Unit IV Key Terms

Key Terms

Institutions

(Underlined terms have appeared on the multiple choice sections of past released AP exams.)

**Appropriation**: money that Congress has allocated to be spent.

**Appropriations Committee**: congressional committee that deals with federal spending.

**Appellate jurisdiction**: authority of a court to hear an appeal from a lower court.

**Bureaucracy**: departments, agencies, bureaus, and commissions in the executive branch of government.

**Casework**: personal work done by a member of Congress for his constituents.

**Civil law**: concerns noncriminal disputes between private parties.

**Class action lawsuit**: lawsuit brought on behalf of a class of people against a defendant, e.g., lawsuits brought by those who have suffered from smoking against tobacco companies.

**Closed rule**: Rules Committee rule that bans amendments to a bill.

**Cloture**: Senate motion to end a filibuster that requires a 3/5 vote.

**Concurring opinion**: written by a Supreme Court Justice who voted with the majority, but for different reasons.

**Conference committee**: works out a compromise between differing House-Senate versions of a bill.

**Constituents**: the people who are represented by elected officials.

**Discharge petition**: a motion to force a bill to the House floor that has been bottled up in committee.

**Dissenting opinion**: written by a Supreme Court Justice (or Justices) who express a minority viewpoint in a case.

**Executive agreement**: an agreement between the President and another head of state that, unlike a treaty does not require Senate consent.

**Executive order**: presidential rule or regulation that has the force of law.

**Executive privilege**: the privilege of a President and his staff to withhold their “privileged” conversations from Congress or the courts.

**Filibuster**: nonstop Senate debate that prevents a bill from coming to a vote.

**Finance committee**: Senate committee that handles tax bills.

**Franking privilege**: allows members of Congress to send mail postage free.

**Gerrymandering**: redrawing district lines to favor one party at the expense of the other.

**Hold**: Senate maneuver that allows a Senator to stop or delay consideration of a bill or presidential appointment.

**Impeachment**: House action that formally charges an official with wrongdoing. Conviction requires 2/3 vote from the Senate.

**Impoundment**: refusal of a President to spend money that has been appropriated by Congress

**Injunction**: court order that forbids a party from performing a certain action.

**Judicial activism**: philosophy that the courts should take an active role in solving problems.

**Judicial restraint**: philosophy that the courts should defer to elected lawmakers in setting policy, and should instead focus on interpreting law rather than making law.

**Judicial review**: power of the courts to review the constitutionality of laws or government actions.

**Legislative oversight**: ongoing process of congressional monitoring of the executive branch to ensure that the latter complies with the law.

**Legislative veto**: process in which Congress overturned rules and regulations proposed by executive branch agencies. Struck down in 1983.

**Line item veto**: power of most governors (and President Clinton for only a few years) to delete or reduce funding in a bill on a line by line basis.

**Logrolling**: when to members of Congress agree to vote for each other's bill.

**Majority opinion**: written to express the majority viewpoint in a Supreme Court case.

**Mark up**: committee action to amend a proposed bill.

**Merit system**: system of hiring federal workers based upon competitive exams.

**Open rule**: House Rules Committee rule that allows amendments to a bill.

**Original jurisdiction**: authority of a court to first hear a case.

**Patronage**: power to appoint loyal party members to federal positions.

**Pocket veto**: presidential killing of a bill by inaction after Congress adjourns.

**Political appointees**: those who have received presidential appointments to office. Contrast with Civil Service employees, who receive federal jobs by competitive exams.

**Pork barrel**: wasteful congressional spending, e.g. funding for a Lawrence Welk museum in North Dakota.

**Quorum**: minimum number of members needed for the House and Senate to meet.

**Reapportionment**: reallocation of House seats to the states on the basis of changes in state populations, as determined by the census.

**Redistricting**: redrawing of congressional district boundaries by the party in power of the state legislature.

**Red tape**: complex rules and procedures required by bureaucratic agencies.

**Remand**: the Supreme Court's sending of a case back to the original court in which it was heard.

**Rider**: amendment to a bill that has little to do with that bill. Also known as a **nongermane amendment**.

**Rule of four**: the Supreme Court will hear a case if four Justices agree to do so.

**Rules Committee**: the “traffic cop” of the House that sets the legislative calendar and issues rules for debate on a bill.

**Senatorial courtesy**: tradition in which the President consults with the senators within a state in which an appointment is to be made.

**Seniority system**: tradition in which the Senator from the majority party with the most years of service on a committee becomes the chairman of that committee.

**Spoils system**: see **patronage** above.

**Standing committees**: the permanent congressional committees that handle legislation.

**Stare decisis**: Latin for “let the decision stand.” Supreme Court policy of following precedent in deciding cases.

**Sunset laws**: laws that automatically expire after a given time.

**Ways and Means Committee**: House committee that handles tax bills.

**Whistleblower**: an employee who exposes unethical or illegal conduct within the federal government or one if contractors.

**Writ of certiorari**: issued by the Supreme Court to a lower court to send up the records of a case so that it can be reviewed by the high court.

**Writ of habeas corpus**: court order that the authorities show cause for why they are holding a prisoner in custody. Deters unlawful imprisonment.

**Writ of mandamus**: court order directing a party to perform a certain action.