

INDEPENDENT AGENCIES

TEXT SUMMARY

Since the 1880s, Congress has created many **independent agencies**, or agencies that operate outside the executive departments. These agencies exist for a number of reasons. Some agencies do not fit well in any department. Some need protection from department politics. Others must be independent because of the nature of their functions.

Three main types of independent agencies exist today. Most are **independent executive agencies**. These are organized much like executive departments, with subunits and a single head, but do not have Cabinet status.

Independent agencies that regulate parts of the economy are **independent regulatory commissions**. Uniquely,

they exist outside of presidential control, and are **quasi-legislative** and **quasi-judicial**. This means that Congress has given them certain legislative-like and judicial-like powers. Legislatively, they may make rules detailing laws that Congress has asked them to enforce; these rules carry the force of law. Judicially, they may decide disputes in the fields in which Congress has given them policing authority.

Some independent agencies are known as **government corporations**. These agencies, such as the U.S. Postal Service, carry out certain business-like activities.

THE BIG IDEA

A number of independent agencies work outside the framework of the executive branch.

GRAPHIC SUMMARY: *The Three Types of Independent Agencies*

Independent Executive Agencies	Independent Regulatory Commissions	Government Corporations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • organized like executive departments • do not have Cabinet status 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • regulate parts of the economy • are quasi-legislative and quasi-judicial • exist outside of presidential control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • carry out business-like activities

There are three types of independent agencies that carry out specific duties.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What defines an independent agency?

2. **Chart Skills** Which type of independent agency regulates parts of the economy?