serial Set Index, 1789–1969*, under the heading "Private Relief and Related Actions-Index of Names of Individuals and Organizations."

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Indexes in the Congressional Serial Set

<u>Chamber</u>	<u>Congress</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Serial Set Volume Number</u>
Senate	14th–46th	1815–81	1945–1946
	47th–51st	1881–91	3175
	52nd–55th	1891–99	3881
	56th–57th	1899–1903	4433
	58th	1903–05	4917
	59th–60th	1905–09	6165
House	1st–31st	1789–1851	653-655
	32nd–41st	1851–71	1574
	42nd–46th	1871–81	2036
	47th–51st	1881–91	3268

For more information, see the following reference reports:

- *American State Papers: Public Lands and Claims*
- *Early Congressional Private Claims in the U.S. House of Representatives, 1789–1817*
- *Early Congressional Private Claims in the U.S. Senate, 1797–1811*
- *The Accompanying Papers of the U.S. House of Representatives, 1865–1877*

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