Search Strategies for www.congress.gov

A note about Congress.gov and its contents:

- Congress.gov is the official site for US federal legislative information, maintained by the Library of Congress. The site is designed to provide accurate, timely information for Members of Congress, legislative agencies, and the public using data from the Office of the Clerk of the US House of Representatives, the Office of the Secretary of the Senate, the Government Printing Office, Congressional Budget Office, and the LOC's Congressional Research Service. Congress.gov is usually updated the morning after a session adjourns. (via Congress.gov)
- Congress.gov is an update and continuation of THOMAS, which was created in 1995 (104th Congress). Currently, records are only digitized back to the 93rd Congress (1973-75). However, Congressional documents from the first 100 years of the U.S. Congress (1774-1875) can also be accessed through Century of Lawmaking.
- Unlike LOC.gov, creating an account on Congress.gov will allow users to save searches and information.
- Remember LOC.gov legislation results will redirect to their corresponding Congress.gov result.

Navigating Congress.gov from the homepage:

You can search the Congress.gov website from the main page using Search box or browse using the toolbar above it. Searches default to the current Congress and format of legislation, but filters can be applied manually.
Searching Congress.gov:

1. Type a search term in the Search box.
2. Select a Format from the drop down and click GO
3. Refine your results using the left column of the Search results page.
   (Congress, Type, Status, Subject, Chamber, Committee, Sponsor, Cosponsor, and Party)

Searching and understanding legislation results:

Search results are displayed in a list using the following format:

Users can also search by legislation numbers, but must include the prefix and number (with or without spaces and periods and in upper or lowercase). Remember that: bills, resolutions, and amendments include an alphabetical prefix and number; committee reports include an alphabetical prefix, Congress number, and report number; public laws include an alphabetical prefix, Congress number, and law number.

Using quotation marks around words will help find an exact match. Whenever searching using multiple words, use boolean operators (AND, OR).

The proximity operator (~) can be used to find two or more words within a specified distance of each other. Enter your search terms enclosed in quotation marks, followed by ~ and a number, to indicate how many intervening words may occur between your search terms. For example, "john kennedy"~3

Don’t forget documents can be browsed via the homepage (via subjects/policy area, statuses, etc.)!

For more help, visit: https://beta.congress.gov/help/search-tips-overview/
Understanding individual items:

Educational Materials:

From the homepage (congress.gov), the section for Legislative history and tools contains many resources for teachers including:

**US Founding Documents**: A gallery that highlights resources designed to study select documents such as the Constitution, Declaration of Independence, Bill of Rights, and Federalist Papers. Also contains an annotated Constitution resource. (https://beta.congress.gov/legislative-process)

**The Legislative Process**: A section of nine videos and various images chronicling how a bill becomes a law. (https://beta.congress.gov/founding-documents)