

The board of civil authority heard your tax appeal a month ago. Doesn't the law say that

The zoning administrator tells you that you can't have a home occupation in your back

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There are times in your life when you need to know what the law is. You want to know it right now and you don't want

This pamphlet is intended to get you started. It tells you where to look and what to look for, on paper or on the  
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lates everybody's actions. Knowing it, being able to recite it and rely on it, is a right of any person. So what are you  
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### Fear of the Law

Let's face it. From the outside, the law looks very intimi-  
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look at it. It's a set of green books, about twenty of them, entitled Vermont Statutes Annotated. Every town clerk's  
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Just look at those green books, standing there on the  
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the state laws that apply to you, organized by title, chapter and section. Pull down a volume and just leaf through it, reading a sentence here or there.

It's written in English. They stopped using Latin a long time ago. It's written in a wooden style, to be sure, but

regular people—legislators—understood it at the time it  
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Now if your assignment for tonight was to read the whole set of books, you'd rightly balk at the idea. But nobody reads the whole thing. It's treated like an encyclopedia. You only take down the volume you need. The challenge  
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### On the Internet

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and it's there on your computer any time you want to see it. It takes some experience to become familiar with the search process, but once you have used the legislative  
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the law.

Go to legislature.vermont.gov. Laws." The statutes are all there, along with a search option ("Statutes Search"). Now, to answer some of the questions we began with: Type in "election contest."  
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tion to request a recount, but only if there's a 5 percent or less difference between the winning candidates and the next losing candidate.

On the page where you found the details on requesting a recount, there is a blue-tinged box that says "Local Elections." That brings you to a listing of all of the statutes dealing with local elections, and each of the laws appears in a single set of pages. To understand one statute, you often need context, and reading through the parts of the chapter you can understand how the

changes have been introduced for that legislative session.

The law was never this accepted.



is a paragraph describing the ruling, and then a citation of

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Motive is irrelevant to the right of access under this chapter. *Finberg v. Murnane* (1992), 159 Vt. 431, 623 A.2d 979.

This could be important to your next public records search when the clerk asks you why you want to see the records.

Not everyone needs to read the whole case, but relying too much on the annotation is not always prudent either. Suppose you want to read *Finberg v. Murnane*. challenge is knowing what to look for. The case name *Finberg v. Murnane* means that Finberg sued Murnane and

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internet, you can locate most decisions by typing the name into a search engine. *Finberg v. Murnane* is accessible that way.

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case, but it can help you understand the statute or at least how the courts will handle such questions.