



The Executive Branch – Carrying out the Laws

The Office of the President



The Role of President

- As our highest elected official, the President represents all Americans (not just citizens of a state or congressional district).
- Even though the President has many advisors, the President alone is responsible for making the final decisions about many important issues facing the nation.
- Many consider this office to be the most powerful in the world.

Creating the Office of President

- In creating the presidency, the framers did not want a leader with unlimited powers. To prevent tyranny, the framers gave very few specific powers to the President.
- Limits include term of office (4 years, 2 terms maximum) and checks and balances by other branches (many Presidential decisions must be approved by Congress).

Qualifications and Salary

- Must be at least 35 years old
- Must be a natural-born citizen of the United States and must have lived in the U.S. for at least 14 years.
- Yearly salary is set by Congress.

The President as Chief Executive

- The President serves as Chief Executive, or head of the executive branch. The President is in charge of executing (carrying out) the laws passed by Congress.
- Presidents can give direction through executive orders (rules or regulations that government officials must follow). However, the President's orders may not violate the Constitution or laws passed by Congress.



The President as Commander in Chief

- The Constitution provides that “the President shall be commander in chief of the army and navy of the United States”.
- To protect American interests, the President has the ability to send troops to a foreign country even if Congress has not declared war. Troops may not remain for more than 90 days without the approval of Congress.

The President as Chief Diplomat

- The President serves as representative of the U.S. in relations with other nations. The President leads in making foreign policy (guiding our nation's relationship with other countries).
- However, Congress must approve all treaties and appointments of ambassadors.

The President as Legislative Leader

- The President gives a speech to both houses of Congress once each year, the State of the Union address. The President puts forth ideas for foreign, as well as domestic, policy.
- The President also has the ability to veto proposed legislation of Congress. Often just the threat of a veto will cause Congress to change a bill to the President's liking.
- The President also has the power to call special sessions of Congress.



The President's Judicial Powers

- The President chooses Supreme Court justices and other federal judges (though the Senate has to confirm).
- The President also has the power to pardon or reduce the punishment of someone who has been convicted of a crime in federal courts.



Organization of the Executive Branch

- The executive branch has grown from a few hundred officials in Washington's time to about 4 million employees today. It is the largest branch of government.
- To help direct organization, the President appoints an administration (team of executive branch officials). They direct the 3 main parts of the executive branch; the office of the President, the executive departments, and independent agencies.

The Executive Office of the President

- Unlike the other parts of the executive branch, the main job of the Executive Office is not to carry out laws directly, but to advise the President.
- At the center of the administration is the White House Staff; including a chief of staff, key advisors, press secretaries, legal experts, speech writers, and researchers. The President also decides what the Vice President will do. (The Vice President is most often invisible, but serves the important function of assuming the role of President if the President were to die.)

Executive Departments and Independent Agencies

- The Executive Departments do much of the work of carrying out the nation's laws and running of government programs. The President appoints the head of each department, though each appointment must be approved by the Senate. These department heads form the President's Cabinet (core policy advisors).
- Independent agencies include executive agencies (such as NASA), regulatory commissions (such as the FCC), and government corporations (such as the Postal Service).