**FAQs**

- **Primary Sources versus Secondary Sources – what’s the difference?**
  Primary Sources are physical manifestations of “the law” – books, electronic documents, etc. Most primary sources fall into the following categories: statutes, case opinions/decisions, executive orders, and regulations. Secondary Sources are materials explaining, analyzing or helpful in finding primary sources. Frequently used secondary sources include law review articles, digests, treatises, and legal encyclopedias. Some materials are “hybrid” in nature – they have become so widely respected they are considered statements of the law, or they print primary sources and secondary sources in the same work. Two of these include Restatements of the Law and American Law Reports (ALR) Annotated.

- **What is the difference between an Official publication and an Unofficial publication – and why does it matter?**
  In the legal publishing world, particularly in the publication of codes (statutes) and cases (opinion/decisions), there are official and unofficial sources. An official source is published by the issuing body or sanctioned by the issuing body – think of the Nebraska legislature or the United States Supreme Court. An unofficial source is one published by a commercial publisher without being officially sanctioned by the issuing body. While the LAW published is the same, the unofficial source is usually available sooner than the official publication and contains added enhancements such as key numbers and annotations. Nebraska, for example, has both official (Nebraska Reports; Revised Statutes of Nebraska) and unofficial (Northwestern Reporter; Revised Statutes of Nebraska Annotated; West’s Revised Statutes of Nebraska Annotated) reporters and statutes.

- **What is an Annotation?**
  Annotations are summaries in code volumes and other resources providing references to cases, law reviews, and other resources interpreting, explaining, analyzing, or citing that code section.

- **Someone has asked for an Unpublished decision – what do they want and where will I find it?**
  Some courts designate decisions as “unpublished” or “unreported”; this means that while the court has rendered a decision in the case, the case usually has no precedential value. At one time, these decisions were only available by contacting the court. Today many courts provide access to these decisions in print or electronically. For Nebraska cases (most are issued from Appellate Courts), the Schmid Law Library retains and binds "unpublished" opinions. For cases on the federal level, Thomson/West publishing collects these opinions and prints them in a publication called Federal Appendix. When considering the use of these opinions, always check the court rules to see how they may be used.

- **Why is everything updated in legal research – what does it mean and why is it relevant?**
  The “law” changes frequently – legislative actions, executive orders, and judicial opinions are passed or decided nearly every day. To integrate those changes, updates in the form of pocket parts or supplements are published in lieu of republishing an entire volume or set of volumes in most codes and secondary sources. When the pocket parts or supplements become too large, volumes are reprinted with the changes integrated. The original volume is then either recycled or kept for historical research purposes.

  Updating is imperative; THE MOST CURRENT STATEMENT OF THE LAW IS THE GOAL. Researchers should always know the date of the publication they are using and when the last update occurred. When using cases or codes, researchers should know if the case has been overruled/reversed and if the code section has been declared unconstitutional or changed. The two most frequently used methods are Shepard’s (a verification tool available on LexisNexis) and KeyCite (a verification tool available through Westlaw). For help using either of these services, please contact a law librarian.
Common Legal Abbreviations

### A., A.2d, A.3d

### A.L.R.

### Cal. Rptr.; Cal. Rptr. 2d; Cal. Rptr. 3d; Cal. Rptr. 4th
West’s California Reporter; West’s California Reporter, second series; West’s California Reporter, third series; West’s California Reporter, fourth series (1959 to present; part of West’s National Reporter System).

### C.F.R.
Code of Federal Regulations.

### F., F.2d, F.3d

### F. App’x
Federal Appendix (“unpublished” decisions from Federal Courts).

### F.R.
Federal Register.

### F.Supp., F.Supp.2d; F.Supp. 3d

### Neb.
Nebraska Reports (publishes decisions from the Nebraska Supreme Court).

### Neb. Admin. Code
Nebraska Administrative Code (regulations relating to Nebraska State Agencies).

Nebraska Court of Appeals Reports (publishes decisions from the Nebraska Court of Appeals).

Revised Statutes of Nebraska (official statutes published by the State of Nebraska).

Revised Statutes of Nebraska Annotated (unofficial statutes published by Lexis Law Publishing) OR West’s Revised Statutes of Nebraska Annotated (unofficial statutes published by Thomson Reuters/West).

### N.E., N.E.2d; N.E.3d
North Eastern Reporter; North Eastern Reporter, second series; North Eastern Reporter, third series (regional reporter – part of West’s National Reporter System; publishes decisions from Illinois, Indiana, Massachusetts, New York, and Ohio).

### N.W., N.W.2d
North Western Reporter; North Western Reporter, second series (regional reporter – part of West’s National Reporter System; publishes decisions from Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin).

### P., P.2d, P.3d
**S.E., S.E.2d**
South Eastern Reporter; South Eastern Reporter, second series *(regional reporter – part of West’s National Reporter System; publishes decisions from Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia).*

**So., So.2d. So.3d**
Southern Reporter; Southern Reporter, second series; Southern Reporter, third series *(regional reporter – part of West’s National Reporter System; publishes decisions from Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, and Mississippi).*

**STAT.**
Statutes at Large. Set publishes all Public Laws passed by the United States Congress in chronological order, by legislative session.

**S.W., S.W.2d, S.W.3d**
South Western Reporter; South Western Reporter, second series; South Western Reporter, third series *(regional reporter – part of West’s National Reporter System; publishes decisions from Arkansas, Kentucky, Missouri, Tennessee, and Texas).*

**U.S.C.**
United States Code *(official codification of the laws of the United States).*

**U.S.C.A.**
United States Code Annotated *(unofficial codification of the laws of the United States published by Thomson Reuters/West).*

**U.S.C.C.A.N.**
United States Code Congressional & Administrative News *(published by Thomson Reuters/West, this resource reprints Public Laws and selected legislative history – e.g., senate reports, committee reports, etc.).*

**U.S.C.S.**
BASIC LEGAL CITATION FORMATS

Basic Elements of Most Legal Citations

| Volume or Title number | Publication (usually abbreviated) | Page number | Date |

Examples:

Nebraska Cases


- Plaintiff
- Defendant
- Volume
- Page
- Volume
- Page
- Date

REPORTER (Nebraska Reports)
REPORTER (North Western Reporter, second series)

United States Supreme Court


- Plaintiff
- Defendant
- Volume
- Page
- Volume
- Page
- Date

REPORTER (United States Reports)
REPORTER (West’s Supreme Court Reporter)

REPORTER (Lawyer’s Edition, second series)
**Federal Circuit Court**

_U.S. v. Butler_, 296 F.3d 721 (8th Cir. 2002).

**Federal District Court Cases**


**Law Reviews & Legal Periodicals**


Federal Statutes/Codification

Federal Regulations

39 C.F.R. § 266.6 (2014).

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ABBREVIATION
(Code of Federal Regulations)

PROPOSED RULE


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ABBREVIATION
(Federal Register)

Nebraska Statute


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ABBREVIATION
(Revised Statutes of Nebraska)

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ABBREVIATION
(article 1 section 76)