

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).