Public Law Titles Codebook

Policy Agendas Project
2016

Overview of the Data Set

This dataset contains information about titles within public laws. Beginning in the 1960s, Congress often divided longer laws into subsections, which addressed discrete topic areas. Congress called these subsections, "titles." A single public law may contain no titles, or several titles that span multiple topic areas.

Beginning with laws enacted in 1948, the text of each statute recorded in the Policy Agendas Project Public Laws dataset was examined in the volumes of the U.S. Statutes at Large. The U.S. Statutes at Large is the chronological compilation of all federal law. Within its volumes, every law that meets the formal requirements for enactment, laid out in the presentment clause of the Constitution, is published in the order in which the President signs it. The laws themselves are published in the same form in which the President signs them, which preserves their internal structure, including the titles into which Congress organized their constituent parts.

Each law that contained one or more titles was identified in the physical volumes of the U.S. Statutes at Large. The name(s) of the title(s), as well as the number of pages they occupied in the physical volumes were recorded in .25 page increments. The name of each title was coded according to the Policy Agendas Project coding scheme.

Because not all public laws contain titles, this dataset treats smaller laws, which are not subdivided into titles, and titles within larger laws as equivalent units of law. As a result, the final dataset is a mix of titles and smaller laws.

Content Coding

Each entry, titles and small laws, is coded according to policy content, along with other variables of interest. We employed the standard Policy Agendas Project topic scheme in our policy content coding, and each entry was assigned one and only one content code. This allows researchers to trace activity on a particular topic across the period. The full description of our content categories may be found in the major topics codebook at http://www.comparativeagendas.net/us.

Variable Names and Descriptions

ID
This column records the unique identifier for each observation. It has no substantive application.

Source
The alphanumeric number of the public law in the United States Code (i.e. P.L. 80242)

PublicLawNo
The number of the public law in the United States Code (i.e. 80242)

Year
The year covered in the CQ Almanac.

Congress
The number of the Congress.

HouseBill
The bill that became law.

SenateBill
The bill that became law.

HouseReportNo
The number of the report from the House committee markup(s). If a House report number is not mentioned and a conference report number is mentioned, then the conference report is coded.

SenateReportNo
The number of the report from the Senate committee markup(s). If a Senate report number is not mentioned and a conference report number is mentioned, then the conference report is coded.

FilterDemocrat
1 if the representative or Senator introducing the bill is a Democrat; 0 otherwise.

Introduced
The name of the representative or Senator who introduced the legislation. In cases where more than one name is listed, only the first person is coded.

House Committee, HouseCommittee2
The House committee(s) that reported the bill (up to two). See the Committee Codebook for a complete list of committee and subcommittee codes.

Senate Committee
The Senate committee that reported the bill. See the Committee Codebook for a complete list of

committee and subcommittee codes.

Conference
1 if the bill had a House-Senate conference committee; 0 otherwise.

Filter_Vetoed
1 if vetoed by the president (meaning Congress overroad it); 0 otherwise.

Filter_Commemorative
1 if the legislation is commemorative in nature (e.g. proclamations for theme weeks like National Potato Week, naming a federal building after someone); 0 otherwise.

Law_Description
The concise description of the law, copied from the CQ Almanac.

Law_Pap_MajorTopic
This column records the Policy Agendas Project's major topic code that corresponds to the information found in the Law_Description column. The codes and examples for this column are found in the Major Topics Codebook on the Policy Agendas Project website.

Law_Pap_SubTopicCode
This column denotes the Policy Agendas Project's subtopic code that corresponds to the information found in the Law_Description column. The codes and examples for this column are found in the Major Topics Codebook on the Policy Agendas Project website.

Law_MajorTopic
This column records the Comparative Agendas Project's major topic code that corresponds to the existing Policy Agendas Project topic code and the Law_Description column. Please visit the Comparative Agendas Project website (www.comparativeagendas.net) for more information.

Law_SubTopic
This column records the Comparative Agendas Project's subtopic topic code that corresponds to the existing Policy Agendas Project topic code and the Law_Description column. Please visit the Comparative Agendas Project website (www.comparativeagendas.net) for more information.

Link
For each law from the 93rd Congress forward, a link to the bill summary and status is made available through THOMAS (note: we will be updating the 2008-2010 data to include this link very soon). From the second session of the 102nd Congress forward, the full text of the public law is also available.

DateIntroduced
Beginning with observations in 2008, the date the public law was introduced as a bill.

DatePassedHouse

Beginning with observations in 2008, the date the public law was passed the House.

DatePassedSenate
Beginning with observations in 2008, the date the public law was passed the Senate.

DateSigned
Beginning with observations in 2008, the date the public law was signed into law.

LawLength
Number of pages the law occupies in the U.S. Statutes at large.

Title
1 if the entry is a title within a larger law; 0 otherwise.

TitleDiscription
Name of the title as recorded from the volumes of the U.S. Statutes at Large.

TitleLength
Number of pages the title occupies in the U.S. Statutes at large.

MajorTopic
If Title=1, this column records the Comparative Agendas Project's major topic code that corresponds to the information found in the Title_Description column. If Title=0, this column records the Comparative Agendas Project's major topic code that corresponds to information found in the Law_Description. Please visit the Comparative Agendas Project website (www.comparativeagendas.net) for more information.

SubTopic
If Title=1, this column records the Comparative Agendas Project's subtopic topic code that corresponds to information found in the Title_Description column. If Title=0, this column records the Comparative Agendas Project's subtopic code that corresponds to information found in the Law_Description. Please visit the Comparative Agendas Project website (www.comparativeagendas.net) for more information.