§ 6. Department and agency defined

As used in this title:

The term “department” means one of the executive departments enumerated in section 1 of Title 5, unless the context shows that such term was intended to describe the executive, legislative, or judicial branches of the government.

The term “agency” includes any department, independent establishment, commission, administration, authority, board or bureau of the United States or any corporation in which the United States has a proprietary interest, unless the context shows that such term was intended to be used in a more limited sense.

(June 25, 1948, ch. 645, 62 Stat. 685.)

Historical and Revision Notes

This section defines the terms “department” and “agency” of the United States. The word “department” appears 57 times in title 18, U.S.C., 1940 ed., and the word “agency” 14 times. It was considered necessary to define clearly these words in order to avoid possible litigation as to the scope or coverage of a given section containing such words. (See United States v. Germaine, 1878, 99 U.S. 508, 25 L. Ed. 482, for definition of words “department” or “head of department.”)

The phrase “corporation in which the United States has a proprietary interest” is intended to include those governmental corporations in which stock is not actually issued, as well as those in which stock is owned by the United States. It excludes those corporations in which the interest of the Government is custodial or incidental.

References in Text

Section 1 of Title 5, referred to in text, was repealed by Pub. L. 89–554, § 8, Sept. 6, 1966, 80 Stat. 632, and reenacted by the first section thereof as section 101 of Title 5, Government Organization and Employees.