

THE FEDERAL BUREAUCRACY

Class Notes | Revised 2/26/15

I. "Bureaucracy" Defined

- Literally means "rule by desks;" government by clerks
- Professional corps of officials organized in a pyramid hierarchy
- Functioning under impersonal, uniform rules & procedures

II. What is the federal bureaucracy

- 4 million+ employees; 2.8 million are civilians or "civil servants"
- President only appoints 3% (patronage or political appointments)
- 15 cabinet level departments
- 200+ independent agencies with 2,000+ bureaus, divisions, branches, etc.
- Biggest - Dept. of Defense, U.S. Postal Service, Veterans Administration

III. Functions of the Federal Bureaucracy

1. *Implementation* - carry out laws of Congress, executive orders of the President
2. *Administration* - routine administrative work; provide services (ex: SSA sends social security checks to beneficiaries)
3. *Regulation* - issue rules and regulations that impact the public (ex: EPA sets clean air standards)

IV. Organization of the Federal Bureaucracy - see *Structure Of The Federal Bureaucracy* and *Key Government Agencies* handouts

1. *Cabinet Departments*
 - The 15 cabinet departments headed by a cabinet secretary appointed by the president and approved by the Senate
 - Each department "expert" in specific policy area
 - Each department has its own budget
 - Department of Homeland Security, created in 2002, is newest department
2. *Independent Executive Agencies*
 - Established by Congress with separate status outside the executive branch
 - Given a specific mandate and generally perform a service function, not a regulatory one.
 - Some examples include: Social Security Administration, CIA, NASA, EPA.
3. *Independent Regulatory Commissions*
 - IRCs exist to regulate a specific economic activity or interest such as the *Federal Communications Commission* (public air waves) or *Federal Reserve Board* (banking system, money supply)
 - IRCs operate independently from Congress and the President
 - Once appointed and seated, members cannot be removed without cause
4. *Government Corporations*
 - Government owned businesses created by Congress
 - May or may not be profitable, but serve a public need
 - Ex: U.S. Postal Service, Amtrak, Tennessee Valley Authority, Corporation for Public Broadcasting

V. Who are the "bureaucrats?"

- 97% are career government employees
- Only 10% live in the D.C. area
- 30% work for the D.O.D.
- Less than 15% work for social welfare agencies
- Most are white collar workers: secretaries, clerks, lawyers, inspectors & engineers
- Civil employees more diverse demographically than Congress