

# Research Tip – West’s Key Number System

## 1. What Are Key Numbers

One of the defining features of Westlaw is the Key Number System. The Key Number System is a classification system that organizes cases by topic, allowing legal researchers to quickly find cases related to a particular issue.

This system was created in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, starting with seven categories: persons, property, contracts, torts, crime, remedies, and government. It has since grown to over 400 topics, covering everything from abandoned property to zoning, and nearly 100,000 individual points of law.

The key numbers are categorized topically in a hierarchical structure. Legal issues are first categorized broadly and then subcategorized down to very specific points of law. Key numbers are the same across all West publications, so if the document you are viewing contains a key number, you can use that same number to find additional cases from any jurisdiction.

## 2. How to Use

Key numbers are found on the Westlaw homepage and at the beginning of most cases. To use the key numbers, follow the key number links from within a case or search/browse the list of all key numbers from the homepage.

### a. From Within a Case

One way to locate relevant cases is to start from the key numbers within a case. Key numbers are found with the headnotes at the beginning of most cases. If there is a key number relevant to your issue, you can use it to find other cases examining that particular issue.

The screenshot shows the Westlaw interface for the case 'Obergefell v. Hodges'. The 'West Headnotes (22)' section is visible, with a red box highlighting a key number '92k3848' and its corresponding key number '92k3850'. The key number '92k3848' is associated with the text 'Relationship to Other Constitutional Provisions: Incorporation' and 'Bill of Rights in general'. The key number '92k3850' is associated with the text 'Bill of Rights in general'. The key number '92' is associated with 'Constitutional Law'. The key number '92XXVII' is associated with 'Due Process'. The key number '92XXVII(A)' is associated with 'In General'. The key number '92XXVII(B)' is associated with 'Protections Provided and Deprivations Prohibited in General'. The key number '92k3868' is associated with 'Rights, Interests, Benefits, or Privileges Involved in General'. The key number '92k3873' is associated with 'Liberties and liberty interests'.

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Use the buttons in the top right corner to toggle between grid view and list view.

West Headnotes (22)

1 **Constitutional Law**  
The fundamental liberties protected by the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment include most of the rights enumerated in the Bill of Rights, and in addition, these liberties extend to certain personal choices central to individual dignity and autonomy, including intimate choices that define personal identity and beliefs. *U.S.C.A. Const.Amend. 14.*  
[26 Cases that cite this headnote](#)

	<b>92</b>	Constitutional Law
	<b>92XXVII</b>	Due Process
	<b>92XXVII(A)</b>	In General
	<b>92k3848</b>	Relationship to Other Constitutional Provisions; Incorporation
	<b>92k3850</b>	Bill of Rights in general

Once you find a relevant topic, select that key number to be taken to the list of cases.

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REFERENCE History Folders My links Notifications ? Sign out

3850 — Bill of Rights ... Search West Key Number Headnotes U.S. Supreme Court

Filter

Select multiple

Search within results

Key Number +

Jurisdiction +

Date +

Home > West Key Number System > 92 CONSTITUTIONAL LAW > XXVII. DUE PROCESS, k3840-k4849 > (A) IN GENERAL, k3840-k3864 > 3848 Relationship to other constitutional provisions; incorporation

**3850 — Bill of Rights in general (15)**

Add to Favorites Copy link

Jurisdiction: United States Supreme Court Change

1 - 15 Sort: Topic then Date

Select all items - No items selected

- 92 CONSTITUTIONAL LAW 18,606
  - 92XXVII Due Process 5,355
    - 92XXVII(A) In General 166
      - 92 3848 Relationship to Other Constitutional Provisions; Incorporation 123
        - 92 3850 Bill of Rights in general 15

1. **Timbs v. Indiana**  
Supreme Court of the United States. - February 20, 2019 - 139 S.Ct. 682  
**Headnote:** A Bill of Rights protection is an incorporated protection, applicable to the States under the Fourteenth Amendment's Due Process Clause, if it is fundamental to the scheme of ordered liberty, or deeply rooted in the Nation's history and tradition. *U.S. Const. Amend. 14.*  
[15 Cases that cite this legal issue](#)  
**Document Preview:** CRIMINAL JUSTICE — Sentencing. The Eighth Amendment's Excessive Fines Clause is an incorporated protection applicable to the States.

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From there, you can use filters to customize your search by limiting jurisdiction, date, or by searching within the results.

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REFERENCE History Folders My links Notifications ? Sign out

3850 –Bill of Rights ... Search West Key Number Headnotes U.S. Supreme Court

**Filter**

Select multiple

Search within results

Key Number +

Jurisdiction +

Date +

Home > West Key Number System > 92 CONSTITUTIONAL LAW > XXVII. DUE PROCESS, k3840-k4849 > (A) IN GENERAL, k3840-k3864 > 3848 Relationship to other constitutional provisions; incorporation

**3850 –Bill of Rights in general (15)**

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15 Cases that cite this legal issue

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You can also change the hierarchy level to broaden your search by selecting any of the key numbers listed at the top of the page. The higher up the hierarchy you go, the more cases will be included in the results. A search from any intermediate level will include results from the more specific levels below it.

Home > West Key Number System > 92 CONSTITUTIONAL LAW > XXVII. DUE PROCESS, k3840-k4849 > (A) IN GENERAL, k3840-k3864 > 3848 Relationship to other constitutional provisions; incorporation

**3850 –Bill of Rights in general (15)**

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Select all items - No items selected

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Home > West Key Number System > 92 CONSTITUTIONAL LAW > XXVII. DUE PROCESS, k3840-k4849  
(A) IN GENERAL, k3840-k3864 (166)

[Add to Favorites](#) [Copy link](#)

Jurisdiction: [United States Supreme Court](#) [Change](#)

1 - 100 > Sort: [Topic then Date](#)

Select all items - No items selected

- 92 CONSTITUTIONAL LAW 18,606
  - 92XXVII Due Process 5,355
    - 92XXVII(A) In General 166**
      - 92 3840 In general. 2

**1. Application of Gault**  
Supreme Court of the United States - May 15, 1967 - 387 U.S. 1  
**Headnote:** Due process of law is primary and indispensable foundation of individual freedom. [U.S.C.A.Const. Amend. 14.](#)  
[14 Cases that cite this legal issue](#)  
**Document Preview:** Proceeding on appeal from a judgment of the Supreme Court of Arizona, 99 Ariz. 181, 407 P.2d 760, affirming dismissal of petition for writ of habeas corpus filed by parents to secure release of their 15-year-old son who had been committed as juvenile delinquent to state industrial school. The United States Supreme Court, Mr. Justice Fortas, held that juvenile has right to notice of charges, to counsel, to confrontation and cross-examination of witnesses, and to privilege against self-incrimination. Judgment reversed and cause remanded with directions. Mr. Justice Harlan dissented in part; Mr. Justice Stewart dissented.

## b. Browse & Search

You can find the full list of topics by selecting ‘Topics & Key Numbers’ from the homepage.

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REFERENCE History Folders My links Notifications ? Sign out

Enter terms, citations, databases, questions, anything ... All State & Federal Search Tips > Advanced >

Content types Federal materials State materials Practice areas My content Tools

- Cases
- Trial Court Orders
- Statutes & Court Rules
- Secondary Sources
- Practical Law
- Regulations
- Administrative Decisions & Guidance
- Arbitration Materials

- Briefs
- Expert Materials
- Forms
- Jury Verdicts & Settlements
- Topics & Key Numbers**
- Proposed & Adopted Regulations
- Proposed & Enacted Legislation
- Trial Court Documents

**Featured topics**  
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# Research Tip – West’s Key Number System

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West Key Number Head... Search West Key Number Headnotes All State & Federal Search Tips

Home

## West Key Number System

Add to Favorites Copy link

Search for Key Numbers relevant to your issue

Enter terms e.g., landlord duty of care to trespassers Search

Jurisdiction selected: All State & Federal Change Jurisdiction

Select all content No items selected Clear Selection Specify Content to Search

<input type="checkbox"/> 1 ABANDONED AND LOST PROPERTY	<input type="checkbox"/> 141E EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> 289 PARTNERSHIP
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 ABATEMENT AND REVIVAL	<input type="checkbox"/> 142 EJECTMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> 290 PARTY WALLS
<input type="checkbox"/> 4 ABORTION AND BIRTH CONTROL	<input type="checkbox"/> 142T ELECTION LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> 291 PATENTS
<input type="checkbox"/> 5 ABSENTEES	<input type="checkbox"/> 143 ELECTION OF REMEDIES	<input type="checkbox"/> 294 PAYMENT
<input type="checkbox"/> 6 ABSTRACTS OF TITLE	<input type="checkbox"/> 145 ELECTRICITY	<input type="checkbox"/> 295 PENALTIES
<input type="checkbox"/> 8 ACCORD AND SATISFACTION	<input type="checkbox"/> 146 EMBEZZLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> 296 PENSIONS
<input type="checkbox"/> 9 ACCOUNT	<input type="checkbox"/> 148 EMINENT DOMAIN	<input type="checkbox"/> 297 PERJURY
<input type="checkbox"/> 10 ACCOUNT, ACTION ON	<input type="checkbox"/> 149 ENTRY, WRIT OF	<input type="checkbox"/> 298 PERPETUITIES
<input type="checkbox"/> 11 ACCOUNT STATED	<input type="checkbox"/> 149E ENVIRONMENTAL LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> 300 PILOTS
<input type="checkbox"/> 11A ACCOUNTANTS	<input type="checkbox"/> 149T EQUITABLE CONVERSION	<input type="checkbox"/> 302 PLEADING
<input type="checkbox"/> 12 ACKNOWLEDGMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> 150 EQUITY	<input type="checkbox"/> 303 PLEDGES
	<input type="checkbox"/> 151 ESCAPE	<input type="checkbox"/> 305 POSSESSORY WARRANT
	<input type="checkbox"/> 156 ESTOPPEL	<input type="checkbox"/> 306 POSTAL SERVICE

Select any topic to browse the list of subtopics and locate your issue.

Home > West Key Number System

## 170A FEDERAL CIVIL PROCEDURE

Add to Favorites Copy link

Select all content No items selected Clear Selection Collapse All Specify Content to Search

- I. IN GENERAL, k1-k100
  - (A) IN GENERAL, k1-k20
  - (B) RULES OF COURT IN GENERAL, k21-k50
  - (D) NATURE AND FORM OF REMEDY, k71-k80
  - (E) JOINDER OF CLAIMS AND REMEDIES, k81-k100
- II. PARTIES, k101-k400
  - (A) IN GENERAL, k101-k110
  - (B) CAPACITY, k111-k130
  - (C) REAL PARTIES IN INTEREST, k131-k160
  - (D) CLASS ACTIONS, k161-k200
  - (E) NECESSARY JOINDER, k201-k240
  - (F) PERMISSIVE JOINDER, k241-k280
  - (G) BRINGING IN NEW PARTIES; THIRD-PARTY PROCEEDINGS, k281-k310
  - (H) INTERVENTION, k311-k350
  - (I) SUBSTITUTION, k351-k380
  - (J) DEFECTS, OBJECTIONS AND AMENDMENTS, k381-k400
- VI. MOTIONS AND ORDERS, k611.1-k620
  - (A) MOTIONS IN GENERAL, k611.1-k611.18
  - (B) ORDERS, k612.1-k612.7

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Or use the search box to find a list of key numbers related to your search terms.

The screenshot shows the Thomson Reuters Westlaw Edge interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'REFERENCE', 'History', 'Folders', 'My links', 'Notifications', and 'Sign out'. Below this is a search bar with 'West Key Number Head...' and 'Search West Key Number Headnotes'. A dropdown menu shows 'All State & Federal'. The main content area is titled 'Home' and 'West Key Number System'. There are buttons for 'Add to Favorites' and 'Copy link'. A search box is highlighted with a red border, containing the text 'Search for Key Numbers relevant to your issue' and a search button. Below the search box, it says 'Jurisdiction selected: All State & Federal - Change Jurisdiction'. At the bottom, there are checkboxes for 'Select all content' and 'Specify Content to Search'.

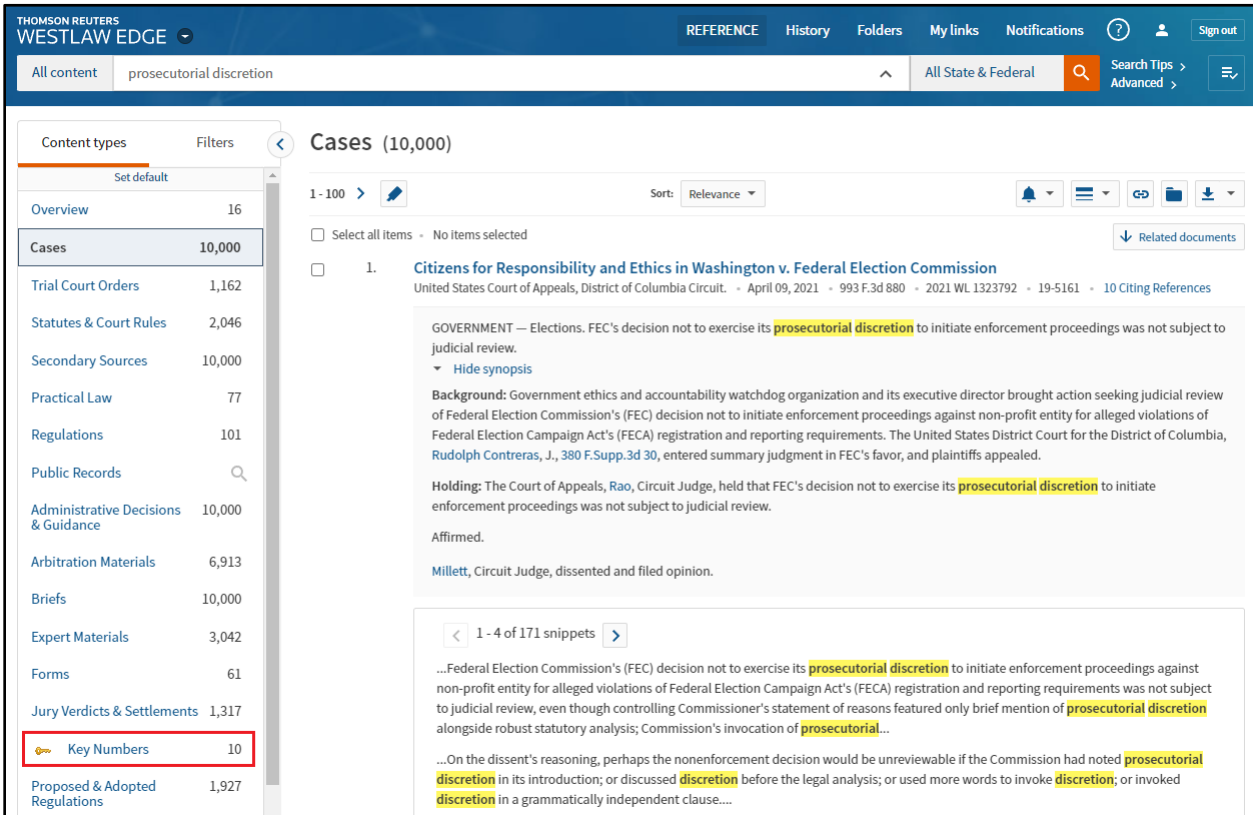
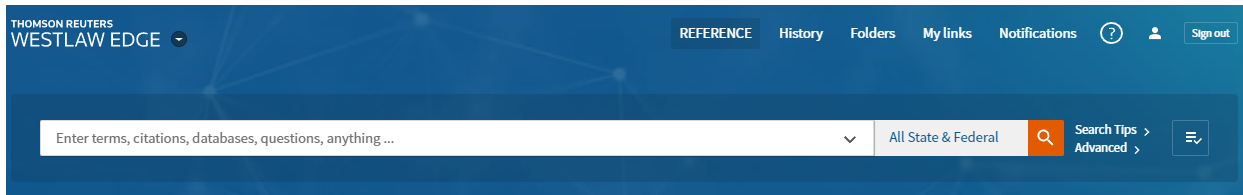
The screenshot shows the Thomson Reuters Westlaw Edge interface displaying search results for key numbers. The search bar contains 'summary judgment' and the search button is highlighted. Below the search bar, it says 'Jurisdiction selected: All State & Federal - Change Jurisdiction'. The results are listed under 'Select content to View or Search Headnotes'. The results are organized into categories: 'All State & Federal', 'CRIMINAL LAW', 'JUDGMENT', and 'APPEAL AND ERROR'. Under 'CRIMINAL LAW', there are two items: '110-1153.7 > Reception and admissibility of evidence > Best and secondary evidence' and '110-400(1) > In general > In general'. Under 'JUDGMENT', there are six items: '228-183 > Motion or other application > In general', '228-186 > Motion or other application > Hearing and determination', '228-185(2) > Evidence in general > Presumptions and burden of proof', '228-189 > ON MOTION OR SUMMARY PROCEEDING > Defects and objections', '228-185.1(1) > Affidavits, form, requisites and execution of > In general', and '228-184 > Motion or other application > Notice'. Under 'APPEAL AND ERROR', there are two items: '30-4072(3) > Verdict, findings, sufficiency of evidence, and judgment > Summary judgment' (highlighted in yellow) and '30-3551 > SUMMARY JUDGMENT > In general'.

Once you have selected an individual key number, you will be taken to a page listing all the cases that have been assigned that key number. Remember you can filter your results by limiting the jurisdiction, date, or by searching within your results. You can also change the hierarchy level by using the list of key numbers at the top of the results page.

## c. Global Search

Key numbers also appear as a filter after running a search in the global search box at the top of every page. You will see a link for Key Numbers in the menu on the left side of the page after running your search.

# Research Tip – West’s Key Number System



## 3. In Print

The Key Number System is also available in print in the form of digests. Some digests are available at the law library. [Use our catalog](#) to find digests available in your location.

## 4. For More Information

You can find more information and training resources on Westlaw’s Training and Support page at <https://legal.thomsonreuters.com/en/support/westlaw-edge>.

For research assistance, contact library staff at [library@akcourts.gov](mailto:library@akcourts.gov) or (907) 264-0585.