

The American Citizen
Chapter 15: The Powers of the President
Vocabulary Terms and Key Concepts



Learning these terms and concepts is necessary to understand the basic principles of government. In this course, you must be able to recognize definitions of these terms for classroom lecture/discussions and (eventually) quizzes and tests.

ambassador

The highest-ranking diplomat appointed to represent the President and carry out foreign policy in an assigned country

amnesty

A general pardon given to a group of people who have broken the law.

civil service

The system by which classified public employees are hired and promoted on the basis of merit rather than political party affiliation.

commander-in-chief

The President is called the in his role as head of the nation's military forces.

diplomatic recognition

The recognition of a foreign government by exchanging diplomatic representatives

executive agreement

An agreement, not requiring the Senate's approval, between the President of the U.S. and the leader of a foreign government

executive order

A rule or regulation issued by the President or another executive official to help enforce a treaty, law, or court ruling

executive privilege

The right of the President and other top executive officials to refuse to appear before congressional committees and to withhold information from the courts

Foreign Service

The U.S. is represented overseas by thousands of diplomatic personnel who are members of this branch of the State Department.

impoundment

A President's refusal to spend money appropriated by Congress.

item veto (or, line item veto)

The power of a President or governor to reject part of a bill while signing the rest into law

pardon

When a President or governor legally releases someone from punishment (including imprisonment)

persona non grata

The power of the President to declare that a country's diplomatic personnel must leave the U.S. (a Latin term for "unacceptable person")

pocket veto

A President's indirect veto of a bill, exercised by failing to act on it after Congress has adjourned.

reprieve

When a government official (such as a Justice of the Supreme Court, a President, or a governor) orders a delay in the carrying out of the punishment of a person convicted of a crime.

State of the Union Address

A presidential speech required by the Constitution, customarily given yearly at the beginning of each session of Congress

treaty

A formal agreement between foreign nations.

War Powers Act

The law, passed by Congress in 1973, restricts the President's use of American troops abroad by requiring him or her to generally get approval from Congress before committing troops to battle zones.