

# The Presidency

**W**hen the writers of the Constitution created the presidency in 1787, they could not have imagined the tremendous powers that a twentieth-century President of the United States would possess. George Washington became the first President in 1789 after winning an election with no primaries, no rival party candidate, no heated campaign, and only the 69 votes of the first electoral college. No one was sure of how he should spend his time or even how he should be addressed. Rejecting such titles as “His Excellency” or “Elective Majesty,” Washington settled on the less formal “Mr. President.”

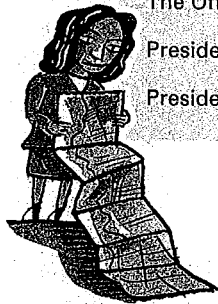
The title remains the same today, but the process of winning the presidency and the strength of the President’s powers and influence have changed dramatically since the time of George Washington. The President is America’s most visible leader. He has the most explicit responsibility for guiding the course of the nation. The Founders probably would not be surprised to see that the presidency and the executive branch now serve as a strong check to legislative policy making. However, since they envisioned the legislature as dominant, they almost certainly could not have anticipated the gradual increase in presidential power. Today the President often sets the policy-making agenda, and Congress must sometimes respond, rather than lead.

## In this chapter . . .

The Office of President 177

Presidential Selection and Succession 181

Presidential Powers and Leadership 191



## The Office of President

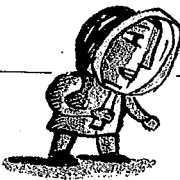
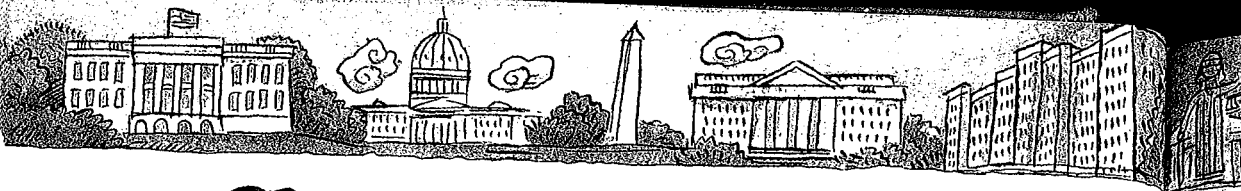
The modern presidency bears little resemblance to the office described by the Founders in 1787, but Article II of the Constitution provides a brief job description. It outlines the qualifications, terms, compensation, selection process, and several responsibilities of the presidency. Notice how Article II is much shorter than Article I, which details the duties and powers of Congress. Right away you get the point about which branch the Founders thought was most important. Remember, however, that the previous government, under the Articles of Confederation, provided for no President at all. Even though it's short, Article II represented a major shift.

### ★ QUALIFICATIONS

The Constitution includes only three formal requirements for becoming President. Previous experience in government is not one of them. First, the President must be a "natural-born citizen." Anyone born in a foreign country who later becomes a citizen is not eligible. The Founders no doubt were concerned that the leader of the newborn country be a loyal citizen who understood Americans and their needs. Second, the President must have lived in the United States for at least 14 years, although the years need not be consecutive. Third, the President must be at least 35 years old. The youngest man to take the office was Theodore Roosevelt at age 42 (succeeding William McKinley, who was assassinated in 1901), and the youngest ever elected was John F. Kennedy at age 43. So no President has been at all close to the minimum age of 35.

### ★ TERM

After seriously considering a single six-year or seven-year term, the Founders settled on a four-year term, with the President being eligible for re-election. The Constitution put no limit on the number of terms a President might serve. However, beginning with George Washington, no one had sought more than two terms, and so the unwritten tradition of "no third terms" continued. In 1940, Franklin Roosevelt broke that tradition, and in 1944, he was elected to a fourth term.



e.g.

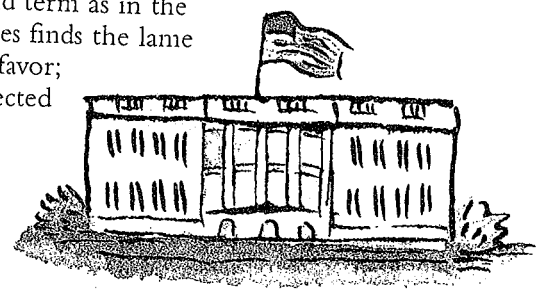
### PRESIDENTIAL FACTS

- As of 2001, the United States has had 43 Presidents.
- ★ 42 belonged to political parties (George Washington did not).
  - ★ 42 were Protestants (John Kennedy was a Catholic).
  - ★ 38 had previous government experience before assuming office.
  - ★ 35 were 50 years or older.
  - ★ 32 went to college (all except one—Harry Truman—in the twentieth century).
  - ★ 24 were lawyers.
  - ★ 14 were former Vice Presidents.
  - ★ None was a racial or ethnic minority.
  - ★ None was a woman.



In 1951, the unwritten custom limiting presidential terms became the 22<sup>nd</sup> Amendment to the Constitution. A President can be elected to a maximum of two full terms, which generally means eight years in office. However, if a President succeeds to the office more than halfway into a term to which someone else was elected, the President could end up serving as many as ten years. For example, Lyndon Johnson filled the remainder of John Kennedy's term after Kennedy was assassinated in 1963. Because only a little more than one year of Kennedy's term remained, Johnson was eligible to run both in 1964 and 1968 (although he chose not to in 1968).

Although the intent of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Amendment was to reinforce the precedent set by Washington, the two-term limit has created the lame duck phenomenon. Because everyone knows that the President will be leaving office, his authority is somewhat undercut. Most Presidents are able to get things done despite the limitations, but almost none in the last 50 years has accomplished as much in the second term as in the first. However, a President sometimes finds the lame duck phenomenon working in his favor; the political motivation to be re-elected can't be seen in his actions.



## ★ PAY AND BENEFITS

Article II, Section 1 of the Constitution states that the President should be paid a “compensation” that cannot be increased or decreased during a term. First set at \$25,000 a year in 1789, the President’s salary since 1969 has been \$200,000. In 1999, President Clinton signed legislation doubling the next President’s salary to \$400,000. Besides the salary, Presidents receive a great many benefits—such as an expense account, residence in the White House, generous travel and entertainment funds, superb health care, a lifetime pension, and use of a yacht, a fleet of fancy automobiles, and *Air Force One*. So, is the President really well paid? The answer depends on your frame of reference. If you do the math, with a salary of \$200,000, the President makes less than one penny for every thousand people he governs. Compare, for example, the pay and benefits of the President to those of chief executive officers (CEOs) of American businesses.

We need to recognize, of course, the important differences between being the President and being a CEO. The positions differ not just in pay and benefits but in power, fame, media praise and criticism, and public respect. CEOs head companies whose purpose is to make money, while Presidents are public servants whose salaries are paid by ordinary taxpayers. Presidents are in the glare of the public spotlight, with their appearance, conversation, leisure activities, and personal behavior the subject of often harsh scrutiny. Yet Presidents are traditionally given a degree of respect not generally given to successful CEOs. Libraries of collected documents, papers, and related articles are dedicated to former Presidents. Their birthplaces and boyhood homes are preserved and turned into museums. Impressive monuments are created for the great ones in Washington, such as the Jefferson, Lincoln, and Roosevelt memorials. Art and music centers and universities (such as Carnegie Hall and Stanford and Vanderbilt universities) are named for businessmen, but only if their money financed the buildings, the programs, or the grounds.



### Quote

“I have had all the honor there is in this place [the White House], and have had responsibilities enough to kill any man.”

*William McKinley, President of the United States (1897–1901)*

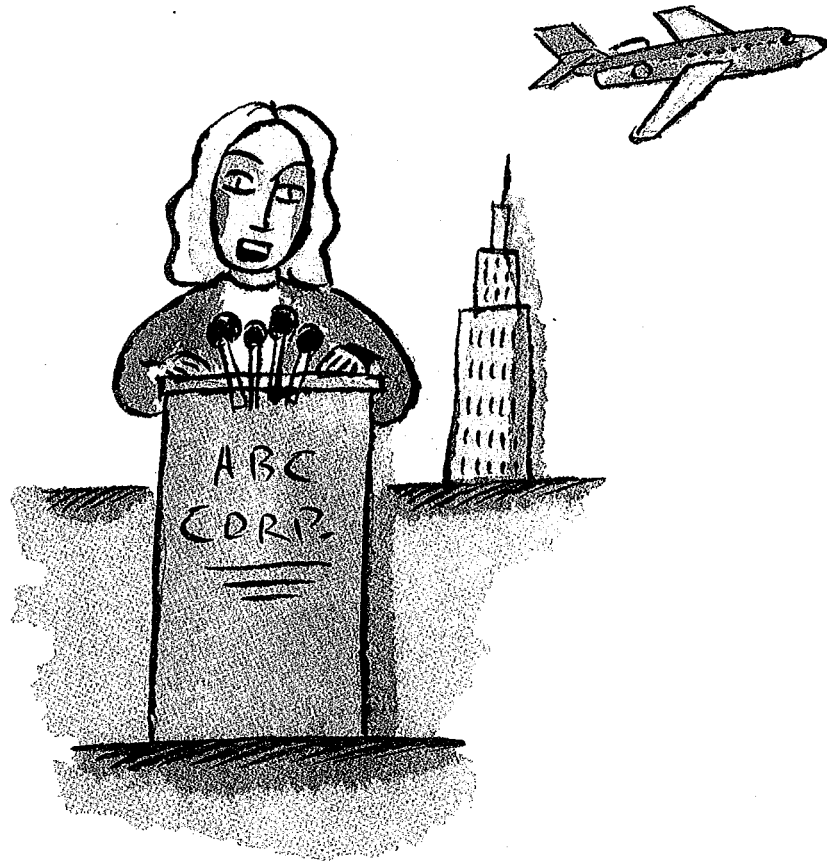




## TOP CEO ANNUAL SALARIES AND BONUSES: 1996

Compare the President's annual salary in 1996 (\$200,000) and pension plan (\$171,500) to the salaries and bonuses of these corporate leaders in 1996. These figures, from a study conducted by William M. Mercer Inc., don't include stock options or long-term incentive payouts.

EXECUTIVE	COMPANY	SALARY AND BONUS
Sanford I. Weill	Travelers Group, Inc.	\$8,025,000
John F. Welch, Jr.	General Electric Co.	\$6,300,000
Eckhard Pfeiffer	Compaq Computer Corp.	\$4,250,000
Maurice R. Greenberg	American International Group Inc.	\$4,150,000
John S. Reed	Citicorp	\$3,466,667



## Presidential Selection and Succession

Two other important topics addressed by the Founders were the selection of the President and the succession to the presidency. The guidelines they provided in the Constitution about the methods for electing a President and filling a vacancy in the presidency are complex. To some, they are even a bit controversial.

### PRESIDENTIAL SELECTION

The Founders spent a great deal of time determining the methods of choosing the President. They sought a balance between the views of the people (a direct vote) and control by the political leaders (selection by Congress). When the Founders considered the selection of the President at the Constitutional Convention in 1787, they had already decided to allow the people to directly elect the House of Representatives and to leave selection of the Senate to the state legislatures. That compromise worked with a bicameral legislature, but how could they agree on the presidency? Some argued that citizens could not make a wise choice because they knew nothing of politics. Others believed that popular candidates would not make the best Presidents. Yet if Congress chose the President, then too much of the power of government would be in the hands of one branch.

#### The Electoral College

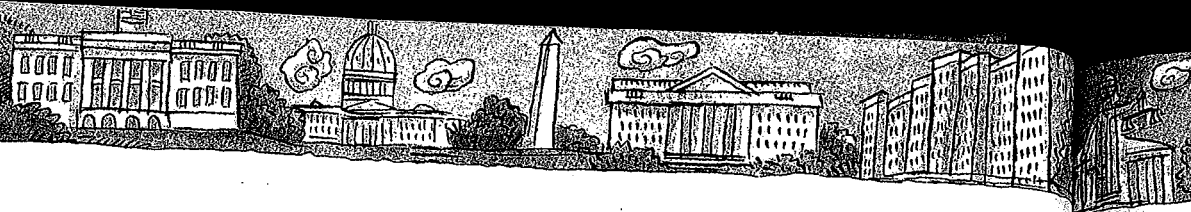
Alexander Hamilton suggested a compromise solution—the **electoral college**. It involved indirect popular participation, a solution the Founders finally accepted. The President would be selected by a special body of **electors**, none of whom could be members of Congress. They were to be chosen in each state as the state legislature directed. The number of electors allowed to each state would equal the total number of senators and representatives it had in Congress. The original plan provided that electors should meet together in each state separately and cast two votes each for presidential candidates. The **electoral vote** was to be counted before a joint session (both houses meeting together) of Congress. The one with the most votes would be President, and the one with the second most votes would be Vice President. In case of a tie,

#### definitions

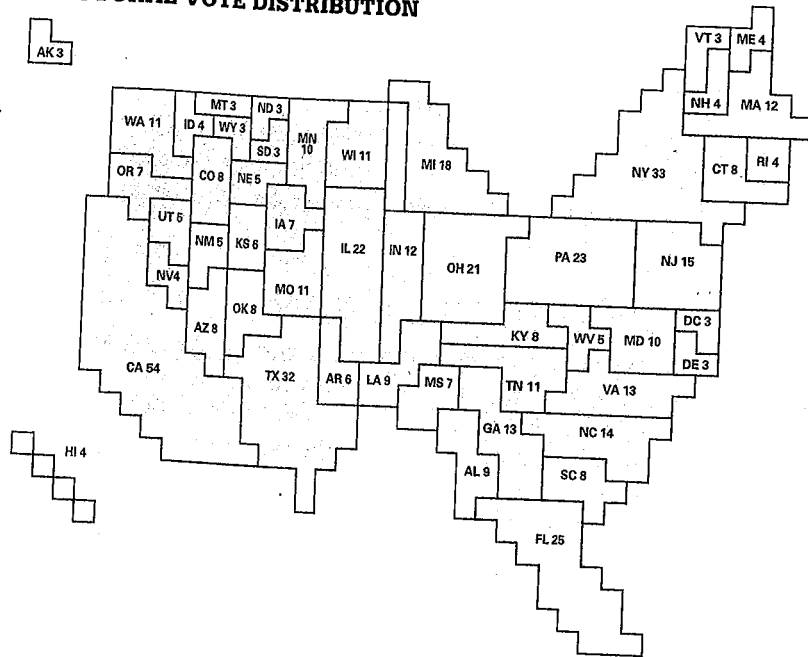
**electoral college**—people selected in each state who gather to formally cast their ballots for the President and Vice President of the United States.

**elector**—a member of the electoral college.

**electoral vote**—the vote cast for President and Vice President by members of the electoral college.



### CARTOGRAM OF 2000 ELECTORAL VOTE DISTRIBUTION



*Note: States are drawn proportionally to their number of electoral votes.*

Source: Federal Election Commission

or if no one received a majority, the House of Representatives would choose the President. The Senate would choose the Vice President in case of a tie for that position. These were the original provisions laid out in Article II, Sections 2 and 4 of the Constitution.

### The Election of 1800 and the 12<sup>th</sup> Amendment

The original electoral college worked as the Founders had hoped in 1789 and 1792 as George Washington was chosen unanimously by the electors. The system ran into trouble in 1800 because two political parties had formed—the Federalists and the Democratic-Republicans. Each party nominated its own candidates for President and also its own electors in each state. The Democratic-Republicans had the majority, so naturally their two candidates won: Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr. The problem was a tie for the presidency. Burr and Jefferson each got exactly the same number of votes because all the Democratic-Republicans had two votes each. The election then went to the House of Representatives. Even though the Democratic-Republican party clearly wanted Jefferson for President and Burr for Vice President, the House



had to cast 36 ballots before the matter was settled. The debate caused many political tensions, especially between the newly selected President and Vice President, so the new administration got off to a hostile start.

As a result of the near-debacle of the election of 1800, the 12<sup>th</sup> Amendment was added in 1804 to the Constitution. It required that the electors cast separate ballots for President and Vice President. That system of separate presidential and vice-presidential elections continues today. So does the unwritten tradition of each party's selection of candidates for the two offices and the choice of electoral delegates who will be loyal to their party's choices.

## THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE TODAY

Today political parties still nominate candidates for office, and citizens vote in presidential elections every four years on the Tuesday after the first Monday of November. What most people don't realize is that even though the candidates' names are on the ballot, they're voting for the electors, not for the candidates directly. The winning candidate is announced almost always on the same day as the popular election, but the electors do not formally meet in their respective state capitals until the Monday following the second Wednesday in December. While the Founders believed that each elector would use individual judgment in selecting a President, since political parties select the electors, the votes are predictable. Each party's electors are expected to vote automatically for their party's candidates. The electoral ballots are sealed and sent to the president of the Senate for a formal count. To become President or Vice President, a candidate must have at least 270 electoral votes (a majority of the 538 total). The formal announcement of the electoral college results comes in a joint session of Congress on January 6.

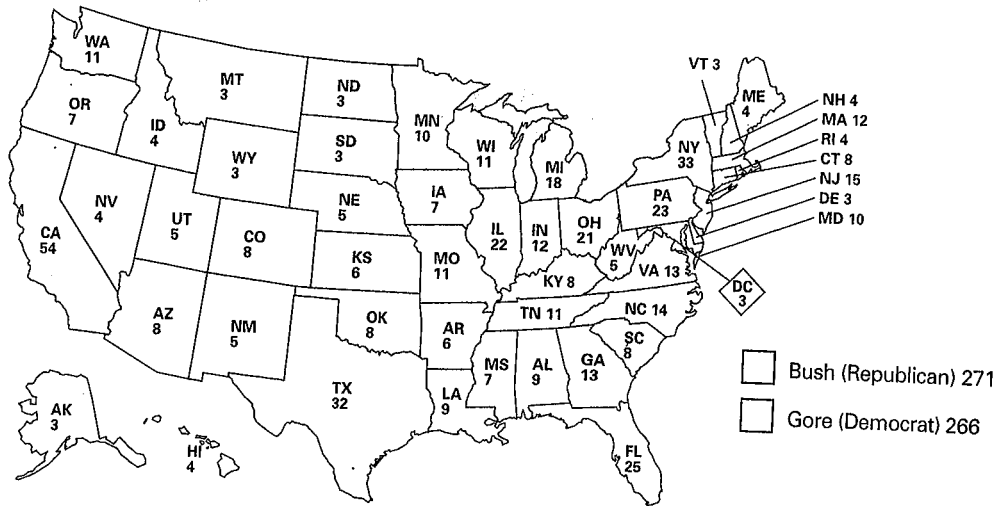
### Criticisms of the Electoral College

The electoral college is criticized as having two main flaws.

- 1 First, some argue that the division of votes among states is not fair. Some small states have a greater percentage of the electoral college vote than their population should dictate. Other critics complain that the larger states carry too much importance because of their large number of electoral votes. A presidential candidate could, for instance, win the necessary 270 electoral votes by carrying only 11 big states. If the election had to be settled in the House of Representatives, additional problems could occur. According to the Constitution, each state has one vote. That means that a state with a small population, such as North Dakota, would have a vote equal to that of a state with a large population, such as California. The possibility of the House having to determine the winner increases if a popular minor party candidate runs.

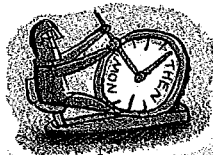


## 2000 ELECTORAL VOTE DISTRIBUTION MAP



Source: Federal Election Commission

2. The main controversy surrounding the electoral college is the possibility that the person who wins the popular vote will not necessarily win the electoral college vote. Remember that the electoral college is a winner-take-all system. In other words, the electoral votes are counted state by state. Whoever wins a state's popular vote wins all of the state's electoral votes. It would be possible, in other words, to win the presidency without winning the majority of the popular votes. Four times this situation has actually happened. In the elections of John Quincy Adams in 1824, Rutherford B. Hayes in 1876, Benjamin Harrison in 1888, and George W. Bush in 2000, those men actually received fewer popular votes than their opponents did. In several other presidential elections, a change of just a few thousand votes would have changed the result. For example, in 1960, the popular vote between Richard Nixon and John Kennedy was extremely close—Kennedy received just 114,673 more votes than Nixon out of the more than 68 million votes cast. Had Nixon received a few more votes in a few key states, he would have won the election.



## Then and Now

### POPULAR VOTE vs. ELECTORAL VOTE

In six elections in American history, the candidate who lost the popular vote won, or almost won, the presidential election.

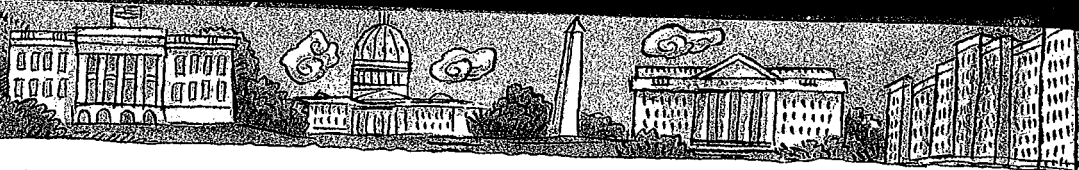
DATE	CANDIDATES	PARTY	TOTAL POPULAR VOTE	TOTAL ELECTORAL VOTE
1824	John Quincy Adams*	Democratic-Republican	113,122	84
	Andrew Jackson	Democratic-Republican	151,271	99
	William H. Crawford	Democrat	40,876	41
	Henry Clay	Democrat	47,531	37
1876	Rutherford B. Hayes*	Republican	4,034,311	185
	Samuel Tilden	Democrat	4,288,546	184
1888	Benjamin Harrison*	Republican	5,443,892	233
	Grover Cleveland	Democrat	5,534,488	168
1960	John Kennedy*	Democrat	34,221,344	303
	Richard Nixon	Republican	34,106,671	219
1968	Richard Nixon*	Republican	31,785,148	301
	Hubert Humphrey	Democrat	31,274,503	191
2000	George W. Bush*	Republican	50,456,169	271
	Al Gore	Democrat	50,996,116	266 (1 blank ballot)

\* winners of presidential elections

Source: *The 1998 New York Times Almanac* and *The New York Times*, December 30, 2000

### Ideas for Reform

A number of ideas for reforming the electoral college have been proposed over the years. Several plans would eliminate the problem of the winner-take-all system by awarding electoral votes on the basis of who won the popular vote in a particular congressional district or the share a candidate receives of a state's popular vote. Another possible solution is the elimination of the entire electoral college so that the people directly elect the President and the Vice President.



So why don't we throw the electoral college out? It's easier said than done. To change the system, an amendment supported by Congress and state legislatures would be necessary, and the constitutional amendment process is a difficult one. Probably the most compelling reason that we keep the electoral college system is that the country has had no significant problems with it from the elections of 1892 through 1996. Until the controversial election of 2000, most people agreed that the system worked fairly well, since the person who had won the electoral vote had also won the popular vote for more than 100 years.



e.g.

### **ELECTORAL COLLEGE 2000: TIME TO REFORM?**

In the late twentieth century almost no living American could remember an election in which the presidential candidate who won the popular vote hadn't also won the electoral vote. Then, in the 2000 presidential election, it happened for the first time since 1888, and the controversy began anew. Democratic candidate Al Gore led Republican candidate George W. Bush by about 500,000 popular votes, but Bush captured 271 electoral votes to Gore's 266.

In the aftermath of the election, supporters of the electoral college argued that just counting popular vote would shift campaigning almost exclusively to urban areas and would take control of elections away from the states. Supporters of reform countered that the president of a democracy should be elected by direct popular vote and that the electoral college unfairly gives more weight to votes of people in rural areas. The debate reflected a conflict between two major American political principles: federalism—which divides and spreads out power—and democracy—which supports the belief that all votes should be counted equally.



### **PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESSION**

The presidency may be vacated in any of four ways: death (either by assassination or natural causes), disability, resignation, or impeachment. Eight American Presidents have died in office, and one (Richard Nixon in 1974) has resigned. None has left office because of disability or after impeachment. The Constitution says little about the issue of **presidential succession**, stating

#### **defini-tions**

**presidential succession**—the specified procedure by which a vacancy in the presidency is filled.

only that "the powers and duties" of the office, not the office itself, would "devolve on the Vice President." The practice of the Vice President succeeding to the presidency began in 1841 (when John Tyler succeeded after William Henry Harrison's death) but was not officially added to the Constitution until the adoption of the 25<sup>th</sup> Amendment in 1967. The 1947 Presidential Succession Act established the line of succession after the Vice President: Speaker of the House, president *pro tempore* of the Senate, and then members of the President's **cabinet**, beginning with the secretary of state and according to the seniority of the department.

### The 25<sup>th</sup> Amendment

Eight times in American history, the nation has had no Vice President, most recently when Lyndon Johnson became President after John Kennedy's assassination. Whatever the plan in place for presidential succession, some worried the nation was vulnerable without a Vice President. The 25<sup>th</sup> Amendment, ratified in 1967, addressed the problem of how to handle a vacancy in the vice presidency. Section 2 of the Amendment states that to fill a vacancy in the office of the Vice President, the President makes a nomination to Congress. After confirmation by a majority of both the House and the Senate, the nominated candidate shall take office.

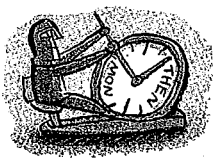
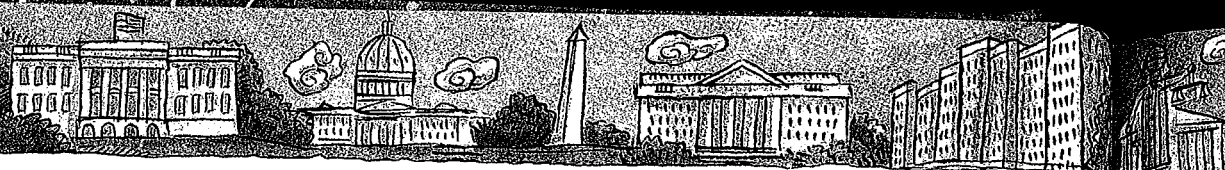
The country didn't have to wait long for the 25<sup>th</sup> Amendment to be applied in a rather spectacular way. In 1973 Spiro Agnew resigned the office of Vice President after being charged with fraud during his previous position as Maryland's governor. (His case was later settled through plea bargain.) President Nixon appointed and Congress confirmed Gerald Ford as the new Vice President. The following year Nixon himself was forced to resign in the wake of the Watergate scandal, and Ford became President. Because the Vice President's position was again vacant, Ford appointed and Congress confirmed Nelson Rockefeller as Vice President. So for the only time in American history, both the President and Vice President were appointed figures, not elected to those offices.

What happens if the presidency and the vice presidency should be vacant at the same time? Only in that case does the 1947 Presidential Succession Act govern. The Speaker would become President and nominate a Vice President, "who shall take office upon confirmation by a majority vote in both houses of Congress." That's one reason the President and Vice President often travel in separate cars, and the Secret Service takes all kinds of precautions to keep them out of mutual danger.

### definitions

**cabinet**—the group of persons, heading 14 executive departments, appointed by the President to act as official advisers and help establish policy.





## Then and Now

### VICE-PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESSION

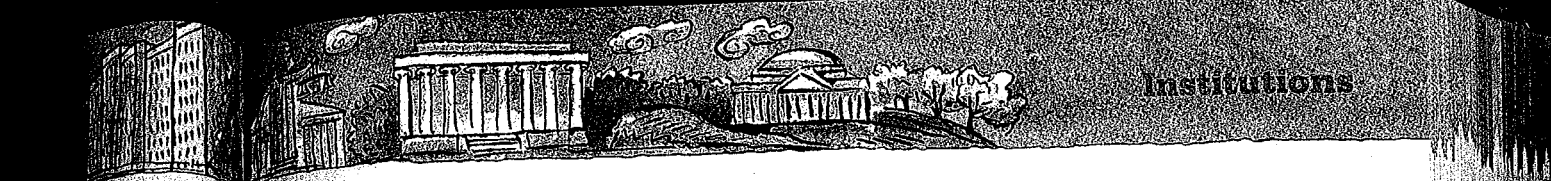
Nine times in American history, the Vice President has succeeded to the presidency.

- 1841:** John Tyler became President when William Henry Harrison died of pneumonia.
- 1850:** Millard Fillmore became President when Zachary Taylor died, probably from overeating or overheating at a July 4<sup>th</sup> picnic.
- 1865:** Andrew Johnson became President when Abraham Lincoln was assassinated by southern loyalist John Wilkes Booth.
- 1881:** Chester Arthur became President when James Garfield was assassinated in 1881 at a train station by a disgruntled campaign supporter.
- 1901:** Theodore Roosevelt became President when William McKinley was assassinated at the World's Fair in Buffalo, New York, by a man who hated capitalists.
- 1923:** Calvin Coolidge became President when Warren Harding died of a massive cerebral hemorrhage.
- 1945:** Harry Truman became President after Franklin Roosevelt died only weeks after his inauguration for a fourth term.
- 1963:** Lyndon Johnson became President when John Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas.
- 1974:** Gerald Ford became President after Richard Nixon resigned.

### Presidential Disability

Besides the appointment of a Vice President, the 25<sup>th</sup> Amendment also addresses the problem of presidential disability. Up to then, neither the Constitution nor Congress specified what should happen if a President were to fall seriously ill and could not fulfill his duties. The situation has occurred on several occasions.

Two Presidents have been disabled for long periods of time. In 1881, James Garfield lay for 80 days before dying from an assassin's gunshot. He was seriously wounded, clearly unable to fulfill his duties, yet he was still the President. In 1919, Woodrow Wilson suffered a serious stroke that left him unable to speak or leave his bed for several months. His wife Edith took the responsibility of keeping him quiet and rested and began to make presidential decisions for him.



In the 1950s, Dwight Eisenhower suffered a massive heart attack that debilitated him for about 20 weeks. His assistants split his responsibilities among themselves, and his Vice President, Richard Nixon, filled in for him on ceremonial occasions. Eisenhower suffered two other shorter, less serious illnesses, but they were enough to frighten many people.

The 25<sup>th</sup> Amendment specifies a clear procedure to follow if a President can't perform his duties. The Vice President may serve as "acting President" under one of two conditions: if the President declares himself in writing to be unable to carry out his duties, or if the Vice President and a majority of the cabinet decide that the President is incapacitated, even if the President disagrees. In such a case, a two-thirds majority of the Congress must confirm that the President is unable to serve. In either case, the President may resume his office by informing Congress that his illness is over. However, if the Vice President and a majority of the cabinet disagree, they can take the matter to Congress, which has 21 days in which to decide the issue. Unless Congress votes against the President by a two-thirds vote in each house, the President may reclaim his powers.

The issue of presidential disability arose twice during Ronald Reagan's presidency. In 1981, after Reagan was shot and wounded in an assassination attempt, he underwent emergency surgery before having time to sign over his powers to Vice President George Bush. He recovered quickly enough so that the Vice President and the cabinet did not have to ask for the transfer of powers. But for a short amount of time the President was unable to fulfill his duties. The disability provisions have officially come into effect only one time so far and then for only a few hours. On July 13, 1985, before President Reagan underwent surgery for a malignant tumor, he transferred the powers of the presidency to Vice President Bush for just under eight hours.

## THE VICE PRESIDENCY

Did you ever hear of George Clinton, Daniel Tompkins, Richard M. Johnson, William R. King, William A. Wheeler, James S. Sherman, Thomas R. Marshall, or Henry A. Wallace? They were all Vice Presidents of the United States, yet their names are unfamiliar to most of us. On the other hand, you probably have heard of John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Harry Truman, Richard Nixon, Lyndon Johnson, and George Bush. They also were Vice Presidents but then went on to become President. The two lists reflect something of the inconsistent expectations that go with the "second job" in the American national government.



## Quotes

"The most insignificant office that ever the invention of man contrived or his imagination conceived."

*John Adams, on the vice presidency, which he held from 1789-1797*

"I do not choose to be buried until I am really dead."

*Daniel Webster, explaining his rejection of the vice-presidential nomination in 1848*

The vice presidency has been viewed throughout American history with both disdain and respect because it is a rather peculiar position. The Vice President is always in the shadow of the President, with little real power in the **administration**, but merely one heartbeat away from the most powerful job on Earth.

### 1. Constitutional Duties

The writers of the Constitution paid little attention to the office of Vice President, assigning it only two formal duties.

- ★ The Vice President presides over the Senate (Article I, Section 3, Clause 4). Although the Vice President has this duty, he has no vote except to break a tie.
- ★ Under the 25<sup>th</sup> Amendment (Sections 3 and 4), the Vice President helps decide the question of presidential disability.

So far, since the Amendment was passed in 1967, the Vice President has never had to decide whether a President was unable to fulfill his duties. Nine times—because of death or resignation—a Vice President has had to take over the presidency. Despite the lack of specific powers given the Vice President by the Constitution, the position is clearly an important one.

### 2. The Role of the Vice President

What responsibilities and influence a Vice President has really depend upon the President. From the beginning, the President controls the Vice President by hand-picking him (or her—Geraldine Ferraro ran in 1984 as the only female vice-presidential candidate on a major party ticket in U.S. history).

### definitions

**administration**—the people and organizations that make up the executive branch of a government.



The vice-presidential candidate traditionally has been chosen based on his or her ability to help the President win the election.

Beginning with Eisenhower, Presidents have given their Vice Presidents more responsibilities. Vice Presidents have headed commissions or organized major projects. For example, Al Gore, President Clinton's Vice President, led a national review of the federal bureaucracy and developed important suggestions for reorganizing the government. Often Vice Presidents go on goodwill missions abroad for the President or represent him at important international events. Today Vice Presidents are members of the National Security Council, a group of foreign policy and military advisers.

The real test of the role of a Vice President is whether or not the President regularly asks his advice and includes him in making decisions. That depends almost entirely upon the working relationship between the two people. President Reagan sometimes included George H. Bush, and President Clinton generally included Al Gore as an important adviser. However, the most influential Vice President in recent times appears to be Dick Cheney, who wields enormous influence over President George W. Bush's policies. The 22<sup>nd</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> Amendments have clarified and formalized the Vice President's power of succession, but the general duties of the Vice President are still subject to the goodwill and mood of the President.

## Presidential Powers and Leadership

When the Founders created the presidency, they feared more than anything a monarchy, a government like that in England in which the king had all the power. That's why they created the two-house Congress, whose members are elected to represent the states and their citizens. But the Founders discovered that the country still needed a leader, someone who was responsible for the big picture, not just one state or district. So they provided for an executive branch with a President whose powers were much more restricted than those exercised by modern Presidents.

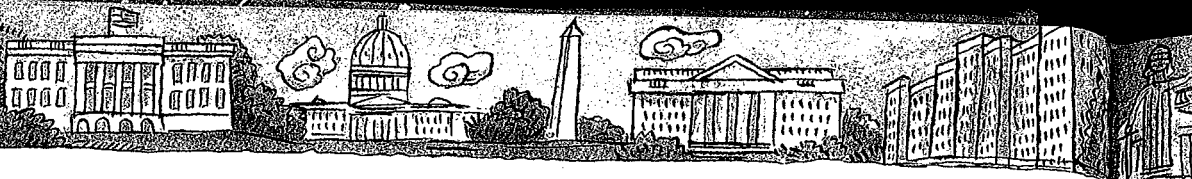


### Quote

"No one who has not had the responsibility can really understand what it [the presidency] is like . . . not even his closest aides or members of his immediate family."

*Harry Truman, President of the United States (1945-1953)*





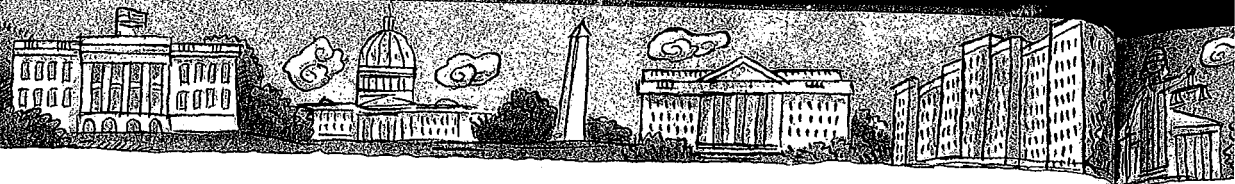
## PRESIDENTS AND THE PRESIDENCY

### PRESIDENTS OF THE UNITED STATES

PRESIDENT	IN OFFICE	AGE TAKING OFFICE	PARTY	PLACE OF BIRTH
George Washington (1732-1799)	1789-1797	57	None	Virginia
John Adams (1735-1826)	1797-1801	61	Federalist	Massachusetts
Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826)	1801-1809	58	Dem-Rep*	Virginia
James Madison (1751-1836)	1809-1817	58	Dem-Rep*	Virginia
James Monroe (1758-1831)	1817-1825	59	Dem-Rep*	Virginia
John Quincy Adams (1767-1848)	1825-1829	58	Dem-Rep*	Massachusetts
Andrew Jackson (1767-1848)	1829-1837	62	Democratic	South Carolina
Martin Van Buren (1782-1862)	1837-1841	55	Democratic	New York
William H. Harrison (1773-1841)	1841	68	Whig	Virginia
John Tyler (1790-1862)	1841-1845	51	Whig	Virginia
James K. Polk (1795-1849)	1845-1849	50	Democratic	North Carolina
Zachary Taylor (1784-1850)	1849-1850	65	Whig	Virginia
Millard Fillmore (1800-1874)	1850-1853	50	Whig	New York
Franklin Pierce (1804-1869)	1853-1857	48	Democratic	New Hampshire
James Buchanan (1791-1868)	1857-1861	65	Democratic	Pennsylvania
Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865)	1861-1865	52	Republican	Kentucky
Andrew Johnson (1808-1875)	1865-1869	57	Democratic	North Carolina
Ulysses S. Grant (1822-1885)	1869-1877	47	Republican	Ohio
Rutherford B. Hayes (1822-1893)	1877-1881	55	Republican	Ohio
James A. Garfield (1831-1881)	1881	50	Republican	Ohio
Chester A. Arthur (1830-1886)	1881-1885	51	Republican	Vermont
Grover Cleveland (1837-1908)	1885-1889	48	Democratic	New Jersey
Benjamin Harrison (1833-1901)	1889-1893	56	Republican	Ohio
Grover Cleveland (1837-1908)	1893-1897	56	Democratic	New Jersey
William McKinley (1843-1901)	1897-1901	54	Republican	Ohio
Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919)	1901-1909	42	Republican	New York
William H. Taft (1857-1930)	1909-1913	52	Republican	Ohio
Woodrow Wilson (1856-1924)	1913-1921	56	Democratic	Virginia
Warren G. Harding (1865-1923)	1921-1923	56	Republican	Ohio
Calvin Coolidge (1872-1933)	1923-1929	51	Republican	Vermont
Herbert C. Hoover (1874-1964)	1929-1933	55	Republican	Iowa
Franklin D. Roosevelt (1882-1945)	1933-1945	50	Democratic	New York
Harry S. Truman (1884-1972)	1945-1953	61	Democratic	Missouri
Dwight D. Eisenhower (1890-1969)	1953-1961	63	Republican	Texas
John F. Kennedy (1917-1963)	1961-1963	43	Democratic	Massachusetts
Lyndon B. Johnson (1908-1973)	1963-1969	55	Democratic	Texas
Richard M. Nixon (1913-1994)	1969-1974	56	Republican	California
Gerald R. Ford (1913-)	1974-1977	61	Republican	Nebraska
James E. Carter (1924-)	1977-1981	52	Democratic	Georgia
Ronald W. Reagan (1911-)	1981-1989	69	Republican	Illinois
George H. W. Bush (1924-)	1989-1993	64	Republican	Massachusetts
William J. Clinton (1946-)	1993-2001	46	Democratic	Arkansas
George W. Bush (1946-)	2001-	54	Republican	Connecticut

\*Democratic-Republican

ETHNIC ORIGINS	RELIGION	PREVIOUS OCCUPATION	VICE PRESIDENT
English	Episcopalian	Farmer, Soldier	John Adams
English	Unitarian	Lawyer, Diplomat	Thomas Jefferson
Welsh	—	Farmer, Lawyer	Aaron Burr, George Clinton
English	Episcopalian	Lawyer	George Clinton, Elbridge Gerry
Scotch	Episcopalian	Lawyer	Daniel D. Tompkins
English	Unitarian	Lawyer, Diplomat	John C. Calhoun
Scotch-Irish	Presbyterian	Lawyer, Soldier	John C. Calhoun, Martin Van Buren
Dutch	Dutch Reformed	Lawyer	Richard M. Johnson
English	Episcopalian	Soldier, Farmer	John Tyler
English	Episcopalian	Lawyer	None
Scotch-Irish	Presbyterian	Lawyer	George M. Dallas
English	Episcopalian	Soldier	Millard Fillmore
English	Unitarian	Lawyer, Teacher	None
English	Episcopalian	Lawyer	William R. King
Scotch-Irish	Presbyterian	Lawyer, Diplomat	John C. Breckenridge
English	—	Lawyer	Hannibal Hamlin, Andrew Johnson
English	Methodist	Tailor	None
English, Scotch	Methodist	Soldier	Schuyler Colfax, Henry Wilson
Scotch	Methodist	Lawyer	William A. Wheeler
English	Disciples of Christ	Teacher, Lawyer	Chester A. Arthur
Scotch-Irish	Episcopalian	Lawyer, Teacher	None
English-Irish	Presbyterian	Lawyer	Thomas A. Hendricks
English	Presbyterian	Lawyer, Soldier	Levi P. Morton
English-Irish	Presbyterian	Lawyer	Adlai E. Stevenson
Scotch-Irish	Methodist	Lawyer, Teacher	Garrett A. Hobart, Theodore Roosevelt
Dutch	Dutch Reformed	Rancher, Soldier, Writer	Charles W. Fairbanks
English	Unitarian	Lawyer	James S. Sherman
Scotch-Irish	Presbyterian	Teacher	Thomas R. Marshall
English	Baptist	Editor	Calvin Coolidge
English	Congregational	Lawyer	Charles G. Dawes
Swiss-German	Quaker	Engineer	Charles Curtis
Dutch	Episcopalian	Lawyer	John Nance Garner, Henry Wallace, Harry S. Truman
English, Scotch	Baptist	Farmer, Haberdasher	Alben W. Barkley
Swiss-German	Presbyterian	Soldier	Richard M. Nixon
Irish	Roman Catholic	Writer	Lyndon B. Johnson
English	Disciples of Christ	Teacher	Hubert H. Humphrey
Eng., Scotch-Irish	Quaker	Lawyer	Spiro T. Agnew, Gerald R. Ford
English	Episcopalian	Lawyer	Nelson A. Rockefeller
English	Baptist	Farmer, Businessman	Walter F. Mondale
Eng., Scotch-Irish	Disciples of Christ	Actor, Union leader	George H. W. Bush
English	Episcopalian	Businessman	James Danforth Quayle
English	Baptist	Lawyer	Albert A. Gore
English	Methodist	Businessman	Richard B. Cheney



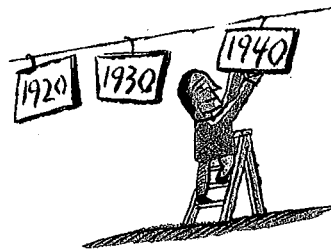
## CONSTITUTIONAL POWERS

Article II of the Constitution contains the very important blueprint that has defined the presidency for more than 200 years. The powers it grants the President are, however, only vaguely described. While the beginning of Article II grants "executive power" to the President, the power itself is not defined. Like the Elastic Clause, the phrase in Section 3 stating that the President should "take care that all the laws be faithfully executed. . . ." has been stretched considerably as the justification for strengthening the power of the presidency.

### 1 Military Powers

The Constitution makes the President, a civilian, the commander in chief of the armed services. The Founders saw the importance of a centralized military to keep law and order and to defend the country from outside attack. However, they were cautious about the military becoming too powerful. The President, not a military general, was put in charge. To ensure that he did not have too much military power, Congress was given the power to authorize money for military forces.

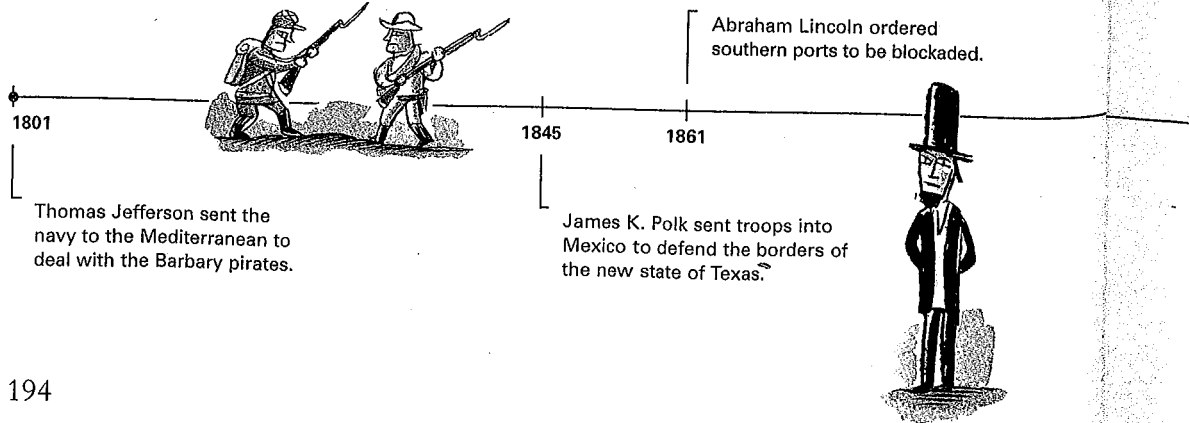
Even though the Constitution splits control of the military between the President and Congress, during nearly every war in United States history the President has held more power than Congress. Presidents, such as Lincoln in the Civil War and Franklin Roosevelt in World War II, have made decisions about war policies and tactics, and Congress has usually funded the President's decisions.



## Timeline

### PRESIDENTS AND MILITARY ACTIONS

Notice that in each of the following cases a dangerous situation required a quick reaction from a chief executive, not from a deliberative body such as Congress.



### THE WAR POWERS ACT

The President's role as commander in chief of the armed services seldom has been as controversial as during the Vietnam War. In response to a crisis, President Lyndon Johnson asked Congress for a resolution giving him power "to take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against forces of the United States." Congress passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, giving Johnson a "blank check." As a result, he dramatically stepped up the war. In 1973, after the United States finally ended its involvement in Vietnam, Congress overturned its 1964 action with the **War Powers Act**.

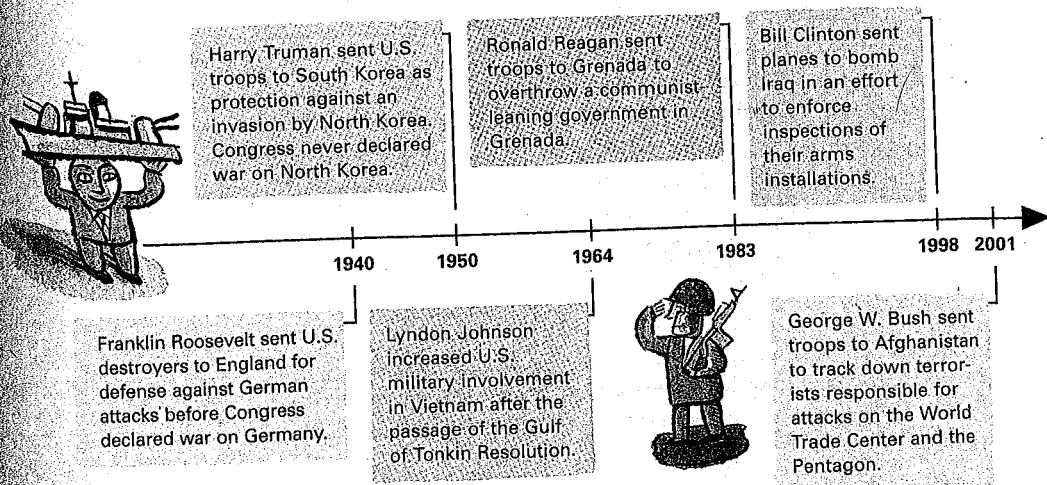
The War Powers Act, passed over President Nixon's veto, restricted the President's powers considerably. It requires him to report in writing to Congress within 48 hours after he places U.S. troops in trouble spots. Congress then must authorize the action within 60 days. If Congress does not authorize the action, the President must withdraw the troops. Congress may also pass a concurrent resolution (which the President may not veto) directing the removal of troops.

The power to pass a concurrent resolution nullifying a presidential action has been challenged. The Supreme Court's decision in *Immigration and Naturalization Service v. Chadha* (1983) declared unconstitutional a **legislative veto**, in which Congress writes laws that allow it to review and cancel actions of executive agencies. The Court ruled that the legislative veto violates the independent actions guaranteed the executive branch. Other parts of the War Powers Act have not yet been tested in court.

### definitions

**legislative veto**—the powers of Congress to void an action of the executive branch.

**War Powers Act**—the law, passed in 1973, that restricts the President's use of U.S. combat troops abroad and authorizes Congress to order troops home.



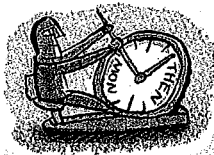




## 2. Diplomatic Powers

The Constitution grants the President many diplomatic powers. The President is the chief negotiator with foreign nations, but the Senate must confirm all **treaties** by a two-thirds vote of approval. Treaties have the same legal standing as do acts passed by Congress. Because the Constitution includes treaties as part of the "supreme law of the land," logically, then, treaties—like laws—need congressional approval.

**Executive agreements** are pacts between heads of state, but they do not have the formal status of treaties. Most executive agreements involve routine matters and flow out of legislation passed by Congress or from treaties that the Senate has confirmed. Dozens of executive agreements are made each year. Some Presidents have kept executive agreements secret, even though Congress passed a law in 1950 that required them to be public. Presidents have tended to ignore the law, most notoriously during the Vietnam War. The "Pentagon Papers" scandal revealed several important executive agreements pledging American military support to South Vietnam and other countries of Southeast Asia.



## Then and Now

### THE DESTROYER DEAL

A very famous executive agreement between Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill in 1940 had far-reaching consequences. The "Destroyer Deal" gave the British 50 older U.S. destroyers in return for 99-year leases to British island bases in the Atlantic Ocean. World War II was raging in Europe, but the United States had not yet joined the war. American destroyers helped the British protect themselves from German attack. The U.S. interest in island bases in the Atlantic to fortify U.S. defenses signaled to Germany that America was not truly neutral in the war. Since U.S. involvement in the war was still controversial, Roosevelt hardly would have wanted to subject the arrangement to Senate approval. Instead, he used an executive agreement.

### definitions

**treaty**—a formal agreement between two or more sovereign nation-states.

**executive agreement**—a presidential agreement, not requiring the Senate's approval, with another head of state.

The Constitution also gives Congress the exclusive authority to set tariffs and enact other legislation governing international trade. The Founders did not want the President's power to go unchecked, as it was in European countries where kings had control of foreign policy. A short phrase in the Constitution, that the President "shall receive ambassadors and other public ministers" (Article II, Section 3), provides the basis for the President's role as head of state. As chief diplomat, the President recognizes new nations, represents the United States to other countries, and performs related ceremonial duties. The President is given the exclusive right to recognize foreign governments, but his negotiation powers are shared with other executives and Congress.



## Headlines

### HOMELAND SECURITY

Presidents often use executive orders to respond quickly to emergencies. In the wake of the 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, President George W. Bush created an Office of Homeland Security and named Tom Ridge, former governor of Pennsylvania, as its first director, a cabinet-level position. President Bush outlined Ridge's powers in an executive order that divided responsibility for the war on terrorism in two. The National Security Council would direct the war abroad, and the Office of Homeland Security would be in charge of fighting terrorism on American soil. As director, Ridge was charged with coordinating activities and budgets among numerous government agencies to detect, prepare for, prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from terrorist attacks within the United States.

The President's negotiating powers have increased through the years, but the constitutional limitation on the President has had its price. At the Versailles Conference following World War I, President Woodrow Wilson was the only leader present who did not have the power to sign the treaty to end the war. He had to get consent from the Senate, who refused to confirm the peace treaty. As a result, the United States never joined the League of Nations, dooming the peace-keeping organization from the start. Controversial treaties, such as the Versailles Treaty, can cause gridlock, or a tug of war between the President and Congress, that can bring progress to a halt.



### 3. Executive Powers

As chief executive of the national government, the President executes, or administers, the decisions the houses make and enforces the laws they pass. He oversees how all federal law is carried out. To help him do this, the President has the power to issue **executive orders**, or rules and regulations that have the effect of law. The President also has the power to appoint other public officers and justices of the Supreme Court, but again, only with the approval of the Senate. Other powerful positions may be appointed by the President alone, but the positions themselves are created or removed by the Senate. The President may remove individuals at will from most appointed positions, but some major public officers, such as Supreme Court and other federal judges, can be removed only by impeachment.

#### PRESIDENTIAL APPOINTMENTS

One exception to the general trend of increasing presidential powers is the tendency in recent years for the Senate to question presidential appointments. Most presidential appointments still are approved by the Senate, but some appointees in recent well-publicized cases have been challenged. In 1987, the Senate refused to confirm Robert Bork's nomination to the Supreme Court, and in 1991 the Senate only narrowly confirmed Clarence Thomas. Several nominees to cabinet positions have been withdrawn from consideration when their personal lives were scrutinized. For example, President Clinton withdrew Zoe Baird's nomination for assistant attorney general when Congress questioned whether or not she reported to the Internal Revenue Service paying a salary to her children's nanny (the "Nanny-gate Scandal").

#### PRESIDENTIAL PARDONS

As chief executive, the President may grant **reprieves** and **pardons** for federal crimes. (Governors grant reprieves and pardons for people convicted in state courts.) The President's power is absolute in these matters, except in cases of impeachment. Presidents usually grant pardons to people after they have been convicted of a crime in federal court. A famous exception to this rule occurred in 1974 when President Gerald Ford granted former President Richard Nixon a pardon for any crimes connected to the Watergate scandal.

#### definitions

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**executive order**—a presidential directive to an agency that defines new policies or carries out existing laws.

**reprieve**—the postponement or setting aside of punishment.

**pardon**—the exemption of a convicted person from the penalties of a crime or offense.

before any court charged Nixon with a crime. Ford's action was so controversial that many observers believe that the pardon was the single most important reason Ford lost the presidential election of 1976. Some critics believe that Nixon's acceptance of the pardon was an admission of guilt, and Ford was accused of allowing Nixon special privileges he did not deserve. The President's pardoning powers also include the power to grant **amnesty**, a general pardon offered to a group of citizens. For example, in the 1970s Presidents Ford and Carter offered amnesty to Vietnam War draft evaders, allowing a number of citizens to return from Canada and other countries to the United States without danger of arrest.

#### 4 Legislative Powers

The Constitution gives the President a limited number of legislative powers that allow him to influence the actions of Congress. For instance, the President may call Congress into special session to deal with an important, immediate issue and may adjourn Congress if the two houses cannot agree on a date for adjournment—a situation that has yet to happen. The Constitution requires the President to deliver a State of the Union message “from time to time” (Article II, Section 3). By tradition, soon after the beginning of each congressional session, the President calls together both houses, his cabinet, and the Supreme Court to listen to his address, which calls on Congress to pass legislation supporting his programs.

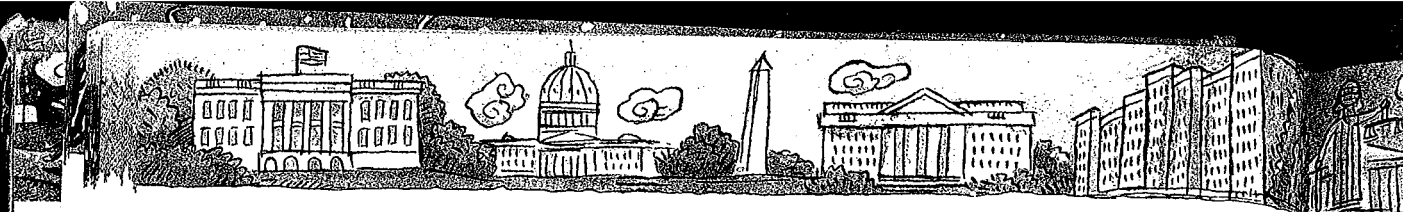
#### VETO POWER

If a President disapproves of a bill passed by Congress, he may veto the bill by refusing to sign it. Along with the veto he may send a veto message to Congress within ten days. If the bill is passed within ten days of the adjournment of Congress, the President simply may ignore it through a pocket veto, and the bill will die. A presidential veto may be overridden by a two-thirds vote of both houses, but Congress rarely has the votes to override, so the veto is a substantial presidential power.

In 1996, Congress passed the Line-Item Veto Act, which allows the President to veto only sections of an appropriations bill (“items of new direct spending”). President Clinton exercised the new **line-item veto** on sections of the Balanced Budget Act and the Taxpayer Relief Act. However, both the “actions of the Congress that passed it and the President who signed it into law” were found to be unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in *Clinton v. City of New York* (1998). The Court argued that the line-item veto permits the President to construct legislation, which is an abuse of the principle of separation of powers.

**amnesty**—the government's general pardon given to people who have broken the law.

**line-item veto**—an executive's power to reject part of a bill while approving the rest.



**PRESIDENTIAL VETO POWER**

<b>PRESIDENT</b>	<b>REGULAR VETOES</b>	<b>POCKET VETOES</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>VETOES OVERRIDDEN</b>
Washington (1789-1797)	2	—	2	—
Madison (1809-1817)	5	2	7	—
Monroe (1817-1825)	1	—	1	—
Jackson (1829-1837)	5	7	12	—
Van Buren (1837-1841)	—	1	1	—
Tyler (1841-1845)	6	4	10	1
Polk (1845-1849)	2	1	3	—
Pierce (1853-1857)	9	—	9	5
Buchanan (1857-1861)	4	3	7	—
Lincoln (1861-1865)	2	5	7	—
Johnson (1865-1869)	21	8	29	15
Grant (1869-1877)	45	48	93	4
Hayes (1877-1881)	12	1	13	1
Arthur (1881-1885)	4	8	12	1
Cleveland (1885-1889)	304	110	414	2
Harrison (1889-1893)	19	25	44	1
Cleveland (1893-1897)	42	128	170	5
McKinley (1897-1901)	6	36	42	—
Roosevelt (1901-1909)	42	40	82	1
Taft (1909-1913)	30	9	39	1
Wilson (1913-1921)	33	11	44	6
Harding (1921-1923)	5	1	6	—
Coolidge (1923-1929)	20	30	50	4
Hoover (1929-1933)	21	16	37	3
Roosevelt (1933-1945)	372	263	635	9
Truman (1945-1953)	180	70	250	12
Eisenhower (1953-1961)	73	108	181	2
Kennedy (1961-1963)	12	9	21	—

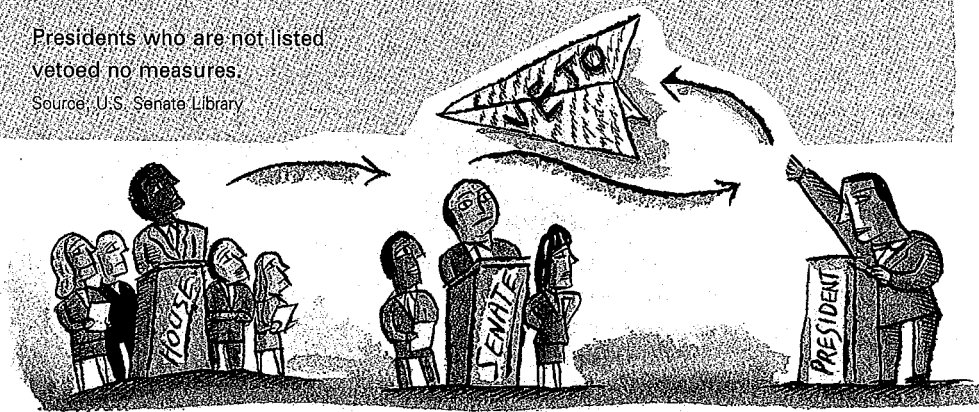
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**PRESIDENTIAL VETOES CONTINUED**

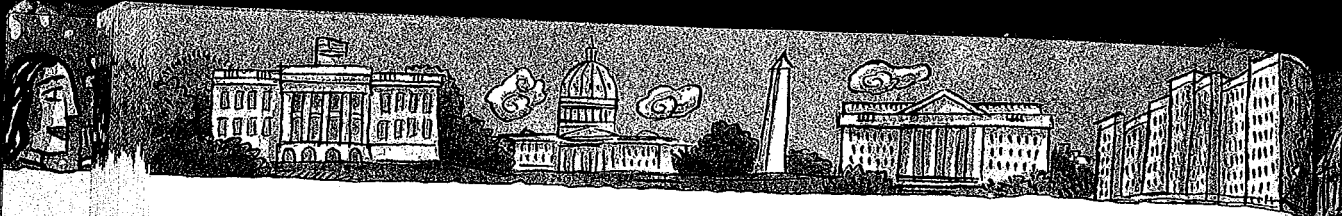
PRESIDENT	REGULAR VETOES	POCKET VETOES	TOTAL	VETOES OVERRIDDEN
Johnson (1963-1969)	16	14	30	—
Nixon (1969-1974)	26	17	43	7
Ford (1974-1977)	48	18	66	12
Carter (1977-1981)	13	18	31	2
Reagan (1981-1989)	39	39	78	9
Bush (1989-1993)	29	15	46	1
Clinton (1993-1997)	17	0	17	2
	<b>1,465</b>	<b>1,181</b>	<b>2,646</b>	<b>106</b>

Presidents who are not listed vetoed no measures.  
 Source: U.S. Senate Library



**EVOLUTIONARY POWERS**

According to nineteenth-century historian Henry Adams, “The American President resembles a commander of a ship at sea. He must have a helm to grasp, a course to steer, a port to seek.” The Founders had no crystal ball to gaze into the future to see what history would demand of the President. To help the President have “a helm to grasp,” leadership responsibilities that are not spelled out in the Constitution have evolved through history and are now accepted as rightful presidential powers. Even though his power is checked by the other branches, the President is still the nation’s most visible leader. He has come to be not only the chief of his own political party but the chief citizen of the entire country, the representative of all the people. Among the many factors that have led to the strengthening of the presidency, four stand out: the power of economic planning, the power of executive privilege, the power of impoundment, and the power of persuasion.



## 1. The Power of Economic Planning

A very important evolutionary power of the President is that of chief economic planner. Franklin Roosevelt assumed that role during the Great Depression. Congress followed Roosevelt's lead in developing economic programs to help the country out of the economic crisis. The Employment Act of 1946 significantly strengthened this role by directing the President to submit an annual economic report to Congress. It created a Council of Economic Advisers to study and prepare reports on the economy for the President. It also declared for the first time that the federal government has the responsibility to promote employment of workers, encourage productivity of factories and businesses, and increase purchasing power for the consumer.

The President's powers were increased further during a serious recession in the early 1970s. Then Congress granted President Nixon power to control prices and wages. Even though the law had a time limit that expired and was not renewed, it allowed Nixon to freeze wages, rents, and prices for a 90-day period. Presidents have also increased their role as economic planners by taking a lead in preparing the federal budget every year.

The President also appoints the chairman and members of the Federal Reserve Board. Although the Board operates fairly independently, the President's appointments shape the country's monetary policy.

## 2. The Power of Executive Privilege

**Executive privilege** was not mentioned in the Constitution, but Presidents have claimed it for more than 200 years. This right of the President to confidentiality and to refuse to testify before or provide information to Congress or a court rests on the principle of separation of powers. Executive privilege has evolved from Presidents' claims that the advice they get and the private discussions they have in the Oval Office should not always be made public. Presidents believed that breaking confidentiality could lead to breaches of national security.

No one questioned executive privilege until 1974 when the Watergate scandal led to a major Supreme Court decision. Richard Nixon had secretly taped conversations with top aides about the Watergate cover-up. When a federal court ordered him to surrender the tapes, Nixon refused, claiming executive privilege. In *United States v. Nixon* (1974), the Court ruled that Nixon had to surrender the tapes, but it did not declare executive privilege unconstitutional. Instead, it held that since the privilege "relates to the effective discharge of a President's powers, it is constitutionally based." However, the Court further ruled that there is no

### definitions

**executive privilege**—the President's right to withhold information from or refuse to testify before Congress or the courts.

“absolute unqualified Presidential privilege of immunity from judicial process under all circumstances.” Presidents still may claim executive privilege, and advisers may continue to give private counsel. But neither the President nor his advisers may block a federal court from deciding criminal cases.

The decision in *United States v. Nixon* (1974) led to *Nixon v. Fitzgerald* (1982), in which the Supreme Court ruled that a President cannot be sued for damages related to official decisions he makes while in office. In 1997, President Clinton’s lawyers used the 1982 decision to argue that a President is entitled to a reprieve from all civil suits while in office. The President was sued by Paula Jones, a former Arkansas state employee, for sexual harassment while Clinton was governor of Arkansas. Clinton’s advisers argued that allowing civil suits against a chief executive would mean major distractions since he would have to spend time defending himself instead of performing his official duties. In *Clinton v. Jones* (1997), the Supreme Court unanimously rejected Clinton’s argument.

In 1998, a U.S. Court of Appeals decided that Clinton did not have attorney-client privileges with government lawyers. The ruling stated that executive privilege does not apply in cases of criminal investigation, such as that conducted by independent prosecutor Kenneth Starr. The Supreme Court further ruled that the President could not claim executive privilege by barring from investigation the testimony of Secret Service agents. The rulings in these cases, which further restricted the President’s use of executive privilege, allowed Starr to continue his investigation of President Clinton.

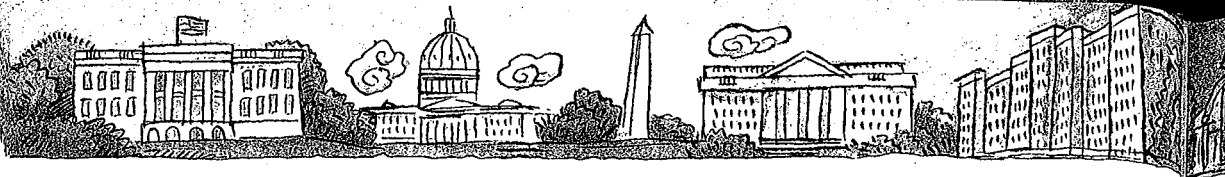
### 3. The Power of Impoundment

The Constitution did not address the issue of **impoundment**. Although the Founders didn’t anticipate this practice, Presidents figured out almost from the beginning that they could assert their disapproval of a congressional action by refusing to execute it. Suppose that Congress passed a bill that provided for the building of new federal highways. What if the President didn’t want to veto such a bill but was horrified by the amount of money Congress appropriated to it? When the appropriation got to the Department of Transportation, the President could simply refuse to approve execution of the project. Congress could then do nothing to force the President to spend the money.

The impoundment issue erupted during the presidency of Richard Nixon. The Democratic Congress appropriated money for programs that the Republican Nixon did not approve of, so he impounded the funds. Congress reacted with the Budget Reform Act of 1974. This act requires the President

#### defini-tions

**impoundment**—a President’s refusal to spend money that Congress has appropriated.



to spend all appropriated funds, unless he gets approval from Congress to delay the spending. In other words, the President has to spend money that Congress has appropriated. Some critics complain that such a rule is unconstitutional because it keeps the President from exercising his power to check and balance Congress.

#### 4 The Power of Persuasion

The Constitution clearly gives more explicit powers to the legislative branch than to the executive, but the President has one clear advantage. There is only one of him. Congress speaks with 535 voices, but the President with only one. This simple fact allows an articulate President to exercise his power of persuasion to set important agendas for the nation. He can meet with leaders of Congress regarding important legislation and convince them to go along with his point of view. He can also call members of Congress on the phone—members who are often flattered to be contacted personally by the President. The President also has the power to appeal to the real bosses—the American public—through public appearances, press conferences, and presidential addresses. Even though Presidents may have always understood the power of persuasion, its potential has been magnified in recent years by effective use of radio and television.

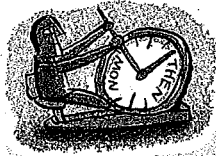
Savvy Presidents use many forms of mass media to communicate—to other officials in Washington, D.C., to party leaders and officials throughout the United States, and to the American public. Presidents have several ways to shape their images and communicate persuasively:

- ★ **NEWS RELEASES AND BRIEFINGS** A news release is prepared by the White House to call attention to a recent or pending presidential action or policy. A briefing allows the President or his press secretary to make announcements and gives reporters a chance to ask questions about news releases.
- ★ **PRESS CONFERENCES** The President announces ahead of time that he will meet with members of the press, who may ask questions regarding almost anything they like. The press conference is the perfect way for a President to get media attention to help build **bipartisan** public support for policies. On the other hand, a President may look foolish in a press conference if the questions stir up controversial issues or if his answers seem inadequate or evasive.

#### definitions

**bipartisan**—made up of members of both political parties.





## Then and Now

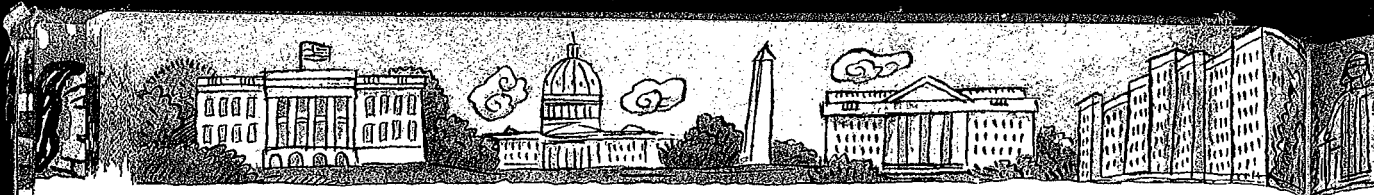
### THE FIRST TELEVISED PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE

In the election of 1960, when John Kennedy, the Democratic candidate, faced Republican Richard Nixon in the first-ever televised presidential debate, the camera almost certainly made a difference in the public's perception of the two men. In the days preceding the debate, Kennedy spent his time reviewing and rehearsing as he relaxed by the swimming pool at the Kennedy compound in Florida. While preparing for the debate, he used a product called Man-Tan that reputedly enhanced a natural tan. Nixon, on the other hand, was maintaining a grueling campaign schedule, fulfilling his promise to visit all 48 contiguous states. On the day of the debate, Nixon looked thin and tired. The only enhancing product Nixon used was Burma Shave, an old-fashioned shaving cream. It failed to cover up a dark shadow that made him look as if he had not shaved at all. Kennedy's advisers knew that black-and-white television made white shirts look yellow; Nixon's did not. So, a rested, tanned Kennedy, dressed in a blue shirt, out-debated a tired, sick, Burma-Shaved Nixon who was dressed in a baggy white shirt. Kennedy won the election, and the age of television politics was off and running.

- ★ **PHOTO-OPS AND MEDIA EVENTS** Photographs certainly convey important messages both in print and television. The President is by far the most photographed person in the country, and a good photo can convey a message to the public more effectively than does a speech. Through carefully planned media events, Presidents can communicate their ideas as well as enhance or shape their images.
- ★ **SOUND BITES** A President must consider the importance of **sound bites**, or short video clips, any time he wants to get a message to the public through the media. Over the years, evening newscasts have shortened the average sound bite from about 42 seconds in 1968 to less than 10 seconds today. As a result, short, catchy phrases are just as important as well-constructed speeches, and a President must tailor his speeches and activities to suit the medium.
- ★ **BACKGROUNDERS AND LEAKS** The President may give reporters important information called backgrounders to test ideas or send unofficial messages to Congress or to foreign countries. For example, President Reagan once sent a not-too-subtle message to the Soviet Union when he called it an

**sound bite**—a short statement used on a radio or television news broadcast.





“evil empire.” The message was given to the press, not officially or directly to the Soviet Union, but Brezhnev (the Soviet leader) got the point. Leaks can’t always be traced to the President because they are given anonymously, but recent Presidents have been known to plant them.



e.g.

### THE PRESIDENT IN THE MOVIES

Just as a skillful President can manipulate the media, sometimes the media can shape the public’s image of the President. Consider the images of the President in these 1990s movies:

**1993: DAVE**

Actor Kevin Kline played an affable, gentle presidential look-alike who filled in when the real President was felled by a stroke.

**1995: THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT**

Michael Douglas depicted a widowed President as a handsome heartthrob who fell in love with a beautiful lobbyist.

**1997: ABSOLUTE POWER**

Gene Hackman portrayed a drunken President whose affair with a married woman caused a massive cover-up.

**1997: AIR FORCE ONE**

Harrison Ford played an action-hero President, an ex-Vietnam helicopter pilot, who knew how to fight and outsmart the enemy. When *Air Force One* was hijacked, Ford shot, kicked, and wrestled his way to a dramatic rescue of his family.

**1997: WAG THE DOG**

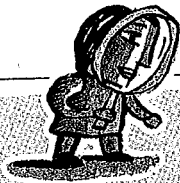
Dustin Hoffman and Robert Duvall advised an off-screen President who went to great lengths to cover up a romantic affair. The movie was an eery precursor to the Clinton-Lewinsky affair that came to light about the time the film was released.

**1998: PRIMARY COLORS**

John Travolta portrayed a complex presidential candidate (modeled after Bill Clinton), capable of great empathy and understanding but deeply flawed by political ambition.

## PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP AND STYLE

The Constitution outlines the qualifications, powers, selection and succession processes, and terms of the presidency. But it says nothing about the personal background, attitudes toward power, or personality traits that make up presidential style. Each person who has held the office has brought to it a style of his own. The frequency of his public appearances, his relationship with the media, the degree to which he isolates himself, the activities of the First Lady—all these contribute to the public's perception of the President's style as a national leader. During some administrations, the atmosphere of the White House has been restrained and quiet. At other times, life in the White House was more informal and lively. During the term of Theodore Roosevelt, for instance, the Roosevelt children often slid down stairways, bicycled and skated on polished floors, and once even took their pony upstairs on the President's private elevator.



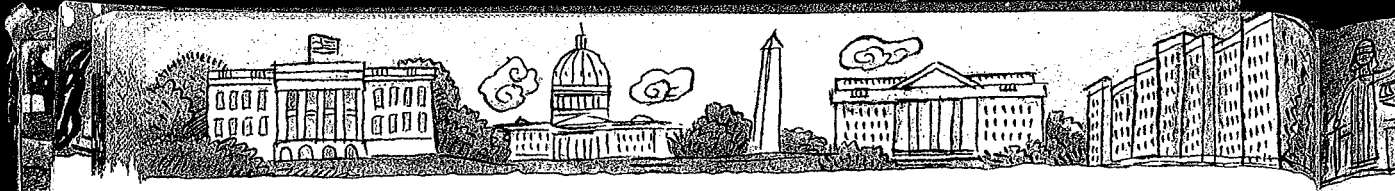
e.g.

### FIRST LADIES

Americans always have been fascinated with the First Lady, who is usually the wife of the President. Her influence most often has been informal, but her importance varies with the individual and appears to be changing along with general trends in American society.

1. **HOSTESS** Part of the President's job involves greeting, honoring, and entertaining foreign dignitaries, members of Congress, government officials in the executive and judicial branches, and other people from outside government. Traditionally, the First Lady has taken a major responsibility in organizing such events. For example, the relationships that the shy James Madison had with his work associates almost certainly were enhanced by his vivacious wife Dolley, who was renowned for the White House events she hosted. Jacqueline Kennedy played a major role in defining the elegance and style associated with the presidency of John Kennedy in the early 1960s.
2. **ADVISER** Even though the First Lady has no official capacity as adviser to the President, perceptive staff members—and a little later, the American public—have recognized that the President's wife sometimes influences her husband's decisions and image. From Abigail Adams to Rosalyn Carter and Nancy Reagan, First Ladies often wield considerable power.

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**3. ACTIVE PARTICIPANT IN POLICY MAKING** A much more controversial role for First Ladies is that of active involvement in the President's work. Eleanor Roosevelt was the first to participate actively in politics. Partly because Franklin Roosevelt was paralyzed by polio, she became his "eyes and ears," serving as his investigator, traveling across the country to report on conditions and to suggest programs. Her political involvement caused her to be the target of criticism as well as admiration. When Bill Clinton appointed his wife to head his health care reform initiative in 1993, some observers criticized her for following in Eleanor Roosevelt's footsteps. When the health care reform initiatives failed, Hillary Rodham Clinton responded by becoming less visible. According to a 1997 *Newsweek* article, "She learned the hard way what First Ladies before her had assumed: that her influence was better felt than seen."

**Rating the Presidents**

Recognizing differences in presidential styles can help explain why some Presidents are more popular with the public and why some seem to use their powers more effectively than others. History's judgment of presidential greatness is not necessarily reflected in presidential popularity polls.

Presidential greatness has long been a favorite topic of conversation. The game of rating the Presidents is played by ordinary Americans as well as scholars and media pundits. Harvard professor Arthur M. Schlesinger started the modern version of the game in 1948 when he invited 55 other historians to rate the Presidents up to that time. Lincoln, Washington, Franklin Roosevelt, Wilson, and Jefferson topped the list in that order. Since then, historians and political scientists have taken similar surveys. Although the results vary—and change somewhat through the years—some consistent patterns have emerged.

Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, and Franklin Roosevelt are always at the top. Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, James Polk, Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, and Harry Truman follow, but in varying order. Usually placed near the bottom are James Buchanan, Franklin Pierce, Millard Fillmore, Zachary Taylor, Calvin Coolidge, and Richard Nixon. Finally, Andrew Johnson, Ulysses S. Grant, and Warren Harding are usually rated as failures. It is worth noting that while a national crisis—such as a war or major economic depression—may provide an opportunity for greatness, it does not necessarily make the man.



## Quote

"I do not believe that any man can lead who does not act . . . under the impulse of a profound sympathy with those whom he leads."

*Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States (1913-1921)*

### Leadership Qualities

Great Presidents seem to have several leadership qualities in common.

- ★ Strong vision of an ideal America communicated clearly in both speeches and governmental actions
- ★ Good ability to see their own times in the context of what has happened in the past
- ★ Effective communication skills, and especially the ability to convince Congress and the electorate of the rightness of their course
- ★ Political courage to make decisions they know will be unpopular with voters

The modern President is a visible leader. The presidency has evolved into the most visible and powerful position in the world today. Even so, its development is firmly rooted in a fundamental constitutional principle that continues to guide our country: leadership within a system of checks and balances, always complex, not always efficient, and never easy.



The powers and responsibilities of the American presidency almost certainly would surprise the Founders. Today policy is made through the complex workings between Congress and the President. Added to that are a powerful judiciary, executive branch officials, and a bureaucracy not even mentioned in the Constitution. The presidency has become an immensely powerful, yet carefully watched and checked office.