

Case Law Fields on Westlaw

Almost all documents on Westlaw are composed of several parts called fields. Rather than searching entire documents, you can restrict your search to one or more fields. Doing so saves searching and browsing time and makes your search more efficient.

In a case law document the names of the parties, the name of the judge, and the names of the attorneys are each considered a separate field. Other fields, including the synopsis, topic, headnote, and digest fields, contain exclusive West editorial enhancements. To add field restrictions to your Terms and Connectors search, use the Fields drop-down list at the database Search page. In the alternative, type the field abbreviation in the Search text box, followed immediately by the terms you want included in the field restriction enclosed in parentheses. For example, to retrieve cases dealing with retaliation against whistle-blowers, you could restrict your search to the synopsis (sy) and digest (di) fields by typing `sy,di(whistle-blow! /p retaliat!)`.

When you search a case law database using the Natural Language search method, you can add court, attorney, and judge field restrictions to your search. Type the terms you want included in the field restriction in the text box following the field name at the bottom of the database Search page.

A sample document on the next page illustrates fields in a case on Westlaw.

For assistance using Westlaw, call **1-800-WESTLAW** (1-800-937-8529).

For free reference materials, visit west.thomson.com/westlaw/guides.

The screenshot displays the Westlaw search interface. At the top, there is a 'Search' header with links for 'Custom Digest' and 'Search by Party Name'. Below this, the 'Selected Databases' section shows 'Multistate Labor and Employment - Cases (MLB-CS)'. The 'Terms and Connectors' section is active, with 'Natural Language' selected. The search box contains the query 'SY,DI(whistle-blow! /p retaliat!)'. Below the search box, there are options for 'Recent Searches & Locates', 'Dates' (set to 'Unrestricted'), and 'Fields'. The 'Fields' drop-down menu is open, showing a list of field abbreviations: 'Select an Option', 'Court - CO()', 'Synopsis - SY()', 'Digest - DI()', 'Synopsis/Digest - SY,DI()', 'Background - BG()', 'Holding - HG()', 'Words-Phrases - WP()', 'Topic - TO()', 'Headnote - HE()', 'Judge - JU()', 'Attorney - AT()', 'Opinions - OP()', 'Full-Text - FT()', 'Lead - LE()', 'Concurring - CON()', 'Dissenting - DIS()', 'Prelim - PR()', 'Notes - NO()', 'Docket-Number - DN()', 'Panel - PA()', 'Title - TI()', 'Citation - CI()', and 'Image - IM()'. The 'Add Conn' and 'Copyright' sections are partially visible at the bottom.

Fields drop-down list using the Terms and Connectors search method

Identifying Fields in Cases

