
**U.S. Government Printing Office
Federal Digital System (FDsys)
User Guide Document**

Bills XML Bulk Data

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Revision History

Revision	Date	Description
1.0	December 2012	Version 1.0 – House Bills
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1. Introduction

At the direction of the Appropriations Committee within the United States House of Representatives, in support of the Legislative Branch Bulk Data Task Force, the Government Printing Office (GPO), the Library of Congress (LOC), the Clerk of the House, and the Secretary of the Senate are making bills in XML format available through the GPO's Federal Digital System (FDsys) Bulk Data repository starting with the 113th Congress. The FDsys Bulk Data repository for bills is available at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/bulkdata/BILLS>. Please see FDsys at <http://www.fdsys.gov> for access to individual House and Senate Congressional Bills in PDF and HTML formats.

1.1. Types of Legislation

Four types of legislation are available on the Bulk Data repository. This section provides a brief overview of each type of legislation.

Bills

- House Bill (HR)
- Senate Bill (S)

A bill is a legislative proposal before Congress. Bills from each house are assigned a number in the order in which they are introduced, starting at the beginning of each Congress (first and second sessions). Public bills pertain to matters that affect the general public or classes of citizens, while private bills pertain to individual matters that affect individuals and organizations, such as claims against the Government.

Joint Resolutions

- House Joint Resolution (HJRES)
- Senate Joint Resolution (SJRES)

A joint resolution is a legislative proposal that requires the approval of both houses and the signature of the President, just as a bill does. Resolutions from each house are assigned a number in the order in which they are introduced, starting at the beginning of each Congress (first and second sessions). There is no real difference between a bill and a joint resolution. Joint resolutions generally are used for limited matters, such as a single appropriation for a specific purpose. They are also used to propose amendments to the Constitution. A joint resolution has the force of law, if approved. Joint resolutions become a part of the Constitution when three-quarters of the states have ratified them; they do not require the President's signature.

Concurrent Resolutions

- House Concurrent Resolution (HCONRES)
- Senate Concurrent Resolution (SCONRES)

A concurrent resolution is a legislative proposal that requires the approval of both houses but does not require the signature of the President and does not have the force of law. Concurrent resolutions generally are used to make or amend rules that apply to both houses. They are also used to express the sentiments of both of the houses. For example, a concurrent resolution is used to set the time of Congress' adjournment. It may also be used by Congress to convey congratulations to another country on the anniversary of its independence.

Simple Resolutions

- House Simple Resolution (HRES)
- Senate Simple Resolution (SRES)

A simple resolution is a legislative proposal that addresses matters entirely within the prerogative of one house or the other. It requires neither the approval of the other house nor the signature of the President, and it does not have the force of law. Most simple resolutions concern the rules of one house. They are also used to express the sentiments of a single house. For example, a simple resolution may offer condolences to the family of a deceased member of Congress, or it may give "advice" on foreign policy or other executive business.

Additional information about bill types and versions is available at http://www.gpo.gov/help/index.html#about_congressional_bills.htm.

1.2. Scope of Bulk Data

The Bills data collection on FDsys includes XML bill texts from the 113th Congress forward.

1.3. Bulk Data Downloads

The Bulk Data repository is organized by Congress, session, and bill type. A ZIP file is available for each bill type and contains all bill XML files for that bill type within a specific session and Congress.

2. Authenticity of Bill XML Files

Q. What is the data set available for bills in XML?

A. Bill files in XML are provided to GPO by the House of Representatives and Senate and are available starting in 2013 with the 113th Congress.

Q. How do the bulk XML files offered on the FDsys Bulk Data repository relate to the digitally signed PDF files available on FDsys?

A. GPO makes Congressional Bills from the 103rd Congress forward available on FDsys in digitally signed PDF and HTML formats. Generally, House and Senate bills from the 111th Congress forward are also available in XML on FDsys.

Q. What does the term “digitally signed” mean?

A. Currently, GPO uses digital signature technology on PDF documents to add a visible Seal of Authenticity (a graphic of an eagle) to authenticated and certified documents. The technology allows GPO to assure data integrity, and provide users with assurance that the content is unchanged since it was disseminated by GPO. A signed and certified document also displays a blue ribbon icon near the Seal of Authenticity and in the Signatures tab within Adobe Acrobat or Reader. When users print a document that has been signed and certified by GPO, the Seal of Authenticity will automatically print on the document, but the blue ribbon will not print.

Q. Are bill XML bulk data download files digitally signed?

A. No, XML files available for individual or bulk download are not digitally signed. They can be manipulated and enriched to operate in the various applications that users may devise. GPO is evaluating technology that could be used to digitally sign XML files on FDsys. Adding signed non-PDF files to FDsys would be an enhancement for FDsys users, but would not be used to restrict or adversely affect the XML bulk data downloads. The integrity of a bill XML file can be verified by checking its SHA-256 hash value against the hash value recorded in the PREMIS metadata file for each bill on FDsys.

Q. What is the authenticity of bill XML files after they have been downloaded to another site?

A. We cannot vouch for the authenticity of data that is not under GPO's control. GPO is providing free access to bill data via XML for display in various applications and mash-ups outside the FDsys domain. GPO does not endorse third party applications, and does not evaluate how our original legal content is displayed on other sites. Consumers should form their own conclusions as to whether the downloaded data can be relied upon within an application or mash-up. An application may link to the official bill files on FDsys to provide users with additional assurance. The authenticated digitally-signed PDF is available on FDsys at <http://www.fdsys.gov>.

Q. Does GPO assert any control over downstream uses of bulk data?

A. In general, there are no restrictions on re-use of information in bills because U.S. Government works are not subject to copyright. GPO does not restrict downstream uses of bill data, except that independent providers should be aware that only GPO and its legislative branch data partners are entitled to represent that they are the providers of the official versions of bills.

Q. How can re-publishers indicate the source of a bill XML file?

A. Re-publishers of bills in XML may cite FDsys and GPO as the source of their data, and they are free to characterize the quality of data as it appears on their site.

3. Resources Directory

The resources directory at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/bulkdata/BILLS/resources> contains the current version of the DTD, stylesheets, and associated graphics which, when placed in the same directory as a bill XML file, are used to display the XML file in a browser. Additional information about bills in XML can be found at <http://xml.house.gov>.