

## Guide to Constitutional Convention Research

**PART I: Basic steps to performing research** on the Alaska Constitution based on questions about articles and sections of the document.

- 1) **Check secondary sources:** Gordon Harrison, Victor Fischer, & Public Administration Service reports provide background information and context.
- 2) **Search the *Papers of the Constitutional Convention (Files)*:** Check **Guide to Files:** Identify Articles, Proposals, and Committees of interest. Note folder numbers, consult materials, repeat as needed.
- 3) **Search the *Proceedings*:** Check **Indexes to Proceedings (Minutes)**: determine days/dates of interest. Search key terms in the digital version. Page numbers in the indexes match the page numbers of the digitized version hosted on the website.
- 4) **Check *Journals* and other materials** as needed.

**PART II Sources and Indexes** with more detailed descriptions and explanations of their use.

- 1) **Secondary Sources**. The following are recommended secondary sources which provide a background understanding and aid researchers in relating specific documents to the greater context:
  - a. **Gordon Harrison, *Alaska's Constitution: A Citizen's Guide* (5<sup>th</sup> edition, 2012):** (Free publication available on the "Publications" page of this website.) This volume contains both the text of each section of the constitution and a summary of history and court cases that illustrate how each section has been interpreted.
  - b. **Victor Fischer, *Alaska's Constitutional Convention, University of Alaska Press, 1975*:** (Print only - available in the Legislative Library and other public libraries.) Fischer, a convention delegate, describes the contents as "a largely descriptive and historical story, being distilled from official and other records and from recollections of convention participants and observers." (Preface, p. vii) Much of the study is based in the proceedings, minutes and other documents

of the convention, and it thoroughly covers the major subjects of the articles.

- c. **Public Administration Service (PAS), *Constitutional Studies*, 3 Vol., 1955** (Convention *Files*: 100-General-Background Material File #180.1, 180.2, 180.3. Also available online in Legislative Library Catalog, card #5500200 and in print at the Legislative Library.) These staff reports were commissioned by the Alaska Statehood Committee for the Constitutional Convention. They contain research and analysis of the role of state constitutions in the American political system, outline basic rights and principles, discuss the structure of government, and tie all this to the specifics of the Alaskan situation.
  - d. **Background Materials, *Convention Files***. (100-General-Background Materials, Files #180.1 - 180.210.4) These files contain research materials used by committees in drafting the Articles. Contents include the PAS reports described above; George W. Rogers, *Handbook on Alaska Regionalism*; The Tennessee Plan; reports on transitional measures and natural resource issues.
- 2) **Papers of the Alaska Constitutional Convention, 1955-1956 ("Files")**. Documents in the files include correspondence, committee minutes, all delegate proposals, all versions of the committee proposals, and the Chief Clerk's *Journal* with all final amendments. **Guide to the Files (Index)** lists in numerical folder order the contents of the Legislative Library's boxed paper files. Note that our digital files (produced from microfilm of the boxed material) retain the same numerical order. The index will enable you to identify relevant files and review them. Some entries cross-reference the number of the committee proposal and the article number, which are not always identical. See also the cross-reference tables on pages 5 & 6 of this guide.
  - 3) **Minutes to the Constitutional Convention Proceedings**. **Proceedings (also referred to as Minutes)** are a complete chronological transcript that includes detailed discussions of the Articles, Proposals, Amendments, and other matters debated on the floor of the convention. They were published in a 6-volume set in 1965. The **Index, volume 7 of the set**

(1978), is organized by topic and article with page references to the print volumes. (Print editions available at the Legislative Library; Index and digital version available on this site.)

4) Subject Indexes to the Proceedings:

- a. **Article VIII, Natural Resources and Related Provisions** by George Utermohle (1990). Provides detailed page references to the history of Article VIII, includes the history of sections deleted from Committee Proposal 8/a, and a glossary of terms used in the resources article.
- b. **Article IX, Finance and Taxation** by George Utermohle (2001). Provides a detailed subject index and procedural history of Article IX, including a history of sections deleted from Committee Proposal No. 9. Both indexes available on this site.

5) Journals and other materials.

- a. The **Chief Clerk's Journals** are included in the Convention *Files* (File #520), and contain the procedural information of the daily meetings. **Unofficial Index to the Daily Journal (1963)** is organized by the subject of each article with a reference to the date and Journal page number.
- b. **Correspondence files** may turn up letters directly addressing matters of concern. (*Files* 190-196.)
- c. **Recess Hearings** occurred midway through the Convention and were held for public input. (*Files* 150-154.)
- d. **Speeches and Publicity:** (*Files* 160, 170-171) Includes speeches at the opening of the convention by U.S. Senator William F. Knowland, Delegate E.L. Bartlett, and former Governor Ernest Gruening. Publicity includes press releases for televised committee meetings.
- e. **Article X, Local Government - Excerpts from the Proceedings (Unofficial, 1963).** Portions of three days' proceedings from the second reading to the adoption of completed Article X of the constitution. Some sections not paginated or proofread. (Available online: Legislative Library Catalog #6300380 and in print in Box 107 of the convention *Files*).

- f. **Alaska Local Boundary Commission - Review of Article X of the Alaska Constitution, February 13 and 14, 1996, Transcript.** A hearing in which convention participants Victor Fischer (delegate), George Rogers (consultant), and Thomas Stewart (secretary) discuss Article X with the local boundary commission. (Available online: Legislative Library Catalog #9600130.)
- g. **Apportionment - Executive Director's File #160** has a compilation of constitutional convention materials such as delegate proposals and excerpts from the proceedings related to Article XIV, Apportionment. (Available at Legislative Library, print only.)

6) **General Research Notes.**

- a. Forms and Locations of the *Papers of the Constitutional Convention*: The digital version will be hosted at [http://akleg.gov/pages/constitutional\\_convention.php](http://akleg.gov/pages/constitutional_convention.php). A paper copy is held by the Legislative Reference Library and the originals by the Alaska State Archives. Microfilm copies are held by the Legislative Reference Library, Alaska State Library, Alaska State Archives, Anchorage Law Library, University of Alaska Anchorage Consortium Library, Fairbanks Law Library, and University of Alaska Fairbanks Rasmuson Library.
- b. The Legislative Library's paper copy of the *Papers* includes "Box 108," a collection of miscellaneous documents not microfilmed or digitized. Contents include: *Model State Constitution*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. 1948 and 6<sup>th</sup> ed. 1963; the 1956 printing of the Alaska Constitution; The Alaska Statehood Act (P.L. 85-508); materials from the statehood committee including Gov. Gruening's speech, "Statehood for Alaska" (Feb. 2, 1951); and Legislative Council correspondence files.
- c. Most errors and omissions have been corrected: missing pages, mislabeled items, etc. Internal errors in the primary materials have not been edited.
- d. Handwriting has not been subject to text recognition, except in the case of the corrected *Journals*.
- e. Always feel free to **contact the Legislative Reference Library for assistance**: [legislative.library@akleg.gov](mailto:legislative.library@akleg.gov) or 907-465-3808, M-F 8-5.

Constitution Article/Committee Proposal  
Cross-Reference Table

Article No.	Committee Proposal No.
I. Declaration of Rights	C/P 7
II. Legislature	C/P 5
III. Executive	C/P 10, 10a
IV. Judiciary	C/P 2
V. Suffrage & Elections	C/P 1
VI. Legislative Apportionment	C/P 14
VII. Health, Educ. & Welfare	C/P 7
VIII. Natural Resources	C/P 8, 8a
IX. Finance & Taxation	C/P 9
X. Local Government	C/P 6, 6a
XI. Initiative, Referendum & Recall	C/P 3
XII General Provisions	C/P 12,15,16
XIII. Amendment & Revision	C/P 3
XIV. Apportionment Schedule	C/P 14
XV. Schedule of Transition Measures	C/P 4, 11, 17, 17b
Ordinance No.1 Ratification	C/P 17b
Ordinance No.2 Alaska-Tennessee Plan	C/P 17c
Ordinance No.3 Abolition of Fish Traps	C/P 17a

