

Chapter Summary

The Executive Branch

Lesson 1 *The President and Vice President*

- Under the Constitution, the president must be at least 35 years old, a native-born American citizen, and have lived in the United States for at least 14 years.
- Presidential elections are held every four years. Citizens vote for electors, who then elect the president. Each state has the same number of electors as it has senators and representatives. The District of Columbia has three electors.
- If a candidate wins in a state, he or she usually gets all the state's electoral votes.
- To win the election, a candidate must have more than half the 538 electoral votes. In the event of a tie, the House of Representatives chooses the president.
- The president serves a four-year term and is limited to a maximum of two elected terms in office.
- The vice president is elected with the president. He or she has the power to oversee the Senate, to vote in the Senate in the event of a tie, and to become president if the president becomes ill, dies, or resigns.

Lesson 2 *The President's Powers and Role*

- The president's main job is to carry out laws.
- The Constitution lists presidential powers, including the power to issue executive orders, veto bills, call Congress into special session, appoint Supreme Court justices, receive leaders from other countries, make treaties with foreign countries, name heads of executive agencies, and pardon people convicted of federal crimes.
- The president's roles include chief executive, chief diplomat, head of state, commander in chief of the armed forces, legislative leader, economic leader, and party leader.
- The president delivers a yearly State of the Union address to fulfill the Constitutional obligation to tell Congress about the state of the country and how he or she plans to solve problems.

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Lesson 3 *Making Foreign Policy*

- Foreign policy, or the way a country deals with other nations, is important to maintain national security, to build strong trade relations, to promote world peace, and to advance democracy.
- The president's foreign policy team includes the National Security Advisor, the State Department, the Defense Department, the National Security Counsel, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, and the Central Intelligence Agency.
- The Constitution does not clearly define the war powers of the president and the Congress. The balance of control has moved back and forth between the two branches.
- The tools Congress and the president use to carry out foreign policy include: treaties and executive agreements with other countries, ambassadors, foreign aid, trade policies, and military force.

Lesson 4 *How the Executive Branch Works*

- The Executive Office of the President (EOP) employs almost 2,000 people. The White House Office is made up of 500 people who work directly with the president. Among them are a few close presidential aides who make up the White House staff.
- The chief of staff, the president's most powerful advisor, directs the White House and takes care of the president's schedule.
- The Office of Management and Budget, the National Security Council, and the Council of Economic Advisers are parts of the EOP that help the president form policy on key issues.
- The president's cabinet is made up of the heads of 15 large departments, including the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Labor, the Department of Justice, and the Department of Homeland Security. The cabinet members give the president advice on their areas of specialty.

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Lesson 4 *How the Executive Branch Works, Cont.*

- The executive branch also includes hundreds of agencies that work under cabinet departments as well as many independent agencies. Together, these are known as the federal bureaucracy.
- The heads of most federal agencies are political appointees. Most employees of those agencies are civil service workers.
- The civil service system sets standards for hiring most government workers.