

The Executive Branch

**American History and
Government Workbook Series**

© Student Handouts

Pre-Reading Activity: Word Search Puzzle

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 T N E M T R A P E D I P L O M A C Y L X
 S S E R G N O C M I L I T A R Y B N E X

Puzzle Terms

- administration
- advisors
- Air Force One
- budget
- Cabinet
- clemency
- Commander-in-Chief
- Congress
- Constitution
- department
- diplomacy
- election
- Electoral College
- employees
- enforcement
- executive branch
- federal agencies
- federal commissions
- foreign policy
- government
- head of state
- inauguration
- legislation
- Marine One
- military
- national security
- pardon
- presidency
- president
- ratification
- responsibility
- Secret Service
- United States
- USDA
- vested
- vice president
- Washington, D.C.
- White House

The Executive Branch

The power of the Executive Branch is vested in the President of the United States, who also acts as head of state and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. The President is responsible for implementing and enforcing the laws written by Congress and, to that end, appoints the heads of the federal agencies, including the Cabinet. The Vice President is also part of the Executive Branch, ready to assume the Presidency should the need arise.

The Cabinet and independent federal agencies are responsible for the day-to-day enforcement and administration of federal laws. These departments and agencies have missions and responsibilities as widely divergent as those of the Department of Defense and the Environmental Protection Agency, the Social Security Administration and the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Including members of the armed forces, the Executive Branch employs more than 4 million Americans.

Questions

1. Which of the following is *not* true about the president?

- a. Acts as head of state
- b. Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces
- c. Power to change the Constitution through executive order
- d. Vested with the power of the Executive Branch

2. Who is responsible for the day-to-day enforcement and administration of federal laws?

3. Approximately how many Americans are employed by the Executive Branch?

The President

The President is both the head of state and head of government of the United States of America, and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces.

The Executive Branch

Under Article II of the Constitution, the President is responsible for the execution and enforcement of the laws created by Congress. Fifteen executive departments — each led by an appointed member of the President's Cabinet — carry out the day-to-day administration of the federal government. They are joined in this by other executive agencies such as the CIA and Environmental Protection Agency, the heads of which are not part of the Cabinet, but who are under the full authority of the President. The President also appoints the heads of more than 50 independent federal commissions, such as the Federal Reserve Board or the Securities and Exchange Commission, as well as federal judges, ambassadors, and other federal offices. The Executive Office of the President (EOP) consists of the immediate staff to the President, along with entities such as the Office of Management and Budget and the Office of the United States Trade Representative.

The President has the power either to sign legislation into law or to veto bills enacted by Congress, although Congress may override a veto with a two-thirds vote of both houses. The Executive Branch conducts diplomacy with other nations, and the President has the power to negotiate and sign treaties, which also must be ratified by

two-thirds of the Senate. The President can issue executive orders, which direct executive officers or clarify and further existing laws. The President also has unlimited power to extend pardons and clemencies for federal crimes, except in cases of impeachment.

With these powers come several responsibilities, among them a constitutional requirement to "from time to time give to the Congress Information of the State of the Union, and recommend to their Consideration such Measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient." Although the President may fulfill this requirement in any way he or she chooses, Presidents have traditionally given a State of the Union address to a joint session of Congress each January (except in inaugural years) outlining their agenda for the coming year.

The Constitution lists only three qualifications for the Presidency — the President must be 35 years of age, be a natural born citizen, and must have lived in the United States for at least 14 years. And though millions of Americans vote in a presidential election every four years, the President is not, in fact, directly elected by the people. Instead, on the first Tuesday in November of every fourth year, the people elect the members of the Electoral College. Apportioned by population to the 50 states

The Executive Branch

— one for each member of their congressional delegation (with the District of Columbia receiving 3 votes) — these Electors then cast the votes for President. There are currently 538 electors in the Electoral College.

President Barack Obama is the 44th President of the United States. He is, however, only the 43rd person ever to serve as President; President Grover Cleveland served two nonconsecutive terms, and thus is recognized as both the 22nd and the 24th President. Today, the President is limited to two four-year terms, but until the 22nd Amendment to the Constitution, ratified in 1951, a President could serve an unlimited number of terms. Franklin Delano Roosevelt was elected President four times, serving from 1932 until his death in 1945; he is the only President ever to have served more than two terms.

By tradition, the President and the First Family live in the White House in Washington, D.C., also the location of the President's Oval Office and the offices of the his senior staff. When the President travels by plane, his aircraft is designated Air Force One; he may also use a Marine Corps helicopter, known as Marine One while the President is on board. For ground travel, the President uses an armored Presidential limousine.

Questions

4. Under what part of the Constitution is the president responsible for the execution and enforcement of the laws created by Congress?

5. How many executive departments are there?

6. Name two executive agencies.

7. Name two independent federal commissions.

The Executive Branch

8. Describe the annual State of the Union address.

you believe are needed for a person to be elected to the presidency.

9. Which of the following is *not* a qualification for the presidency?

- a. A natural-born citizen
- b. At least 35 years of age
- c. Residency in the United States for at least 14 years
- d. Veteran of the armed forces

10. Although the Constitution lists only three legal qualifications for the presidency, the reality of a candidate getting elected in another matter. Based on your knowledge of the current president and past presidents, list and describe at least three additional factors or qualities that

11. Who casts the votes for president?

The Executive Branch

12. Name the 44th president of the United States.

13. What president served two nonconsecutive terms?

14. What president was elected four times?

15. Where does the president live?

The Vice President

The primary responsibility of the Vice President of the United States is to be

ready at a moment's notice to assume the Presidency if the President is unable to perform his duties. This can be because of the President's death, resignation, or temporary incapacitation, or if the Vice President and a majority of the Cabinet judge that the President is no longer able to discharge the duties of the presidency.

The Vice President is elected along with the President by the Electoral College — each elector casts one vote for President and another for Vice President. Before the ratification of the 12th Amendment in 1804, electors only voted for President, and the person who received the second greatest number of votes became Vice President.

The Vice President also serves as the President of the United States Senate, where he or she casts the deciding vote in the case of a tie. Except in the case of tiebreaking votes, the Vice President rarely actually presides over the Senate. Instead, the Senate selects one of their own members, usually junior members of the majority party, to preside over the Senate each day.

Joseph R. Biden is the 47th Vice President of the United States. Of the 45 previous Vice Presidents, nine have succeeded to the Presidency, and four have been elected to the Presidency in their own right. The duties of the Vice President, outside of those enumerated in the

The Executive Branch

Constitution, are at the discretion of the current President. Each Vice President approaches the role differently — some take on a specific policy portfolio, others serve simply as a top adviser to the President.

The Vice President has an office in the West Wing of the White House, as well as in the nearby Eisenhower Executive Office Building. Like the President, he also maintains an official residence, at the United States Naval Observatory in Northwest Washington, D.C. This peaceful mansion, has been the official home of the Vice President since 1974 — previously, Vice Presidents had lived in their own private residences. The Vice President also has his own limousine, operated by the United States Secret Service, and flies on the same aircraft the President uses — but when the Vice President is aboard, the craft are referred to as Air Force Two and Marine Two.

Questions

16. What is the primary responsibility of the vice president?

17. Describe the 12th Amendment (1804).

18. The vice president serves as the president of the United States Senate.

- a. True
- b. False

19. Name the 47th vice president.

20. Where does the vice president live?

The Executive Branch

Executive Office of the President

Every day, the President of the United States is faced with scores of decisions, each with important consequences for America's future. To provide the President with the support the he or she needs to govern effectively, the Executive Office of the President (EOP) was created in 1939 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The EOP has responsibility for tasks ranging from communicating the President's message to the American people to promoting our trade interests abroad.

The EOP, overseen by the White House Chief of Staff, has traditionally been home to many of the President's closest advisers. While Senate confirmation is required for some advisers, such as the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, most are appointed with full Presidential discretion. The individual offices that these advisers oversee have grown in size and number since the EOP was created. Some were formed by Congress, others as the President has needed them — they are constantly shifting as each President identifies his needs and priorities, with the current EOP employing over 1,800 people.

Perhaps the most visible parts of the EOP are the White House Communications

Office and Press Secretary's Office. The Press Secretary provides daily briefings for the media on the President's activities and agenda. Less visible to most Americans is the National Security Council, which advises the President on foreign policy, intelligence, and national security.

There are also a number of offices responsible for the practicalities of maintaining the White House and providing logistical support for the President. These include the White House Military Office, which is responsible for services ranging from Air Force One to the dining facilities, and the Office of Presidential Advance, which prepares sites remote from the White House for the President's arrival.

Many senior advisers in the EOP work near the President in the West Wing of the White House. However, the majority of the staff is housed in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building, just a few steps away and part of the White House compound.

Questions

21. Who created the Executive Office of the President (EOP) in 1939?

Department of Agriculture

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) develops and executes policy on farming, agriculture, and food. Its aims include meeting the needs of farmers and ranchers, promoting agricultural trade and production, assuring food safety, protecting natural resources, fostering rural communities, and ending hunger in America and abroad.

The USDA employs more than 100,000 employees and has an annual budget of approximately \$95 billion. It consists of 17 agencies, including the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, the Food and Nutrition Service, and the Forest Service. The bulk of the department's budget goes towards mandatory programs that provide services required by law, such as programs designed to provide nutrition assistance, promote agricultural exports, and conserve our environment. The USDA also plays an important role in overseas aid programs by providing surplus foods to developing countries.

The United States Secretary of Agriculture administers the USDA.

Questions

27. What is the job of the USDA?

28. How does the USDA play an important role in overseas aid programs?

Department of Commerce

The Department of Commerce is the government agency tasked with improving living standards for all Americans by promoting economic development and technological innovation.

The department supports U.S. business and industry through a number of services, including gathering economic and demographic data, issuing patents and trademarks, improving understanding of the environment and oceanic life, and ensuring the effective use of scientific and technical resources. The agency also formulates

The Executive Branch

telecommunications and technology policy, and promotes U.S. exports by assisting and enforcing international trade agreements.

The Secretary of Commerce oversees a \$6.5 billion budget and approximately 38,000 employees.

Questions

29. With what is the Department of Commerce tasked?

30. How does the Department of Commerce promote U.S. exports?

Department of Defense

The mission of the Department of Defense (DOD) is to provide the military

forces needed to deter war and to protect the security of our country. The department's headquarters is at the Pentagon.

The DOD consists of the Departments of the Army, Navy, and Air Force, as well as many agencies, offices, and commands, including the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Pentagon Force Protection Agency, the National Security Agency, and the Defense Intelligence Agency. The DOD occupies the vast majority of the Pentagon building in Arlington, VA.

The Department of Defense is the largest government agency, with more than 1.3 million men and women on active duty, nearly 700,000 civilian personnel, and 1.1 million citizens who serve in the National Guard and Reserve forces. Together, the military and civilian arms of DOD protect national interests through war-fighting, providing humanitarian aid, and performing peacekeeping and disaster relief services.

Questions

31. What is the mission of the Department of Defense (DOD)?

The Executive Branch

32. The Department of Defense's headquarters is at the ____.
- a. Eisenhower Building
 - b. Pentagon
 - c. Smithsonian
 - d. White House

33. Imagine that the DOD did not exist. What problems might this pose? Explain your answer.

Department of Education

The mission of the Department of Education is to promote student achievement and preparation for competition

in a global economy by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access to educational opportunity.

The Department administers federal financial aid for education, collects data on America's schools to guide improvements in education quality, and works to complement the efforts of state and local governments, parents, and students.

The U.S. Secretary of Education oversees the Department's 4,200 employees and \$68.6 billion budget.

Questions

34. What is the mission of the Department of Education?

35. The Department of Education provides funds that allow many students, who could not otherwise afford college tuition, the opportunity to attend an institution of higher learning. For example, each year, over 5 million students receive a Pell Grant. What are

The Executive Branch

the pros and cons of the federal government providing so much money to educate its citizens?

Department of Energy

The mission of the Department of Energy (DOE) is to advance the national, economic, and energy security of the United States.

The DOE promotes America's energy security by encouraging the development of

reliable, clean, and affordable energy. It administers federal funding for scientific research to further the goal of discovery and innovation — ensuring American economic competitiveness and improving the quality of life for Americans.

The DOE is also tasked with ensuring America's nuclear security, and with protecting the environment by providing a responsible resolution to the legacy of nuclear weapons production.

The United States Secretary of Energy oversees a budget of approximately \$23 billion and more than 100,000 federal and contract employees.

Question

36. What is the mission of the Department of Energy (DOE)?

Department of Health and Human Services

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is the United States government's principal agency for protecting

The Executive Branch

the health of all Americans and providing essential human services, especially for those who are least able to help themselves. Agencies of HHS conduct health and social science research, work to prevent disease outbreaks, assure food and drug safety, and provide health insurance.

In addition to administering Medicare and Medicaid, which together provide health insurance to one in four Americans, HHS also oversees the National Institutes of Health, the Food and Drug Administration, and the Centers for Disease Control.

The Secretary of Health and Human Services oversees a budget of approximately \$700 billion and approximately 65,000 employees. The Department's programs are administered by 11 operating divisions, including 8 agencies in the U.S. Public Health Service and 3 human services agencies.

Question

37. What two agencies together provide health insurance to one in four Americans?

Department of Homeland Security

The missions of the Department of Homeland Security are to prevent and disrupt terrorist attacks; protect the American people, our critical infrastructure, and key resources; and respond to and recover from incidents that do occur. The third largest Cabinet department, DHS was established by the Homeland Security Act of 2002, largely in response to the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. The new department consolidated 22 executive branch agencies, including the U.S. Customs Service, the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. Secret Service, the Transportation Security Administration, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

DHS employs 216,000 people in its mission to patrol borders, protect travelers and our transportation infrastructure, enforce immigration laws, and respond to disasters and emergencies. The agency also promotes preparedness and emergency prevention among citizens. Policy is coordinated by the Homeland Security Council at the White House, in cooperation with other defense and intelligence agencies, and led by the

The Executive Branch

Assistant to the President for Homeland Security.

Questions

38. Which of the following is *not* a mission of the Department of Homeland Security?

- a. Prevent and disrupt terrorist attacks
- b. Protect the American people, critical infrastructure, and key resources
- c. Respond to and recover from incidents that do occur
- d. Wage war against enemy foreign governments

39. The Homeland Security Act (2002) was largely a response to what?

40. Name five executive branch agencies that were consolidated into the Department of Homeland Security.

41. Following the death of Osama bin Laden and a decline in Al Qaeda activities, many Americans have called for the disbandment of the Department of Homeland Security, or at least a reduction in its size and power. Do you believe that reducing the size and power of this department, or disbanding this department altogether, is a good idea? Why or why not?

The Executive Branch

Offices within HUD include the Federal Housing Administration, which provides mortgage and loan insurance; the Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity, which ensures all Americans equal access to the housing of their choice; and the Community Development Block Grant Program, which helps communities with economic development, job opportunities, and housing rehabilitation. HUD also administers public housing and homeless assistance.

The Secretary of Housing and Urban Development oversees approximately 9,000 employees on a budget of approximately \$40 billion.

Department of Housing and Urban Development

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is the federal agency responsible for national policies and programs that address America's housing needs, that improve and develop the nation's communities, and that enforce fair housing laws. The Department plays a major role in supporting homeownership for lower- and moderate-income families through its mortgage insurance and rent subsidy programs.

Questions

42. For what is the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) responsible?

The Executive Branch

43. What HUD office helps communities with economic development, job opportunities, and housing rehabilitation?

The Secretary of the Interior oversees about 70,000 employees and 200,000 volunteers on a budget of approximately \$16 billion. Every year it raises billions in revenue from energy, mineral, grazing, and timber leases, as well as recreational permits and land sales.

Questions

44. What is the mission of the Department of the Interior (DOI)?

Department of the Interior

The Department of the Interior (DOI) is the nation's principal conservation agency. Its mission is to protect America's natural resources, offer recreation opportunities, conduct scientific research, conserve and protect fish and wildlife, and honor our trust responsibilities to American Indians, Alaskan Natives, and our responsibilities to island communities.

DOI manages 500 million acres of surface land, or about one-fifth of the land in the United States, and manages hundreds of dams and reservoirs. Agencies within the DOI include the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Minerals Management Service, and the U.S. Geological Survey. The DOI manages the national parks and is tasked with protecting endangered species.

45. What percentage of land in the United States is managed by the DOI?

The Executive Branch

46. Name three agencies within the DOI.

and occasionally appears in person before the Supreme Court.

With a budget of approximately \$25 billion, the DOJ is the world's largest law office and the central agency for the enforcement of federal laws.

Department of Justice

The mission of the Department of Justice (DOJ) is to enforce the law and defend the interests of the United States according to the law; to ensure public safety against threats foreign and domestic; to provide federal leadership in preventing and controlling crime; to seek just punishment for those guilty of unlawful behavior; and to ensure fair and impartial administration of justice for all Americans.

The DOJ is comprised of 40 component organizations, including the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the U.S. Marshals, and the Federal Bureau of Prisons. The Attorney General is the head of the DOJ and chief law enforcement officer of the federal government. The Attorney General represents the United States in legal matters, advises the President and the heads of the executive departments of the government,

Questions

47. Which of the following is *not* a mission of the Department of Justice (DOJ)?

- a. Enforce the law and defend the interests of the United States according to the law
- b. Ensure public safety against threats foreign and domestic
- c. Oversee the imposition of martial law in foreign countries
- d. Seek just punishment for those guilty of unlawful behavior

48. Name four component organizations of the DOJ.

The Executive Branch

49. Who is the head of the DOJ?

Administration, which promotes the safety and health of America's working men and women.

The Secretary of Labor oversees 15,000 employees on a budget of approximately \$50 billion.

Department of Labor

The Department of Labor oversees federal programs for ensuring a strong American workforce. These programs address job training, safe working conditions, minimum hourly wage and overtime pay, employment discrimination, and unemployment insurance.

The Department of Labor's mission is to foster and promote the welfare of the job seekers, wage earners, and retirees of the United States by improving their working conditions, advancing their opportunities for profitable employment, protecting their retirement and health care benefits, helping employers find workers, strengthening free collective bargaining, and tracking changes in employment, prices, and other national economic measurements.

Offices within the Department of Labor include the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the federal government's principal statistics agency for labor economics, and the Occupational Safety & Health

Questions

50. What does the Department of Labor oversee?

51. What is the federal government's principal statistics agency for labor economics?

52. What office promotes the safety and health of America's working men and women?

The Executive Branch

Department of State

The Department of State plays the lead role in developing and implementing the President's foreign policy. Major responsibilities include United States representation abroad, foreign assistance, foreign military training programs, countering international crime, and a wide assortment of services to U.S. citizens and foreign nationals seeking entrance to the U.S.

The U.S. maintains diplomatic relations with approximately 180 countries — each posted by civilian U.S. Foreign Service employees — as well as with international organizations. At home, more than 5,000 civil employees carry out the mission of the Department.

The Secretary of State serves as the President's top foreign policy adviser, and oversees 30,000 employees and a budget of approximately \$35 billion.

Questions

53. The Department of State plays the lead role in developing and implementing the president's domestic policy.

- a. True
- b. False

54. The United States maintains diplomatic relations with approximately how many countries?

55. Who serves as the president's top foreign policy adviser?

Department of Transportation

The mission of the Department of Transportation (DOT) is to ensure a fast, safe, efficient, accessible and convenient transportation system that meets our vital national interests and enhances the quality of life of the American people.

Organizations within the DOT include the Federal Highway Administration, the Federal Aviation Administration, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the Federal Transit Administration, the Federal Railroad

The Executive Branch

Administration and the Maritime Administration.

The U.S. Secretary of Transportation oversees approximately 55,000 employees and a budget of approximately \$70 billion.

Department of the Treasury

Questions

The Department of the Treasury is responsible for promoting economic prosperity and ensuring the soundness and security of the U.S. and international financial systems.

56. What is the mission of the Department of Transportation (DOT)?

The Department operates and maintains systems that are critical to the nation's financial infrastructure, such as the production of coin and currency, the disbursement of payments to the American public, the collection of taxes, and the borrowing of funds necessary to run the federal government. The Department works with other federal agencies, foreign governments, and international financial institutions to encourage global economic growth, raise standards of living, and, to the extent possible, predict and prevent economic and financial crises. The Treasury Department also performs a critical and far-reaching role in enhancing national security by improving the safeguards of our financial systems, implementing economic sanctions against foreign threats to the U.S., and identifying and targeting the financial

57. Name three organizations within the DOT.

The Executive Branch

support networks of national security threats.

The Secretary of the Treasury oversees a budget of approximately \$13 billion and a staff of more than 100,000 employees.

Questions

58. The Department of the Treasury is responsible for what?

59. How does the Department of the Treasury enhance national security?

Department of Veterans Affairs

The Department of Veterans Affairs is responsible for administering benefit programs for veterans, their families, and their survivors. These benefits include pension, education, disability compensation, home loans, life insurance, vocational rehabilitation, survivor support, medical care, and burial benefits. Veterans Affairs became a cabinet-level department in 1989.

Of the 25 million veterans currently alive, nearly three of every four served during a war or an official period of hostility. About a quarter of the nation's population — approximately 70 million people — are potentially eligible for V.A. benefits and services because they are veterans, family members, or survivors of veterans.

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs oversees a budget of approximately \$90 billion and a staff of approximately 235,000 employees.

Questions

60. The Department of Veterans Affairs is responsible for what?

The Executive Branch

61. Approximately how many veterans are currently alive?

62. About how many Americans are potentially eligible for V.A. benefits?

Post-Reading Activity: Matching

Write the letter of the corresponding answer in the space provided.

1. _____ Advisory body made up of the heads of the 15 executive departments
2. _____ Commander-in-Chief
3. _____ Elected president four times
4. _____ Headquarters of the Department of Defense
5. _____ Includes the DEA and FBI
6. _____ President of the U.S. Senate
7. _____ President's home
8. _____ Protects America's natural resources
9. _____ Served two nonconsecutive terms
10. _____ Vote for the president

A. Cabinet

B. DOI

C. Electors

D. Franklin D. Roosevelt

E. Grover Cleveland

F. Justice Department

G. Pentagon

H. President

I. Vice president

J. White House

The Executive Branch

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