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*Congressional Oversight of the Clinton Administration and Congressional Procedure*

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Abstract by Ryann Kathleen Bernard

Congressional oversight visibly shapes agency action. The author looks at how congressional practices and procedures shape the occasions for Congress to influence the action of agencies, which he maintains significantly shape the role of congressional oversight in administrative law. The role of congressional oversight since the Administrative Procedure Act is examined, with a particular focus on occurrences after the 1994 elections.

A distinction must be drawn, claims the author, between the oversight utilized by each chamber of Congress. For example, while the Senate exercises a great deal of oversight based on consensus, the minority party in the House does not have the same power and therefore plays a smaller role in agency oversight. Most congressional oversight occurs through the use of committees with legislative jurisdiction. However, in the appropriations process, Congress can exercise oversight by compelling an agency to take a certain action, but faces difficulty in compelling action. Congress uses the budget process as an important means of oversight, as in the annual report requirement of the 1980s Physician Payment Review Commission. Complex legal and institutional frameworks exist to help with the oversight process, including offices within the executive branch. The author concludes that congressional oversight can be better understood if one looks first at the institutional procedures shaping oversight in Congress, as the article does, and then focuses on the effects of this oversight on agencies.