


Lesson Resources - Glossary Terms from "The Executive Branch – An Overview"

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Glossary Terms from: 

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administration

the officials in the executive branch of a government and their policies and principles

ambassador

an official representative of the United States appointed by the president to represent the nation in matters of diplomacy

amnesty

a blanket pardon offered to a group of law violators

attorney general

the head of the Department of Justice

bureaucracy

a large, complex administrative structure that handles the everyday business of an organization

bureaucrat

a person who works for a bureaucratic organization

chief administrator

term for the president as head of the administration of the federal government

chief citizen

term for the president as the representative of the people, working for the public interest

chief diplomat

term for the president as the main architect of foreign policy and spokesperson to other countries

chief economist

term for the president as monitor of the nation's economic condition

chief executive

term for the president as vested with the executive power of the United States

chief legislator

term for the president as architect of public policy and the one who sets the agenda for Congress

chief of party

term for the president as the leader of his or her political party

chief of state

term for the president as the ceremonial head of the United States, the symbol of all the people of the nation

clemency

mercy or leniency granted to an offender by a chief executive

collective security

the keeping of international peace and order

commander in chief

term for the president as commander of the nation's armed forces

commutation

the power to reduce (commute) the length of a sentence or fine for a crime

containment

a policy based in the belief that if communism could be kept within its existing boundaries, it would collapse under the weight of its internal weaknesses

deterrence

the policy of making America and its allies so militarily strong that their very strength will discourage, or prevent, any attack

diplomatic immunity

when ambassadors are not subject to the laws of the state to which they are accredited

district plan

proposal for choosing presidential electors by which two electors would be selected in each state according to the statewide popular vote and the other electors would be selected separately in each of the state's congressional districts

domestic affairs

all matters not directly connected to the realm of foreign affairs

draft

conscription, or compulsory military service

Electoral College

group of persons chosen in each state and the District of Columbia every four years who make a formal selection of the president and vice president

electorate

all of the people entitled to vote in a given election

espionage

spying

executive agreement

a pact made by the president directly with the head of a foreign state; a binding international agreement with the force of law but which (unlike a treaty) does not require Senate consent

Executive Article

Article II of the Constitution. Establishes the presidency and gives the executive power of the federal government to the president

executive departments

often called the cabinet departments, they are the traditional units of federal administration

Executive Office of the President

an organization of several agencies staffed by the president's closest advisors

executive order

directive, rule, or regulation issued by a chief executive or subordinates, based upon constitutional or statutory authority and having the force of law

federal budget

a detailed financial document containing estimates of federal income and spending during the coming fiscal year

fiscal year

the 12-month period used by a government and the business world for its record-keeping, budgeting, revenue-collecting, and other financial management purposes

foreign affairs

a nation's relationships with other countries

foreign aid

economic and military aid to other countries

foreign policy

a group of policies made up of all the stands and actions that a nation takes in every aspect of its relationships with other countries; everything a nation's government says and does in world affairs

government corporations

corporations within the executive branch subject to the president's direction and control, set up by Congress to carry out certain business-like activities

independent agencies

additional agencies created by Congress located outside the cabinet departments

independent executive agencies

agencies headed by a single administrator with regional subunits but lacking cabinet status

independent regulatory commissions

independent agencies created by Congress, designed to regulate important aspects of the nation's economy, largely beyond the reach of presidential control

isolationism

a purposeful refusal to become generally involved in the affairs of the rest of the world

keynote address

speech given at a party convention to set the tone for the convention and the campaign to come

line agency

agency that perform the tasks for which an organization exists

mass media

means of communication that reach large audiences, especially television, radio, printed publications, and the Internet

pardon

release from the punishment or legal consequences of a crime, by the president (in a federal case) or a governor (in a state case)

persona non grata

an unwelcome person; used to describe recalled diplomatic officials

platform

a political party's formal statement of basic principles, stands on major issues, and objectives

presidential primary

an election in which the party's voters 1) choose state party organization's delegates to their party's national convention, and/or 2) express a preference for their party's presidential nomination

Presidential Succession

scheme by which a presidential vacancy is filled

Presidential Succession Act of 1947

law specifying the order of presidential succession following the vice president

proportional plan

proposal by which each presidential candidate would receive the same share of a state's electoral vote as he or she received in the state's popular vote

proportional representation

rule applied in Democratic primaries whereby any candidate who wins at least 15 percent of the votes gets the number of state Democratic convention delegates based on his or her share of that primary vote

recognition

the exclusive power of a president to legally recognize (establish formal diplomatic relations with) foreign states

reprieve

an official postponement of the execution of a sentence

right of legation

the right to send and receive diplomatic representatives

secretary

an official in charge of a department of government

staff agency

agency that supports the chief executive and other administrators by offering advice and other assistance in the management of an organization

terrorism

the use of violence to intimidate a government or society

treaty

a formal agreement between two or more sovereign states

winner take all

an almost obsolete system whereby a presidential aspirant who won the preference vote in a primary automatically won all the delegates chosen in the primary