

The Hoover Commission, also known as the Commission on Organization of the Executive Branch of the Government, was created twice – once in 1947 and again in 1953. Both commissions were chaired by former President Herbert Hoover.

The post-WWII era saw rapid growth in the size and scope of the U.S. federal government. This growth, while necessary for the war effort and the subsequent reconstruction, led to concerns about efficiency, redundancy, and outdated processes within the government. As a result, the Hoover Commissions were tasked with examining the organization of the executive branch and recommending improvements.

Summary of the 1955 Hoover Commission Report Findings & Recommendations:

1. Departmental Reorganizations:

- The commission identified overlapping functions and responsibilities in several departments.
- It suggested the realignment of agencies, such as combining certain responsibilities within the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, and the Department of Defense.

2. Budgeting and Financial Management:

- It stressed a need for a centralized budgeting system to provide better fiscal control and planning.
- Recommendations were made to create a clearer link between program planning and budget formulation.

3. Personnel Management:

- The commission critiqued the rigidity of the civil service system.
- It recommended greater flexibility in hiring, training, and promotion processes.

4. Regulatory Agencies:

- The commission felt that certain regulatory functions were too susceptible to political pressures when housed within Cabinet departments.
- It suggested making some regulatory agencies independent to shield them from undue influence.

5. Civil Service Reform:

- Emphasis was placed on modernizing the civil service system.
- They recommended more rigorous standards for hiring and promotion, with a strong focus on performance and skill rather than seniority.

6. Intergovernmental Relations:

- A better-defined relationship between federal and state governments was called for.
- The commission recommended clearer lines of authority and responsibility to avoid duplication and conflicts between levels of government.

7. Elimination of Unnecessary Functions:

- The commission found some government functions and agencies to be redundant or outdated.
- It recommended the discontinuation or merger of these entities.

8. Administrative Procedures:

- The report highlighted the need for standardization of administrative procedures across the government.
- This was aimed at reducing complexity and improving efficiency.

Many of the recommendations from the 1955 report did lead to significant reforms. Some were swiftly implemented, while others took years to materialize. Yet, some faced strong opposition, especially from groups or agencies that were directly affected by the proposed changes.

The Hoover Commission's reports, both from 1949 and 1955, have left a lasting legacy. They played a pivotal role in the ongoing discourse about the organization and efficiency of the U.S. federal government, providing a blueprint for administrative reforms throughout the latter half of the 20th century.