

Executive Branch

Powers of the Presidency



Many people say that the President of the United States has the most powerful job in the world. He is chief of state, head of government, commander in chief of the armed forces, chief diplomat, and the government's economic leader. He also is the leader of his political party and, although this is not a government role, it adds to his power.

Let's take a closer look at some roles of the President:

- **Chief of state:** The President serves as a living symbol of the U.S. In this role, he performs many ceremonial duties, such as presenting medals of honor to outstanding citizens.
- **Head of government:** The President is the leader of the executive branch of the **federal** (national) government. He appoints and fires officials, develops policies, makes all important government decisions, and enforces the laws of the U.S.
- **Commander in chief:** The U.S. Constitution makes the President the commander in chief of the armed forces. He heads the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines. Only Congress can declare war. In recent years, however, Presidents have sent troops

into combat in other countries without asking Congress to give its approval.

■ **Legislative leader:** The Constitution gives the President power to sign an act of Congress into law, or to **veto** (reject) any law. Congress can override the veto by a two-thirds majority vote in both the House and the Senate. Only Congress has the power to pass laws, but Presidents can and do propose or push for legislation that they want.

■ **Chief diplomat:** The Constitution makes the President the country's chief diplomat by giving the President the power to make treaties with other nations—with the approval of the Senate. The President decides U.S. foreign policy, with the help of the Secretary of State.

■ **Economic chief:** As economic chief, the President is expected to help keep the economy running smoothly. He plans the federal budget and suggests ways to keep prices from rising too fast.

What a President Can and Cannot Do.

Because we have a three-branch system of government with separation of powers, there are many things that a President cannot do. At various times, U.S. Presidents have been frustrated by certain limitations of their power.

YOU DECIDE

Can a President do the following? Write yes or no.

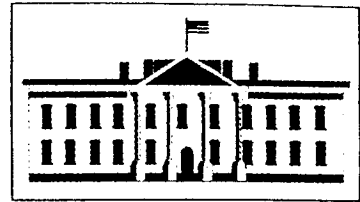
1. Impose taxes:

2. Declare war:

3. Decide foreign policy:

4. Veto a law passed by Congress:

5. Command the U.S. armed forces:



Electoral College Primer

For many Americans, the electoral process by which we elect our nation's President is confusing. Use the map in the student edition along with the information below to learn how it works:

- The President of the U.S. is actually chosen as the result of two elections. The results of the first election—when voters go to the national polls on the first Tuesday in November—is called the **popular vote**.
- On election day, voters are actually deciding how the **electoral college** will vote one month later. The electoral college is comprised of a group of **electors**, 538 people representing the members of Congress from all 50 states, plus three electors from the District of Columbia.
- Each state has a different number of electors.
- The number of electors is based on a state's population and is equal to the state's two Senators plus the number of Representatives it has in the House of Representatives at the time of election.
- The candidate who wins the majority of popular votes in a state is given all of the electoral votes for that state.
- The electors for each state meet in their state capitals on the first Monday after the second Wednesday in December to cast their ballots. When the voting is complete, the sealed ballots are sent to the president pro tempore of the U.S. Senate.
- The electoral votes are then counted in a joint session of Congress, usually held in January. A candidate must win at least 270 electoral votes to become President.
- The inauguration ceremony for the new President is held on January 20.
- Under the electoral college system a candidate can win the popular vote but lose the election. For example, in 1876 Samuel Tilden had almost 251,000 more popular votes than his opponent Rutherford B. Hayes. Tilden lost the election, however, because Hayes had 185 electoral votes and Tilden had 184.
- The Constitution states that if no candidate wins a majority of electoral votes, the House of Representatives will select the President. Only two Presidents have been elected by the House of Representatives: Thomas Jefferson in 1800, and John Quincy Adams in 1824.



Name _____

ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN

The President of the United States has the most important job in the world. Without help from thousands of other people, he would never get his job done. Those who are directly responsible to him are called the members of his *cabinet*. Each of these cabinet members is in charge of a major area of concern to us. He in turn has literally hundreds of people either directly or indirectly responsible to him in gathering information and solving problems concerned with his specific concern. He is then directly responsible for keeping the President informed of the work within his department.

Your task is to research from another source the duties of these various cabinet posts and then to identify them with the statements on the next page.

1. ____ Department of Health and Human Services
2. ____ Department of the Treasury
3. ____ Department of Justice—Attorney General
4. ____ Department of Defense
5. ____ Department of the Interior
6. ____ Department of Energy
7. ____ Department of State
8. ____ Department of Agriculture
9. ____ Department of Transportation
10. ____ Department of Housing and Urban Affairs
11. ____ Department of Labor
12. ____ Department of Commerce
13. ____ Department of Education

- a. _____ This man or woman is mainly responsible for promoting all phases of commerce, industry and business.
- b. _____ This person is responsible for managing our nation's finances. He is also responsible for the coining and printing of all money as well as enforcing all money laws, the Secret Service and the Coast Guard.
- c. _____ The cabinet head here is responsible for enforcing the laws of the United States in the federal courts. He is concerned with those matters in which the United States as a nation is involved in legal matters. He is the chief legal officer and conducts investigations into monopolies, antitrust laws, organized crime and the violation of conservation laws.
- d. _____ The leader here is charged with keeping a reasonable and proper balance of all the nation's resources, with preserving its scenic and historical landmarks, as well as being in charge of its National Parks and Forests, the Bureau of Indian Affairs and our nation's water supply.
- e. _____ This man is charged with handling all of our foreign affairs, including the participation of the United States in the United Nations. He is also responsible for issuing passports and maintaining our foreign embassies. He is perhaps the single most important of the cabinet members.
- f. _____ This "secretary" is charged with the general areas which his title suggests. They include the Public Health Service, the Social Security Administration, the Food and Drug Administration and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation.
- g. _____ The cabinet leader here deals mainly with the complex transportation problems that face a "nation on the move" such as ours.
- h. _____ This man or woman is responsible for answering the problems of the growing needs of city dwellers and the many other implications of living in a large metropolitan area.
- i. _____ This "secretary" is responsible for defending our nation against all invaders. The main arm of his authority extends to our armed forces. He also advises the President on the billions of dollars spent annually on research to develop sophisticated armaments that will ensure our continued safety.
- j. _____ This cabinet leader is responsible for administering all phases of education from the kindergarten level through university post-graduate school.
- k. _____ The head of this department continually analyzes our present and future energy reserves. He also has been placed in the charge of implementing a national energy conservation program.
- l. _____ This department head is responsible for heading the nation's farm program. His job is concerned with getting a fair price for the American farmer and in stimulating sales of U.S. farm products to foreign countries.
- m. _____ He or she is in charge of the nation's labor supply. There are many complicated problems associated with reaching a balance between the available supplies of human labor and the demands for it. The head of this department constantly attempts to achieve that balance.

The Executive Branch Enforces Laws

RETEACHING ACTIVITY

Chapter 7, Section 2

Directions: Read each passage carefully. On the line provided, write the letter of the statement that best presents the main idea of the passage. You will then better understand the responsibilities of the executive branch.

_____ 1. Candidates for President must meet formal qualifications set down in the Constitution and informal qualifications set by tradition. According to Article II of the Constitution, the President must be a natural-born citizen who has been a resident of the United States for at least fourteen years. He or she also must be at least thirty-five years old though candidates most often are between forty and seventy years old. Most candidates have also served in high political or military office and are popular in their respective political parties.

- a. Candidates for President must meet formal and informal qualifications for the office.
- b. A Presidential candidate must be thirty-five years old.
- c. A Presidential candidate must belong to one of the two major political parties.

_____ 2. According to Article II of the Constitution, the Vice-President becomes President if the President dies, is removed from office, or becomes incapacitated. So far, nine Vice-Presidents have succeeded to the Presidency. Eight of them became President because the President they served under died in office. The most recent Vice-President to become President was Gerald Ford. Ford succeeded to the Presidency in 1974 when President Richard M. Nixon resigned.

- a. Gerald Ford became President when Richard Nixon was impeached.
- b. Eight Presidents have died in office so far.
- c. The Vice-President becomes President if the President dies, is removed from office, or becomes incapacitated.

_____ 3. The Constitution gives fewer powers to the President than to the Congress. However, the powers given to the President in Article II have allowed the office of the President to grow in responsibility over the years. The Constitution gives the President the power to command the armed forces, make treaties, appoint ambassadors, appoint Supreme Court justices, and see that the laws of the land are faithfully executed. A few of the powers touch on the role of Congress. For example, the President must give Congress information on the state of the union. The President must also recommend laws for Congress to consider passing. Over the years, this last provision has led to the President proposing a complete legislative agenda to Congress. Congress still retains the authority to pass or not pass these mea-

_____ sures. However, most laws come about because of an initial proposal made by the President.

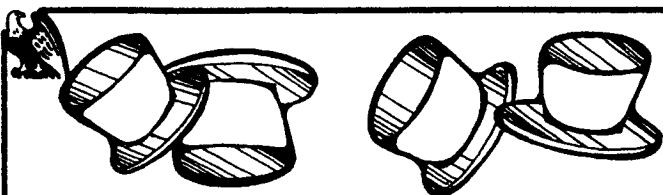
- a. As stated in the Constitution, Congress has more powers than the President.
- b. The role of the President with respect to law-making has expanded over the years.
- c. The main duty of the President is to direct foreign policy.

_____ 4. Article II of the Constitution gives the President the power to make treaties, appoint ambassadors, and meet with heads of state from other countries. These duties mean that the President directs United States foreign policy. As the United States has gained more power and prestige in the world community, the President's authority and responsibilities in shaping foreign policy have grown correspondingly. As a check on the President, Congress has the power to declare war. Nevertheless, Congress has always followed the President's recommendations in this matter. Even though Congress attempted to assert some authority over foreign policy during the Vietnam era, the President remains in charge of relations with other countries.

- a. The President directs American foreign policy.
- b. Congress took over aspects of foreign policy during the Vietnam era.
- c. According to the Constitution, Congress has the power to declare war.

_____ 5. Members of the President's cabinet usually belong to the President's political party. Sometimes a President chooses people from outside the political party. The cabinet is composed of the heads of the major departments of the government. The cabinet members act as advisors to the President. When the government was smaller, the cabinet met frequently to advise the President. However, as the size of the federal government has grown, cabinet meetings have become less frequent and more formal. In recent years Presidents have turned for advice to special task forces, whose members come from various departments of the government, or to staffs working directly under them.

- a. Cabinet members come from both within and without the political sphere of the President.
- b. Recent Presidents have relied less on the cabinet for advice than did earlier Presidents.
- c. When the government was smaller, the cabinet met frequently to advise the President.



Name _____

Match the action being taken by the President (by letter) with the role he is performing in each of the following. There may be some examples of his wearing more than one hat at the same time.

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| A. CHIEF EXECUTIVE | E. CHIEF FOREIGN POLICY MAKER |
| B. COMMANDER IN CHIEF | F. HEAD OF STATE |
| C. CHIEF OF PARTY | G. CHIEF LEGISLATOR |
| D. WATCHDOG OF THE ECONOMY | |

1. _____ Making a patriotic speech on Memorial Day
2. _____ Hosting a cabinet meeting to discuss foreign policy
3. _____ Signing a bill sent to him by Congress
4. _____ Sending in the National Guard to help flood victims in Florida
5. _____ Traveling to Iowa to make a speech at a benefit dinner for a party nominee to Congress
6. _____ Meeting with labor leaders to discuss a strike by auto workers
7. _____ Hosting a party in honor of a diplomat from The People's Republic
8. _____ Greeting visitors who come to the White House
9. _____ Hosting a brunch in the White House for the leaders of the Ways and Means Committee
10. _____ Awarding commissions to those who have recently graduated from West Point
11. _____ Choosing a member of his party to serve in the capacity of Secretary of Education
12. _____ Delivering his annual State of the Union message before the Congress
13. _____ Nominating someone to fill a vacancy created in a federal judgeship
14. _____ Officially receiving the Prime Minister of England
15. _____ Meeting with his cabinet on a regular basis
16. _____ Making a big pitch before the American people to help him fight a tax hike proposed by Congress
17. _____ Telling Congress he wants a mandatory seat belt law nationwide
18. _____ Releasing 9,000 government workers he feels are no longer necessary
19. _____ Meeting with Arab oil leaders to help establish a more stable price for oil
20. _____ Commuting to life imprisonment the death sentence of a terrorist who set off a bomb in a Denver airport terminal

