

Main Idea

The federal bureaucracy includes all the organizations and agencies of the executive branch. The civil service system is used to place qualified civilians into positions within the agencies of the federal bureaucracy.

Reading Focus

1. What is the federal bureaucracy?
2. What is the civil service, and how has it changed over the years?

Key Terms

bureaucracy
bureaucrats
civil service
spoils system

What Is the Federal Bureaucracy? (pp. 192–193)

A **bureaucracy** is any organization, either in government or the private sector, having the following features: a clear, formal structure, a division of labor, and a set of rules and procedures by which it operates. The bureaucracy associated with the U.S. executive branch is called the federal bureaucracy. It contains all the departments and agencies of the executive branch. There are three types of independent agencies: independent executive agencies, independent regulatory commissions, and government corporations.

Today about 2.7 million people work for the federal bureaucracy, not including independent contractors—private businesses that perform specific jobs—and state and local government employees paid by the federal government.

The top administrators in the federal bureaucracy are appointed by the president. However, most of the **bureaucrats**—the administrators and skilled, expert workers who carry out many specific tasks of the federal bureaucracy—are career employees.

Reading Check Identifying Supporting Details What are bureaucrats?**The Civil Service** (pp. 194–195)

The **civil service** is made up of the civilians who carry out the work of the federal government. Today civil service workers are hired through competitive processes.

The Spoils System In the nation’s early years, government jobs were given out by the president, usually as political rewards to people who supported the president’s policies or the president’s election campaign. This practice is known as the **spoils system**. The name comes from a comment made in 1832 by Senator William L. Marcy when he said, “To the victor belong the spoils of the enemy.” Marcy was defending President Andrew Jackson’s 1829 replacement of more than 2,200 federal employees with Jacksonian Democrats. In time, people criticized the spoils system, saying it led to corruption and inefficiency in government.

Changes in the Spoils System In 1871 Congress created a Civil Service Advisory Board to write new rules for federal hiring.

It was inadequately funded and eventually broke apart. The assassination of President James Garfield in 1881 by a disappointed office seeker spurred Congress to action. In 1883 President Chester A. Arthur signed the Pendleton Civil Service Act. It based hiring for certain government jobs on merit. It also created a Civil Service Commission to give exams to determine people's ability.

The Civil Service Today Though the act initially applied to only 10 percent of government jobs, Congress later expanded this number. Today more than 90 percent of federal government jobs are covered by civil service legislation. Several agencies created by the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 manage the civil service today.

Reading Check Identifying Supporting Details What is the spoils system?

SECTION 1 ASSESSMENT

1. **Define** What is the **federal bureaucracy**?
2. **Describe** What is the **spoils system**, and what is its relationship to the **civil service**?