

TITLE 5 - GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION AND EMPLOYEES
PART I - THE AGENCIES GENERALLY
CHAPTER 5 - ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE
SUBCHAPTER II - ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

§ 551. Definitions

For the purpose of this subchapter—

(1) “agency” means each authority of the Government of the United States, whether or not it is within or subject to review by another agency, but does not include—

- (A) the Congress;
- (B) the courts of the United States;
- (C) the governments of the territories or possessions of the United States;
- (D) the government of the District of Columbia;

or except as to the requirements of section 552 of this title—

- (E) agencies composed of representatives of the parties or of representatives of organizations of the parties to the disputes determined by them;
- (F) courts martial and military commissions;
- (G) military authority exercised in the field in time of war or in occupied territory; or
- (H) functions conferred by sections 1738, 1739, 1743, and 1744 of title 12; chapter 2 of title 41; subchapter II of chapter 471 of title 49; or sections 1884, 1891–1902, and former section 1641 (b)(2), of title 50, appendix;

(2) “person” includes an individual, partnership, corporation, association, or public or private organization other than an agency;

(3) “party” includes a person or agency named or admitted as a party, or properly seeking and entitled as of right to be admitted as a party, in an agency proceeding, and a person or agency admitted by an agency as a party for limited purposes;

(4) “rule” means the whole or a part of an agency statement of general or particular applicability and future effect designed to implement, interpret, or prescribe law or policy or describing the organization, procedure, or practice requirements of an agency and includes the approval or prescription for the future of rates, wages, corporate or financial structures or reorganizations thereof, prices, facilities, appliances, services or allowances therefor or of valuations, costs, or accounting, or practices bearing on any of the foregoing;

(5) “rule making” means agency process for formulating, amending, or repealing a rule;

(6) “order” means the whole or a part of a final disposition, whether affirmative, negative, injunctive, or declaratory in form, of an agency in a matter other than rule making but including licensing;

(7) “adjudication” means agency process for the formulation of an order;

(8) “license” includes the whole or a part of an agency permit, certificate, approval, registration, charter, membership, statutory exemption or other form of permission;

(9) “licensing” includes agency process respecting the grant, renewal, denial, revocation, suspension, annulment, withdrawal, limitation, amendment, modification, or conditioning of a license;

(10) “sanction” includes the whole or a part of an agency—

- (A) prohibition, requirement, limitation, or other condition affecting the freedom of a person;
- (B) withholding of relief;
- (C) imposition of penalty or fine;
- (D) destruction, taking, seizure, or withholding of property;
- (E) assessment of damages, reimbursement, restitution, compensation, costs, charges, or fees;
- (F) requirement, revocation, or suspension of a license; or

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- (G) taking other compulsory or restrictive action;
- (11) “relief” includes the whole or a part of an agency—
- (A) grant of money, assistance, license, authority, exemption, exception, privilege, or remedy;
- (B) recognition of a claim, right, immunity, privilege, exemption, or exception; or
- (C) taking of other action on the application or petition of, and beneficial to, a person;
- (12) “agency proceeding” means an agency process as defined by paragraphs (5), (7), and (9) of this section;
- (13) “agency action” includes the whole or a part of an agency rule, order, license, sanction, relief, or the equivalent or denial thereof, or failure to act; and
- (14) “ex parte communication” means an oral or written communication not on the public record with respect to which reasonable prior notice to all parties is not given, but it shall not include requests for status reports on any matter or proceeding covered by this subchapter.

(Pub. L. 89–554, Sept. 6, 1966, 80 Stat. 381; Pub. L. 94–409, § 4(b), Sept. 13, 1976, 90 Stat. 1247; Pub. L. 103–272, § 5(a), July 5, 1994, 108 Stat. 1373.)

Historical and Revision Notes

Derivation	U.S. Code	Revised Statutes and Statutes at Large
(1)	5 U.S.C. 1001(a).	June 11, 1946, ch. 324, § 2(a), 60 Stat. 237. Aug. 8, 1946, ch. 870, § 302, 60 Stat. 918. Aug. 10, 1946, ch. 951, § 601, 60 Stat. 993. Mar. 31, 1947, ch. 30, § 6(a), 61 Stat. 37. June 30, 1947, ch. 163, § 210, 61 Stat. 201. Mar. 30, 1948, ch. 161, § 301, 62 Stat. 99.
(2)–(13)	5 U.S.C. 1001 (less (a)).	June 11, 1946, ch. 324, § 2 (less (a)), 60 Stat. 237.

In paragraph (1), the sentence “Nothing in this Act shall be construed to repeal delegations of authority as provided by law,” is omitted as surplusage since there is nothing in the Act which could reasonably be so construed.

In paragraph (1)(G), the words “or naval” are omitted as included in “military”.

In paragraph (1)(H), the words “functions which by law expire on the termination of present hostilities, within any fixed period thereafter, or before July 1, 1947” are omitted as executed. Reference to the “Selective Training and Service Act of 1940” is omitted as that Act expired Mar. 31, 1947. Reference to the “Sugar Control Extension Act of 1947” is omitted as that Act expired on Mar. 31, 1948. References to the “Housing and Rent Act of 1947, as amended” and the “Veterans’ Emergency Housing Act of 1946” have been consolidated as they are related. The reference to former section 1641 (b)(2) of title 50, appendix, is retained notwithstanding its repeal by § 111(a)(1) of the Act of Sept. 21, 1961, Pub. L. 87–256, 75 Stat. 538, since § 111(c) of the Act provides that a reference in other Acts to a provision of law repealed by § 111(a) shall be considered to be a reference to the appropriate provisions of Pub. L. 87–256.

In paragraph (2), the words “of any character” are omitted as surplusage.

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In paragraph (3), the words “and a person or agency admitted by an agency as a party for limited purposes” are substituted for “but nothing herein shall be construed to prevent an agency from admitting any person or agency as a party for limited purposes”.

In paragraph (9), a comma is supplied between the words “limitation” and “amendment” to correct an editorial error of omission.

In paragraph (10)(C), the words “of any form” are omitted as surplusage.

Standard changes are made to conform with the definitions applicable and the style of this title as outlined in the preface to the report.

Codification

Section 551 of former Title 5, Executive Departments and Government Officers and Employees, was transferred to section 2242 of Title 7, Agriculture.

Amendments

1994—Par. (1)(H). Pub. L. 103–272 substituted “subchapter II of chapter 471 of title 49; or sections” for “or sections 1622.”

1976—Par. (14). Pub. L. 94–409 added par. (14).

Effective Date of 1976 Amendment

Amendment by Pub. L. 94–409 effective 180 days after Sept. 13, 1976, see section 6 of Pub. L. 94–409, set out as an Effective Date note under section 552b of this title.

Study and Reports on Administrative Subpoenas

Pub. L. 106–544, § 7, Dec. 19, 2000, 114 Stat. 2719, provided that:

“(a) Study on Use of Administrative Subpoenas.—Not later than December 31, 2001, the Attorney General, in consultation with the Secretary of the Treasury, shall complete a study on the use of administrative subpoena power by executive branch agencies or entities and shall report the findings to the Committees on the Judiciary of the Senate and the House of Representatives. Such report shall include—

“(1) a description of the sources of administrative subpoena power and the scope of such subpoena power within executive branch agencies;

“(2) a description of applicable subpoena enforcement mechanisms;

“(3) a description of any notification provisions and any other provisions relating to safeguarding privacy interests;

“(4) a description of the standards governing the issuance of administrative subpoenas; and

“(5) recommendations from the Attorney General regarding necessary steps to ensure that administrative subpoena power is used and enforced consistently and fairly by executive branch agencies.

“(b) Report on Frequency of Use of Administrative Subpoenas.—

“(1) In general.—The Attorney General and the Secretary of the Treasury shall report in January of each year to the Committees on the Judiciary of the Senate and the House of Representatives on the number of administrative subpoenas issued by them under this section and the identity of the agency or component of the Department of Justice or the Department of the Treasury issuing the subpoena and imposing the charges.

“(2) Expiration.—The reporting requirement of this subsection shall terminate in 3 years after the date of the enactment of this section [Dec. 19, 2000].”