

Presidential Documents

Introduction

As Commander and Chief of the United States, the President has the authority to issue documents that have legal effect. These documents can be very useful in understanding foreign policy, national security, and domestic policy. The goal of this research guide is to describe the types of presidential documents and to provide descriptions and locations of the sources in which they can be found.

Types of Presidential Documents

Proclamations and Executive Orders

Although there are no concrete distinctions between presidential proclamations and executive orders, usually proclamations deal with general matters of widespread interest (e.g., proclaiming a day of celebration), while executive orders relate to the conduct of government (e.g., organization of executive departments or direction to departments for implementation of policy).

Proclamations and Executive Orders can be found in the following sources:

- [Federal Register](#) - Starting with Proclamation 2287 and Executive Order 7906 (1938)
- [Code of Federal Regulations \(CFR\)](#) - Starting with Proclamation 2287 and Executive Order 7906 (1938)
- [Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents](#) – 1965 – present
- [Public Papers of the President](#) – 1977-1989
- [Statutes at Large](#) – 1846 - present (**Proclamations only**)

Finding Aids for Proclamations and Executive Orders can be found at:

- [Codification of Presidential Proclamations and Executive Orders, April 13, 1945 - Jan 20, 1989](#)
- [Executive Orders Disposition Tables](#) - E.O. 7532 (1937) – present.
- [CIS Index to Presidential Orders and Proclamations](#) – 1789-1987.
- [Presidential Executive Orders, Numbered 1-8030, 1862-1938](#), ed. Clifford L. Lord,
Location: J80 .A73 Law Reference
- [List and Index of Presidential Executive Orders, Unnumbered Series \(1789-1941\)](#), ed. Clifford L. Lord,
Location: J80.A74, 1979 Law Reference

Administrative Orders

Administrative Orders consists of findings, presidential determinations, memoranda, notices and letters. They differ from proclamations and executive orders in that they are not numbered. They receive treatment similar to proclamations and executive orders.

Administrative orders can be found in the following sources:

- [Federal Register](#)
- [Code of Federal Regulations](#)

Reorganization Plans

The President is authorized under 5 U.S.C. §§901-912 to evaluate the structure and duties of executive agencies and to make revisions as appropriate for the more efficient operation of the executive government. This can include the addition, elimination or transfer of duties from an agency. For a reorganization plan to take effect, a joint resolution must be passed by the House and Senate approving the plan. Plans are numbered by year and plan number within that year.

Reorganization Plans can be found in the following sources:

- [Federal Register](#)
- [Code of Federal Regulations](#)
- [Statutes at Large](#)
- [Congressional Record](#) - (for plans **not** approved by Congress)

Presidential Directives

Presidential Directives are orders issued by the President under the advisement of the National Security Council. Directives cover aspects of national security, military and foreign policy. Due to the sensitivity of information provided in the directives, many of these documents are classified. After a period of time, directives are reviewed to determine whether the information contained is still a security issue. After the review, the directives are then 1). Released and made public; 2). Released in part, or 3). Remain classified.

Presidents since Kennedy have issued directives but under different names:

- **Kennedy & Johnson** - National Security Action Memoranda (**NSAMs**)
- **Nixon and Ford** - National Security Decision Memoranda (**NSDMs**)
- **Carter** - Presidential Directives (**PDs**)
- **Reagan** - National Security Decision Directives (**NSDDs**)
- **Bush** - National Security Directives (**NSDs**)
- **Clinton** - Presidential Decision Directives (**PDDs**)
- **GW Bush** - National Security Presidential Directives (**NSPDs**)

Presidential Directives can be located at:

- [Presidential Directive and Orders](#) – Federation of American Scientists
- [Presidential Directives and Where to Find Them](#) – Library of Congress
- [National Security Directives of the Reagan and Bush Administrations: The Declassified History of U.S. Political and Military Policy, 1981-1991](#) / Christopher Simpson.

Location: E876.S5 1995 Hayden Doc Reference

Executive Agreements

As Executive Chief of the United States, the President has the authority to create international agreements. Unlike treaties which require the approval of 2/3 of the Senate, these executive agreements can be entered into without Senate approval. Executive agreements are initiated at the Executive level of government and are negotiated by a representative. Upon agreement of terms, the Secretary of State authorizes the negotiator to sign the agreement and the agreement enters into force. Although the Senate does not approve executive agreements, under the Case-Zablocki Act (1 U.S.C. §112b), the Executive Branch must notify the Senate of the agreement within 60 days of the signing.

To locate executive agreements, please refer to the research guide, [Treaties and Other International Agreements](#).

Miscellaneous Documents

Additional communications by the President include addresses and remarks, interviews with the media, communications to federal agencies and Congress, and meetings with foreign leaders. They can be found in the following sources:

- [Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents](#) – 1965 – present
- [Public Papers of the President](#) – 1929-1933, 1945-present
- [Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents](#) / James D. Richardson – 1789-1925
- [Holdings of the Presidential Libraries](#) – National Archives
- [Papers of the Presidents of the United States](#) – Yale Avalon Project
- [American Presidency Project](#) - UC at Santa Barbara

Sources for Presidential Documents and Their Locations

Federal Register

Starting with Proclamation 2287 and Executive Order 7906 (1938), the *Federal Register* (FR) began printing most proclamations and executive orders. It also includes reorganization plans and administrative decisions such as presidential determination, memoranda, notices and letters. The Federal Register index (cumulated monthly followed by an annual index) provides access under the heading “Presidential Documents.”

Location: AE 2.106:

- Current Year –Law Gov Docs Index Table
- Previous 2 year – Law Gov Docs Stacks
- Prior years – Law Microform Cabinet 22
- [Hein Online](#) – 1935-present (On-campus use. Remote access – ASU students and staff)
- [GPO Access](#) – v.59 (1994) - present
- [Lexis](#) – GENFED; FEDREG July 1980 – present (Available to law students and law faculty only)
- [Westlaw](#) – FR July 1980-present (Available to law students and law faculty only)

Code of Federal Regulations

Beginning in 1938, Title 3 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* (CFR) compiles the text of proclamations, executive orders, reorganization plans, and administrative orders on an annual schedule.

Location: AE 2.106/3: 3/

- Current Year – Law Gov Docs Index Table
- Previous Years - Law Gov Docs Stacks
- [GPO Access](#) – 1997-present
- Lexis - (Available to law students and law faculty only)
 - [GENFED; CFR Current Year](#)
 - [GENFED;ALLCRF \(Previous years from 1981\)](#)
- Westlaw – (Available to law students and law faculty only)
 - [CFR current year](#)
 - [CFRxx \(where x is the year\) Previous years from 1984](#)

Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents

Published since 1965 by the Office of the Federal Register, the *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* is one of the most comprehensive sources for Presidential documents. It is published every Monday and contains the text of proclamations, executive orders, addresses and remarks, interviews with the media, communications to federal agencies and Congress, and meetings with foreign leaders released by the White during the preceding week. A cumulative annual index can be found at the end of each volume.

Location: AE 2.109:

- v.1 (1965) v. 36 (2000) – Law Gov Doc Stacks
- v.28 (1992) – v.32 (2002) – Law Gov Docs Microform, Cabinet 22
- [GPO Access](#) – v.29 (1993) – present
- [Hein Online](#) – 1965-2004
- [Westlaw](#) - WCPD from January 2000-present (Available to law students and law faculty only)

Public Papers of the Presidents

This publication provides coverage of presidential documents from 1929 - 1933, and 1945 – present. It includes the President's message to congress, public speeches and letters as well as news conferences. From 1977-1988, this publication contained the text of executive orders and proclamations. They ceased this in 1989 and now provide a table which contains a citation to where it can be found in the Federal Register. Prior to the Carter administration the presidential papers published were more selective.

Location:

- 1929-1933, 1945-1980/81 GS4.113 Law Gov Docs Stacks
- 1981 – 2001 - AE2.114 Law Gov Docs Stacks
- [GPOAccess](#) – 1991-2002 –
- [Lexis](#) EXEC;PRESDC – March 24. 1979 – present

Statutes at Large

Aside from being the chronological arrangement of law passed during a Congressional Session, the *Statutes at Large* also contains the text of proclamation from 1846 and reorganization plans from 1939.

Location: KF50 .U5 – Law Core

- [Congressional Universe](#) – 1789 – present

CIS Index to Presidential Executive Orders and Proclamations (CIS Index to PEO&P)

This set provides the most complete indexing and access to Executive Orders and Proclamations from 1789-1987. The *CIS Index to PEO&P* provides the following access points to locate orders and proclamations:

- Subject
- Organization
- Personal Name
- Interrelated executive orders and proclamations
- Site and document number index
- Chronological List

Items indexed with only a CIS accession number for the publication are only available from the microfiche collection. However, if an item has been printed in an official source (*Statutes at Large* or CFR), the citation will be given in the bibliographic list.

Location: **Index** - KF70 .A55 1987 – Law Reference
Microfiche Set – Available from the Superior Court Law Library and State Library and Archives.

Executive Orders Disposition Table, 1953

The National Archives and Records Administration's web page, *Executive Orders Disposition Tables, 1953* - provides superseding and updating information on particular executive orders. Disposition Tables contain information about Executive Orders beginning with President Franklin Roosevelt. They are arranged by Administration and year of signature. The Disposition Tables includes the following information:

- Executive Order Number
- Date of signing by the President
- Federal Register citation
- Title of order
- Amendments (if any)
- Current Status

Location: [Executive Order Disposition Tables](#) – National Archives

Codification of Presidential Proclamations and Executive Orders, April 13, 1945 - Jan 20, 1989)

This title provides a subject approach to locating the full-text of executive orders from 1945-1989. The codification is divided into 50 chapters that are similar to the broad subject areas found in the CFR and United States Code. This title has not been updated. As a result, it only covers proclamations and executive orders issues between 1945 and 1989.

Location: AE2.113:945-89 – Law Gov Docs Index Table

- [Codification of Presidential Proclamations and Executive Orders](#) - National Archives

Congressional Record

Aside from containing the floor debates proposed legislation, it also contains the text of reorganization plans **not** approved by Congress.

Location: X 1.1: - Law Gov Doc Stacks (1970 – present)

- KF 35.C6 – Law Historical Collection (1873-1969)
- [GPO Access](#) – 1994 – present
- [Westlaw](#) – CR 1985 – present (Available to law students and law faculty only)
- [Lexis](#) – GENFED;RECORD 1985 – present (Available to law students and law faculty only)
- [Congressional Universe](#) – 1985-present (On-campus use. Remote access-ASU students & staff)
- [Thomas](#) – 1989-present

[Presidential Directive and Orders](#) – Federation of American Scientists

This website contains review and decision directives since the Truman Administration.

[Presidential Directives and Where to Find Them](#) – Library of Congress

This website supported by the Library of Congress provides a list of sources to consult when looking for Presidential Directives.

National Security Directives of the Reagan and Bush Administrations: The Declassified History of U.S. Political and Military Policy, 1981-1991 / Christopher Simpson.

Location: E876.S5 1995 Hayden Doc Reference

Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1929

This 20 volume set contains selected messages and documents issued by the Presidents since George Washington.

Location: J81 .B86 1897 Law Treatises

Presidential Executive Orders, Numbered 1-8030, 1862-1938, ed. Clifford L. Lord,
This 2 volume set provides a list of executive orders from 1862-1938. Volume 1 lists the orders by order number with a brief description of the order, the date it went into effect and a citation to its source if known. Volume 2 is a subject arrangement of orders.

Location: J80.A73 Law Reference

List and Index of Presidential Executive Orders, Unnumbered Series (1789-1941), / Clifford L. Lord,
In the past, many orders were issued without receiving a number which makes them difficult to locate. This one volume set contains entries for over 1,500 unnumbered Orders. Arranged by date, each entry contains a brief description of the order and provides a citation to where the order can be located. It also contains a subject index.

Location: J80.A74, 1979 Law Reference

[Holdings of the Presidential Libraries](#) – National Archives

This website sponsored by the National Archives contains information about researching at Presidential Libraries as well as provides links to all presidential libraries since the Hoover Administration.

[Papers of the Presidents of the United States](#) – Yale Avalon Project

This website provides selected Presidential documents since George Washington.

[American Presidency Project](#) - UC at Santa Barbara

This website provides vast materials on Presidential documents from George Washington's administration to the present day. Materials on the website include:

- Public Papers of the Presidents since Hoover
- State of the Union Addresses since George Washington
- Inaugural Addresses since George Washington
- Saturday Radio Addresses since 1993
- Roosevelt's Fireside Chats
- Presidential Nomination Acceptance Speeches since 1960
- Presidential Candidates Debates since 1960
- Documents relating to the 2000 Election Dispute
- Documents relating to the 2001 Presidential Transition
- National Political Party Platforms since 1840