



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) About Legislative Records at the California State Archives

1. Why should legislative records be sent to the State Archives?

Legislative records are a rich source of information about the history of California state government. Records housed at the State Archives are used by academics, legislators, state agencies, legal professionals, and others to study key issues and legislation that have affected California. Popular research topics include understanding legislative intent, water policy, education, and health care issues. Sending files to the State Archives will also preserve the legacy of a legislator's work while in office.

2. What is the advantage of transferring legislative records to the State Archives?

There are many advantages to a Legislator to transfer records including 1) easy, convenient access to records, 2) long-term preservation of records, and 3) materials in a single location near the Capitol. In addition, the State Archives has professionally trained staff that handle records to high archival standards. Staff members are also able to assist with research inquiries by constituents.

3. What is the process for transferring records to the State Archives?

When a legislator's records are transferred to the State Archives, the records should be sent with a Legislative Records Transfer Form signed for each transfer. Blank copies of the Legislative Records Transfer Form are included in this information packet. Samples of completed transfer forms are also included.

4. How do I prepare records for transfer?

- Records should be packed into standard size record center boxes.
- Materials should be packed in folders in the original order they are maintained in your office. Please do not send binders or hanging file folders.
- Please number the boxes as you pack them.
- All boxes to be transferred to the Archives should be accompanied by a Legislative Records Transfer Form (please see enclosed examples).
- Instructions for the Legislative Records Transfer Form (see samples) are included on the back of the form. Please include a detailed description of box contents and the years covered by the records. Until Archives staff formally processes the materials, the transfer list provides a key to access the collection by Archives staff and offers the legislator or committee a detailed record of materials sent to the Archives.
- The transfer form and informational materials to prepare records are available in the Legislative Records Program [webpage](#).

5. What records should be sent to the State Archives?

Refer to the “*Quick Checklist of Files*” and “*Regarding Committee and Caucus Records*” documents for appropriate file types to send to the Archives. For questions about specific files, email the Legislative Records Program for additional information and guidance.

6. How do I get my records to the State Archives?

The State Archives does not have a means to pick up records being transferred. Legislative offices will need to make arrangements to have materials delivered to the Archives. Deliveries are accepted between 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday in the Archives/Secretary of State loading dock. The entrance to the dock area is on “P” Street between 10th and 11th Streets. A phone is located in the dock area, on the north wall, that will connect directly to an Archives staff member who will send someone to physically accept the materials. ***Please remind individuals making deliveries that they should not leave collections unattended in the loading dock area.***

7. What is the cost of storing records in the State Archives?

There is no cost.

8. How are legislative records processed and stored when transferred to State Archives?

Files are processed by Archives Staff and are placed in acid-free containers and stored in a temperature and humidity-controlled environment.

During the processing of records, files are placed in acid-free folders, and any paper fasteners or rubber bands are removed. Over time, these items will damage the documents. Archives staff will also remove copies of bills from the files to prevent damage to other documents in the file. Where there are exact duplicates of a document, the duplicates will also be removed. Only one copy is required for archival preservation.

After archives staff processes records, those records that are requested more frequently and may be digitized or microfilmed for research use. This allows the State Archives to preserve the original documents and have duplicate copies at other places in the state or country.

9. How do I know where my records are?

Once records are accessioned by the Archives, a copy of your transfer list will be returned to you identifying the accession number and location of the materials that were sent. (A typical accession number would appear as 2018-025 representing the 25th accession received in the year 2018.) Occasionally, materials must be re-boxed by Archives staff and the box numbers you assigned may have changed slightly. It will assist Archives staff if you can provide the accession number for the records that you are requesting.

10. How do I get access to the records of other legislators or legislative committees?

The Archives will provide photocopies of files of other legislators upon receipt of the request. The Archives will also provide photocopies of committee files. Contact the State Archives Reference Desk (916-653-2246) to request files. For the most rapid access, we recommend visiting the Archives in person where Archives staff will assist in locating needed files. While visiting the Archives, you can select specific documents for archives staff to copy. As with other researchers, if the total number of pages to be copied is less than 50 pages, they can be copied while you wait.

11. How can constituents access the records of legislators or legislative committees?

The State Archives reference staff is available to assist constituents Monday through Friday from 9:30 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. State Archives staff can instruct them in the process of requesting legislative materials. Constituents would have the same access as any other member of the public. Per the Terms of Agreement on the Legislative Transfer Form:

“The Legislature hereby transfers the records listed on this form to the custody of the California State Archives with the understanding that the records will become and remain the property of the California State Archives. Once transferred, the records shall be stored, referenced, and managed in accordance with the applicable laws, regulations, policies and procedures of the California State Archives, and the instructions of the State Archivist. The State Archivist may decline the transfer of records which he or she does not deem to be of historical value. The State Archivist may also destroy or otherwise dispose of any of the transferred documents as permitted by law. Furthermore, the records shall be open to inspection by the public unless exempt from disclosure by express provisions of law.”

It is to the advantage of a legislative office to refer the constituent directly to the State Archives. The State Archives has committee files as well as files from legislative caucuses, state agencies, and the Governor’s Office that will give the constituent additional information. In addition, Archives staff can direct them to other sources of information. Referring a constituent also relieves the legislative office of the task of providing the research assistance.

12. Does the public have access to the records sent to the State Archives?

The public has access to committee files and files of most current and former legislators.

13. Who has custody of legislative records transferred to the State Archives?”?

Any records transferred to the State Archives after a Legislator leaves office and identified by our archivists as having long-term historical value, are accessioned into our collection for preservation and become public record. Please ensure that Legislative staff has reached out to the State Archives prior to transferring records as once records have been transferred, they cannot be retrieved.

14. Are there any changes to what types of records a Legislator may submit to archives, especially records created during this time in response to COVID- 19?

Legislators and Legislative Committee offices should consult with the Legislative Records Program to determine which records should be transferred to the State Archives. Records typically sent to the State Archives include legislative bill files and subject files from Legislators and committees. Hearing files, including audio tapes or videotapes and subject files should also be sent to the Archives. Please do not send constituent case files, scheduling files, or meeting files.

If there are any questions or concerns regarding other types of files that can be sent to the State Archives, review the *Quick Checklist of Files* document in the Legislative Records Information Packet or contact the Archives and a staff member can provide suggestions whether or not to submit the file.

15. Where can I access the Legislative Records Transfer Form?

A copy of the Legislative Transfer Form can be found in the Legislative Records Program [webpage](#).

16. Who can I contact for more information regarding the Legislative Records Program?

Archives staff members are available to answer and questions and process any requests Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. until 5:00p. Any questions, inquiries, and/or requests related to the Legislative Records Program can be emailed to LegRecords@sos.ca.gov or to Carlos Beltrán, Government Relations Manager at Carlos.Beltran@sos.ca.gov or by calling the State Archives at (916) 653-7715.