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Research Guide

Locating a California Court Brief

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Scope:

This guide explains how to locate and review a California Court brief either on microfiche, in print, or online using the California Public Law Library Briefs Service.

Our collection of briefs:

The San Diego County Public Law Library is a California brief depository, and has briefs and appendices from cases which have been heard by the California Supreme Court and Courts of Appeal on microfiche from 1895 through 1935. Our collection then has a gap; our microfiche collection starts up again in 1959, with Supreme Court cases published in 53 Cal.2d 1 and forward; we have Courts of Appeal cases only since 1969, with cases published in 1 Cal.App.3d 1 and forward. We also have paper briefs of these and additional, unpublished cases starting in 1972, until the mid-1990's. We do not have any briefs from the California Supreme Court between 1935 and 1959, or from the Courts of Appeal between 1935 and 1969. If you are seeking briefs from this missing period, you should contact the Los Angeles County Law Library at 213-629-3531. They are also a brief depository, and have a more complete collection than we do. Starting with the mid-1990's, the San Diego County Public Law Library arranged to have its depository collection of California Supreme Court and Courts of Appeal briefs copied on microfiche and digitized by the publisher Thomson Corporation. Many of these briefs (although not all) are now available online to California public law libraries through the California Public Law Library Briefs Service.

Reviewing briefs in the library:

Patrons who are present in the library may review without charge any briefs available on microfiche, in print, or online. The librarians can help you locate briefs for any case for which you have either the case name (that is, the names of the parties), the docket number, or the citation of the reported case opinion. We cannot search for briefs for you either online or in our paper or microfiche collections by keyword or topic, although you may search for relevant cases using our conventional materials, such as Westlaw or Lexis or our digests, and we could then see if we can locate the briefs for any relevant case which you discover.

Locating a brief online:

If you seek a brief from the mid-1990's or later, you can search for it on the California Public Law Library Briefs Service, following the instructions in our research guide "Accessing California Briefs Online."

Printing, copying or checking out briefs when in the library:

- You may photocopy our paper briefs for \$0.15 a page.
- You may print microfiched briefs at the microfiche readers for \$0.15 a page. Unfortunately, you can only print one page at a time.
- You may print briefs found on the California Public Law Library Briefs Service, from any of the patron computers for \$0.20 a page.

Most briefs require too much memory to save to a floppy disk, but our patron computers can save materials to CD-ROMs or thumb drives. You may use your own, or you can purchase a CD-ROM at the library's Circulation Desk.

Retrieving briefs from your home or office:

You may e-mail us with a request that particular briefs be mailed or e-mailed to you, if you have the docket number, citation or name of the case; however, we will charge a document delivery fee. Call our Circulation Desk at (619) 531-3900 to request an estimate. We cannot fax briefs to our patrons, as they are too long.

The online service www.briefserve.com makes briefs from California and other courts available to the general public. Any patron can set up his or her own account with BriefServe at his or her home or office using a credit card, and can then download each brief for \$25.00. There is a two brief minimum order from BriefServe, meaning that you will always pay at least \$50.00 to order briefs directly from the company; however, if you are in a hurry or the briefs are particularly long, this may make more sense than paying the library to send them to you.