

Civil Works Administration

The Civil Works Administration (CWA) was an emergency relief program for the 4 million people who were put out of work during the Great Depression and who were not being helped by the larger, more bulky Public Works Administration (PWA). Of the \$933 million the program spent, more than \$740 million went straight to wages and salaries.

The CWA came into existence in 1933 to balance a drop in the revival of the economy in mid-1933 and to help people struggling through the winter of 1933-34. It operated with funds from the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) and the PWA, which were supplemented by local governments. Men hired by the CWA went to work on 400,000 federal, state, and local projects—about one-third on roads and highways. Other projects involved schools, airports, parks, waterways, sewers, and insect control.

Within a month of its creation, the CWA had hired 2.6 million people and was paying them more than \$15 a week, which was insufficient but better than the FERA had been doing. Unlike the FERA, the CWA also had the authority to operate works projects directly. Because of the speed of many CWA operations, there were administrative mistakes and blunders as well as some hints of political corruption and graft, but its director was usually the first to point out the program's faults.

The CWA was abolished in early 1934 and its functions transferred to the FERA.

"Civil Works Administration." *American History*. ABC-CLIO, 2010. Web. 9 May 2010. <<http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com>>.



"6,000 Men and a Scenic Boulevard": San Francisco, California, ca. 1934.

Public Works Administration

The Public Works Administration (PWA) was one of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's major New Deal programs. It was designed to boost the economy and stimulate industrial recovery after the Great Depression through reducing unemployment and restoring the nation's purchasing power.

Established by Title II of the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933, the PWA infused a total of \$6 billion in public money into civilian and military construction projects to build schools, hospitals, courthouses, bridges and tunnels, roads, dams and levees, and navy cruisers, destroyers, and aircraft carriers. In addition, the PWA initiated its own construction projects and funded others started by state governments and federal agencies before the depression.

The PWA was not primarily a relief agency and worked only with private companies. Nevertheless, it had the effect of permitting building contractors to hire about 650,000 workers who otherwise would likely have been unemployed during the devastating economic downturn.

Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes was in charge of the PWA. Ickes' reputation for incorruptibility earned him great admiration and respect, but his caution when it came to disbursing PWA funds resulted in less dramatic progress toward economic recovery than Roosevelt's administration had hoped.

The Federal Works Agency absorbed the PWA in 1943.

"Public Works Administration." *American History*. ABC-CLIO, 2010. Web. 9 May 2010. <<http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com>>.



Works Progress Administration

Renamed the Works Projects Administration in 1939, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) was one of the main programs in President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal. Its aim was to create useful jobs for the country's many unemployed people, and it succeeded, employing about 8.5 million before the program was abolished in 1943. It cost the government a total of \$11 billion.

Roosevelt created the WPA in 1935, and Congress authorized it. Over the next eight years, it became the most important and innovative New Deal work-relief agency, as it did more than just provide work: it offered programs to help people preserve the skills they had learned in the jobs they lost and to develop or maintain their self-esteem during such hard times. Most WPA jobs centered on construction and improvement projects. During the program's eight years, its workers built 78,000 bridges, 116,000 buildings, and 651,000 miles of public roads.

The WPA also sponsored and supported such cultural groups as the Federal Art Project, the Federal Theater Project, and the Federal Writers' Project, which all provided jobs in the arts. Meanwhile, the National Youth Administration gave young people part-time jobs so they could help their families financially.

While millions of people greatly appreciated the WPA's services, others were very critical of it. Critics claimed that it supported political subversives and that Democratic politicians used WPA assignments as favors to those who could help their campaigns in some way.

Roosevelt terminated the WPA when World War II began to dramatically improve the nation's economy.

"Works Progress Administration." *American History*. ABC-CLIO, 2010. Web. 9 May 2010. <<http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com>>.



One of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's responses to the massive unemployment that occurred during the Great Depression was the

massive Civilian Conservation Corps

(CCC) was the successor of the Emergency Conservation Work Agency. It also endeavored to promote environmental conservation and create good citizens through discipline and outdoor work. Roosevelt called the agency his "tree army."

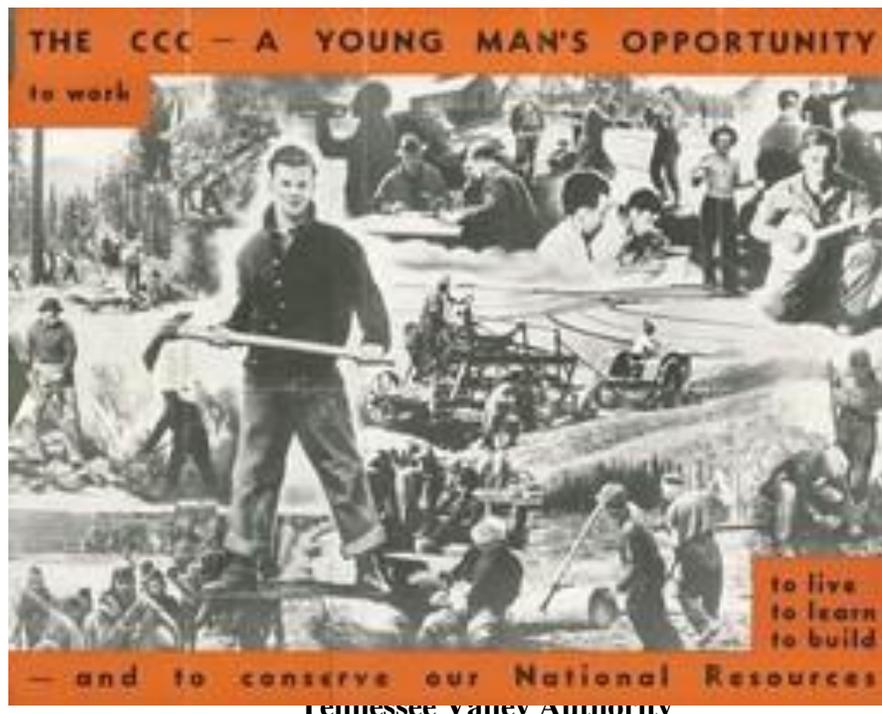
Established by Congress in 1933 as an army program, the CCC enlisted jobless, unmarried, needy young men ages 18 to 25 to work on such natural-resource development and conservation projects as flood control, soil conservation, and forest and wildlife protection. In exchange for their work, the men received vocational training, \$30 per month (\$25 of which went to their families), room and board, and other essentials. The War, Interior, Agriculture, and Labor departments shared the administration of the program through an appointed director.

The CCC was responsible for planting millions of trees and actually did more than 50% of the reforestation that had ever been completed. Corpsmen, as they were known, also stocked rivers and lakes with fish, built more than 30,000 wildlife shelters, restored historic battlegrounds, fixed up beaches and campsites, and dug many canals and ditches.

By 1935, there were 500,000 enrollees in 2,600 CCC camps across the country. During its years of operation, the CCC gave employment to about 2.6 million young men, all who were required to call camp commanders "sir." Commanders even had disciplinary power over their charges. Despite its success, however, the CCC was criticized for failing to employ many African-American men—participation by blacks reached only 10% at its highest. About 90,000 Native Americans also participated in the program.

The organization was terminated in 1942 as World War II got under way and the economy rapidly improved.

"Civilian Conservation Corps." *American History*. ABC-CLIO, 2010. Web. 9 May 2010. <<http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com>>.



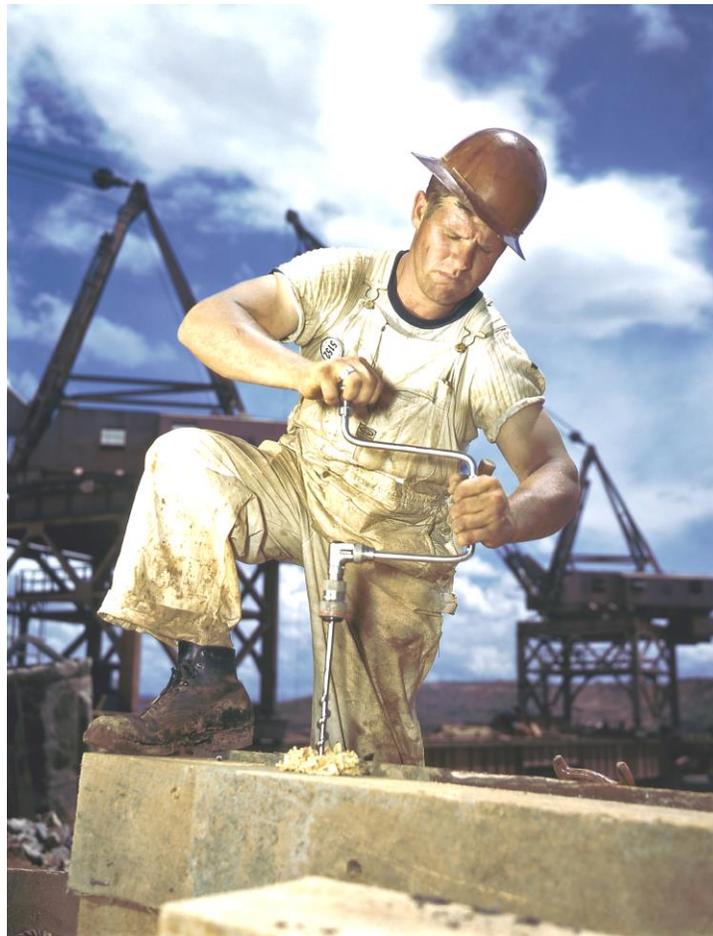
Congress created the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) in 1933 as a publicly owned utility corporation. Its original purpose was to harness the power of the Tennessee River to create electricity for a region of the country that had traditionally been underdeveloped. Until then, the river had been virtually uncontrollable, drying to a trickle in the summer and swelling into

devastating torrents during the spring. The floods it produced washed away the region's fertile topsoil—one of the only economic assets the area had.

The TVA was one of the most successful programs among President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, which sought to promote economic and industrial growth through investment by the government. In the case of the TVA, the project resulted in the construction of hydroelectric power stations and the production and distribution of fertilizers.

The TVA provides irrigation, flood control, recreational facilities, and improved navigation for a seven-state, 40,000-square-mile area drained by the Tennessee River and its tributaries. However, its main purpose now is to provide electricity. The TVA is the biggest utility firm in the country.

"Tennessee Valley Authority." *American History*. ABC-CLIO, 2010. Web. 9 May 2010. <<http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com>>.



Carpenter (wearing a contractor's employee badge) at work during the 1942 construction of the Douglas Dam in East Tennessee.

National Youth Administration

The National Youth Administration (NYA) was a New Deal program established in 1935 to provide relief to youths between the ages of 16 and 25. During its eight years of existence from 1935 to 1943, the NYA offered more than relief. Under the directorship of Aubrey Williams and the watchful eye of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, the NYA also acted as an agent of social justice, offering educational opportunities and training in marketable skills to disadvantaged youth without discrimination on the basis of race. The NYA worked through state offices with close monitoring by

the national headquarters, and the official who worked to ensure nondiscrimination was Mary McLeod Bethune, a prominent African-American educator.

The NYA operated two major divisions to achieve its objectives: the student work program and the out-of-school work program. The student work program employed youth part-time on their high school or college campuses. High school students often performed clerical, maintenance, or library work. College youths conducted surveys, prepared laboratory materials for science classes, or constructed buildings. The out-of-school work projects included such activities as supervising playgrounds, building roadside parks, or remodeling hospitals. After its first two years of operation, the NYA began to develop projects offering youths training in marketable skills. For example, it taught secretarial skills to young women and instructed young men in masonry and carpentry.

Besides providing disadvantaged youth with work relief and long-term opportunities for education and training, NYA construction projects made valuable contributions to financially strapped cities. Cities benefited from NYA youth, who built or repaired streets and who constructed or remodeled a variety of buildings, including auditoriums, youth centers, hospitals, libraries, and band shells. In some communities, NYA projects built new landing fields and aircraft hangars, and across the nation, NYA youth placed more than 1 million street signs and markers. These undertakings, and a wide range of others, such as repairing sewers and constructing sidewalks, improved urban facilities and infrastructure.

In developing urban projects, the NYA found cosponsors among municipal governments, civic organizations, recreational agencies, and charitable programs. In these, as in other NYA projects, cosponsors paid for materials and some supervision, and the NYA funded primary supervisors and wages for the youth. The national office also had the services of an architect and an assistant to oversee the quality and design of major construction projects, and many state offices employed architects as well.

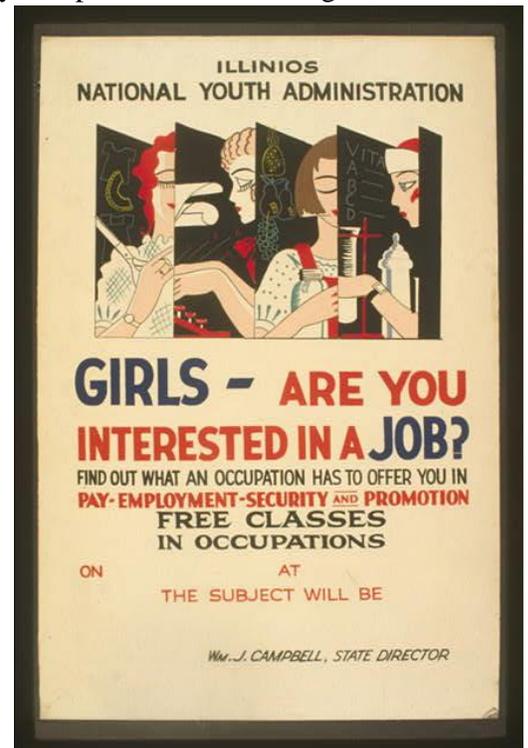
One of the most impressive NYA municipal endeavors was restoring La Villita (the Little Village) in the heart of San Antonio, Texas. Originally built next to the Alamo, La Villita had deteriorated into a slum by the 1930s. The San Antonio council supported a plan to cosponsor the project in conjunction with the NYA to revitalize this historical and cultural site. Once it was completed and the NYA had developed an arts and crafts workshop there, La Villita became an important part of the tourist center. The NYA proved itself to be not only an important benefactor to millions of youth but also a valuable asset in improving the structural features of cities and adding to the economic opportunities of urban areas.

National Youth Administration." *American History*. ABC-CLIO, 2010. Web. 9 May 2010. <<http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com>>.

National Recovery Administration

The cornerstone of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal program, the National Recovery Administration (NRA) allowed companies to draw up trade "codes of fair competition." This resulted in extensive, cross-industrial regulation that enraged the public even as it achieved its goal of strengthening the depression-stricken national economy.

When the NRA was created in 1933, Roosevelt called the measure "the most important and far-



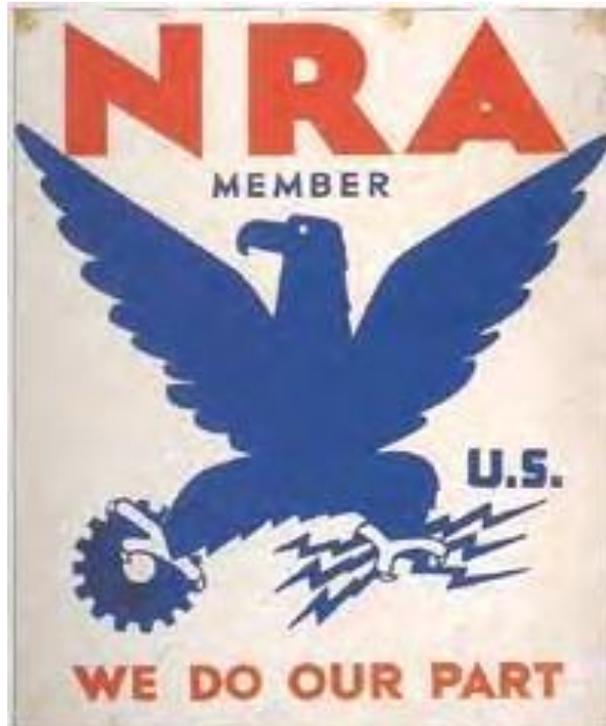
reaching . . . ever enacted by Congress." Under the NRA, businesses were allowed to regulate prices, plant construction, wages, working conditions, and terms of credit as long as they had presidential approval. Businesses that obeyed the codes were exempt from the government's strict antitrust (antimonopoly) laws, which were designed to promote competition and free trade.

The NRA persuaded all the major industries to participate voluntarily, and soon the program began to have its intended effect on the economy. However, consumers began to notice higher prices and less availability of merchandise, and small-business owners complained that big companies had all the say in developing government policy. Meanwhile, workers who had been guaranteed the right to organize unions under the NRA provisions discovered that they had been betrayed.

The Supreme Court brought a sudden end to the NRA when it decided the case *Schechter Poultry Corporation v. United States* in May 1935. The court unanimously ruled that the NRA was unconstitutional because its code-drafting process violated the legal extent of the legislative branch's powers.

An administrator supervised the NRA. Its symbol was a blue eagle and its motto was "We Do Our Part."

"National Recovery Administration." *American History*. ABC-CLIO, 2010. Web. 9 May 2010. <<http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com>>.



NRA Blue Eagle poster. This would be displayed in store windows, on packages, and in ads.

Agricultural Adjustment Administration

Congress created the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA) under the 1933 Agricultural Adjustment Act. Creation of the AAA was the most important early New Deal attempt to fight the damage suffered by the nation's farms during the Great Depression; the AAA's main tactic to achieve this goal was to limit farms' production, thus raising prices for agricultural goods.

The key to the AAA's success was the Domestic Allotment Plan, which paid benefits for lowered production of such staple crops as cotton, wheat, tobacco, and corn. This incentive greatly helped

land-owning farmers and did raise the prices of their commodities, but sharecroppers and tenant farmers usually faced threats of eviction when farm production went down.

By 1936, however, the U.S. Supreme Court had decided in *United States v. Butler* (1936) that the Domestic Allotment Plan was unconstitutional because its government subsidies constituted an illegal system of regulation. Faced with this setback, Congress responded by passing the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act in 1936, which permitted the AAA to pay benefits to farmers who grew soil-enriching crops rather than staple crops.

Combined with the 1936 law, the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1938, which allowed the AAA to fix acreage for staple export crops and grant loans based on the amount of stored surplus crops, kept the AAA in business until 1945. Nevertheless, because of the Supreme Court's 1936 ruling in *Butler*, the agency ended its existence with much less authority than it had started.

"Agricultural Adjustment Administration." *American History*. ABC-CLIO, 2010. Web. 9 May 2010. <<http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com>>.



Scene in county agent's office, San Augustine, Texas. Farmer is receiving his AAA check. Photo by Russell Lee, April 1939, LOC.

Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation

The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) was established as an independent agency of the federal government in 1933 at a time when public faith in the banking system was drastically low. The organization was created to improve and preserve confidence in banks and protect the supply of money by providing insurance for bank deposits and instituting periodic examinations of banks the agency insures.

Organized by the Federal Reserve Act of 1933, which was amended in 1950, the FDIC is managed by a five-person board of directors. The board consists of a comptroller of the currency, a director of the Office of Thrift Supervision, and three presidential appointees, including the chairperson and vice chairperson. There is a Division of Liquidation, a Legal Division, a

Division of Accounting and Corporate Services, and a Division of Research and Statistics. There is a single executive director for the divisions of Supervision and Resolution. These two divisions have regional offices, each of which is headed by a director. FDIC field employees are mostly bank examiners and liquidators.

Institutions that qualify for FDIC insurance are national banks, banks that are members of the Federal Reserve System, non-Federal Reserve state banks that meet certain specifications, and savings and loan associations that are members of the Savings Association Insurance Fund. The FDIC pays depositors up to \$100,000 immediately upon claim in the event of a bank failure. The corporation works to reduce risks to depositors by making loans to facilitate takeovers of insured institutions that are threatened with failure. It will also reopen a closed institution or prevent the closing of an institution when it is in the community's best interest.

The FDIC examines the condition of banks from time to time. If it determines that an institution is engaging in unsound practices or violating the law, it notifies the institution of its findings. The corporation may hold hearings in such cases as well. If an institution continues to engage in unsound practices, the FDIC may terminate its insurance of the institution.

The FDIC also acts as receiver for some banks placed in receivership, approves mergers, requires the report of any change in ownership of an insured institution, demands the maintenance of prescribed security standards at banks, and requires adherence to truth in lending standards.

"Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation." *American History*. ABC-CLIO, 2010. Web. 9 May 2010. <<http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com>>.



The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) is a government agency that provides the fullest possible disclosure of information concerning securities (stocks and bonds) and protects the interest of the public against malpractice in the financial markets. It also polices corporate operations and protects the interests of stockholders.

The SEC is responsible for the establishment of a national market for securities. The Securities and Exchange Act of 1934 assigns to the commission broad regulatory power over the securities markets and persons conducting business in securities. The SEC has wide policy making authority over the activities of brokers, dealers, information processors, and transfer agents. It requires companies selling securities to file an accurate registration statement and prospectus. In addition to the 1934 law, the SEC enforces the Public Utility Holding Company Act of 1935, under which it regulates mergers of utility companies.

In response to widespread reports of illegal campaign contributions, the SEC now requires corporations to report all donations to candidates. It also requires corporate executives to disclose their fringe benefits to shareholders. The SEC cannot guarantee the economic viability of any security—it only requires disclosure of information for public benefit. The SEC tries to prevent fraud and deception in the purchase and sale of securities by obtaining court orders to revoke the registration of corrupt brokers, dealers, and investment advisers.

Headed by a chairperson, the five-member commission is appointed by the president for five-year terms. The appointments are subject to Senate approval. The SEC's departments include the Division of Enforcement; the Division of Corporate Finance; the Division of Investment Management; the Division of Market Regulation; and the Office of Filings, Information, and Consumer Services.

The Washington, D.C.-based SEC has regional offices in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Denver, Fort Worth, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, and Seattle.

"Securities and Exchange Commission." *American History*. ABC-CLIO, 2010. Web. 9 May 2010. <<http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com>>.



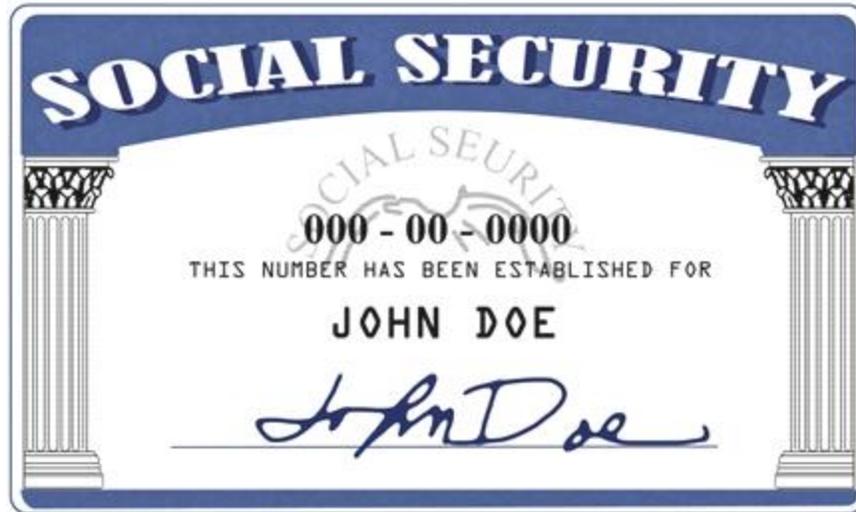
Social Security Administration

The Social Security Administration (SSA) is an independent federal agency responsible for administering the provisions of the Social Security Act of 1935, part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal program. The SSA had its beginnings in the Social Security Board (SSB), which was formed after the Social Security Act's passage. The SSB was abolished in 1946 and replaced by the current SSA. Until 1994, the SSA was part of the Department of Health and Human Services. In 1994, President Bill Clinton supported the bipartisan legislation that authorized the SSA to become an independent agency.

Social security is a government program that provides retirement, death, and disability benefits to all eligible Americans. Initially, the social security program made payments only to retired or unemployed persons, but the Social Security Act has been amended many times over the years to expand and increase social security benefits. In the early 1970s, the SSA became responsible for managing the Supplemental Security Income program, which provides a guaranteed income for all disabled, blind, or needy persons over the age of 65. Social security benefits are paid for by

taxing a portion of each working person's income. Virtually all American workers are required to participate in the social security program.

"Social Security Administration." *American History*. ABC-CLIO, 2010. Web. 9 May 2010. <<http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com>>.



National Labor Relations Board

An independent federal agency, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) administers and enforces the National Labor Relations Act, the main law concerning relations between private-sector employers and unions. In doing so, it protects employees' rights to collective bargaining and self-organization. The NLRB generally has authority over employee-employer relations in all interstate commerce excepting the airline, railroad, government, and agriculture industries.

Congress founded the NLRB in 1935 to monitor, oversee, and direct labor relations. Its two main roles are to decide whether workers at a certain business want to have a union represent them and if so, which one, and to prevent or address unfair labor practices either by unions or employers. The board uses a secret ballot to determine whether workers want representation and conducts investigations into all unfair labor practice charges.

When someone files an unfair labor practice charge, the NLRB field office in that region investigates to decide whether the charge is warranted. The regional director then determines whether to dismiss the charge or not. If the charge is dismissed, the complainant may appeal to the NLRB General Counsel's office in Washington, D.C. If the case goes forward, however, the

relevant region will try to mediate a voluntary settlement to address the violation. If this effort fails, the charge becomes a formal complaint, and the case goes to a hearing before the NLRB administrative judge. He or she issues a written decision that is subject to appeal by the five-member NLRB itself in Washington. The board's decision is in turn subject to review by a U.S. court of appeals. About 35,000 charges are filed every year, of which about one-third become formal complaints.

The NLRB is composed of two separate, independent parts: the board itself and the General Counsel. The president appoints board members to five-year terms pending Senate approval. One of their terms expires every year. The General Counsel is one person also appointed by the president with the Senate's consent. He or she has a four-year term. In addition, there are 52 regional, subregional, and resident offices. Each regional office has a regional director.

"National Labor Relations Board." *American History*. ABC-CLIO, 2010. Web. 9 May 2010. <<http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com>>.

