

The Executive Branch



The White House

The U.S. Constitution sets up our government with three separate branches: executive, legislative, and judicial. The largest branch of the federal government is the executive branch. This branch is made up of the President, Vice President, and many departments and agencies. As the leader of the United States, the President is in charge of the executive branch. The President has many duties. The President is the

Commander in Chief of the U.S. military. In this role, he gives orders to the armed forces. Another important responsibility is to sign bills to become laws or to veto bills. The President also represents the United States to other countries. When there are important issues that involve other countries, the President meets with world leaders to discuss solutions.

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Answer these Civics Test questions.

1. Name one branch or part of the government. _____
2. Who is in charge of the executive branch? _____
3. What is the name of the President of the United States now? _____
4. What is the name of the Vice President of the United States now? _____
5. Who is the Commander in Chief of the military? _____
6. Who signs bills to become laws? _____
7. Who vetoes bills? _____

The President's Cabinet

The President's job is complex. The President has a special group of advisors called the Cabinet. The Cabinet members are experts in their field. Their main responsibility is to advise the President on important decisions. They lead different departments in the executive branch. The role of these departments is to carry out government programs and enforce our laws.

There are 15 Cabinet members, plus the Vice President. Most Cabinet members have the title of "Secretary." For example, the Secretary of Education advises the President about education for children and adults. If you were the Secretary of Education, what advice would you give the President?

Read the sentence. Fill in the Cabinet member to complete the sentence. Use a dictionary or ask your teacher about new words.

Secretary of Labor

Secretary of Transportation

Secretary of Defense

Secretary of State

1. The _____ manages the Air Force, Army, Marines, and Navy.
2. The _____ directs job training programs and protects workers' rights.
3. The _____ oversees airports, highways, and railroads.
4. The _____ helps with foreign policy and works with other countries.

Answer these Civics Test questions.

1. What does the President's Cabinet do? _____
2. What are two Cabinet-level positions?



For more information on the Cabinet, go to www.whitehouse.gov/administration/cabinet.

Presidential Elections

In the United States, we elect the President and Vice President every four years. Presidential elections are held in November. During the next January, the President takes the Oath of Office in an inauguration ceremony. After one four-year term, a President can decide to run for re-election. The President cannot serve more than two terms.

The Constitution lists three special requirements for a presidential candidate. First, a candidate must be a natural born citizen of the United States. Second, he or she must be at least 35 years old. Third, the candidate must have been a U.S. resident for 14 years.



Inaugural ceremony of President John F. Kennedy, Washington, DC, January 20, 1961.

Courtesy of the John F. Kennedy Library and Museum, United States Army Signal Corps, photograph by CWO Donald Mingfield.

Answer these Civics Test questions.

1. We elect a President for how many years? _____
2. In what month do we vote for President? _____



Discuss these questions with your class.

Why do you think the President cannot serve more than two terms?
Do you agree or disagree with this? Why?

What do you think about the requirements for presidential candidates?

Presidential Order of Succession

The U.S. Constitution defines a special process if the President cannot serve. This may happen if the President dies, resigns, or is removed from office. If the President can no longer serve, then the Vice President becomes President. This has happened nine times in our history.

In 1963, President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas. Soon after, Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson was sworn in as President. In this photograph, Lyndon B. Johnson is taking the Oath of Office. His wife, Lady Bird Johnson, and Jacqueline Kennedy are standing with him.

If both the President and the Vice President can no longer serve, then the Speaker of the House of Representatives becomes President. This situation has never happened in American history.



Swearing in of Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson as president aboard Air Force One after the death of President John F. Kennedy on November 22, 1963. Courtesy of the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum, photograph by Cecil Stoughton.

Answer these Civics Test questions.

1. If the President can no longer serve, who becomes President? _____
2. If both the President and the Vice President can no longer serve, who becomes President?



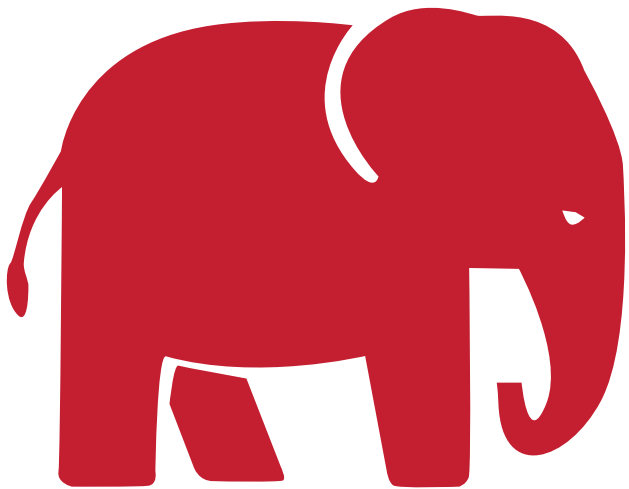
Discuss this question with your class.

What do you think of this special process?

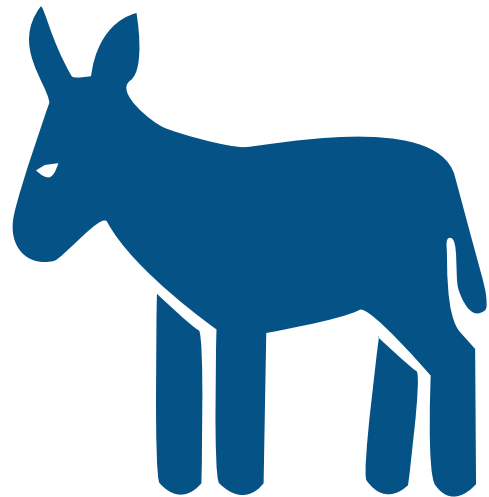
Political Parties

The United States has a two-party system of government. The two major parties are the Democratic Party and the Republican Party. These parties have different opinions about the way the government should run. The President and Vice President usually belong to a major political party.

There are popular symbols for these two parties. The symbol for the Republican Party is an elephant. The symbol for the Democratic Party is a donkey. These symbols came from political cartoons in the 1800s about each party. Later the parties adopted these symbols. Have you seen these symbols in the news?



Republican Party



Democratic Party

Answer these Civics Test questions.

1. What are the two major political parties in the United States? _____
2. What is the political party of the President now? _____