

12

The Presidency

□ Chapter Overview

In this chapter you will learn about the office of President of the United States, who serves both as the head of the government of the United States and the ceremonial representative of the country. We begin by considering how presidents are chosen. We then examine the formal and informal powers of the Office of the President, including the presidency itself, the vice president, the first lady, the cabinet, the Executive Office of the President, and the White House staff. Then we turn to consider how the president interacts with the Congress in the development of governmental policy. We conclude by exploring how presidential popularity and the president's relationship with the media influence the success of their term in office.

□ Study Outline

12.1 Learning Objective 12.1: Characterize the expectations for and the backgrounds of presidents and identify paths to the White House and how presidents may be removed. (p. 399)

The Presidents

- Presidents can reach the Oval Office in different ways:
 - Most are former governors or members of Congress who, after being nominated by their party, campaigned and won the election.
 - Some presidents were vice presidents who took over after the death or removal of a president.

- Vice presidents can also become president in the event the president resigns or is convicted in an impeachment trial.
- The Twenty-Fifth Amendment establishes the procedures for filling vacancies in both the offices of president and vice president, and it also makes provisions for presidential disability.
- The Constitution sets forth the process of impeachment of a president who has abused his powers or committed a “high crime or misdemeanor” worthy of removal from office.
- The House may vote for the impeachment of the president by a simple majority.
- The Senate conducts the impeachment trial and the chief justice of the Supreme Court presides over the trial.
- It takes a two-thirds vote in the Senate to remove the president from office.
- Only two presidents have been impeached, though neither was removed from office.
- Andrew Johnson was tried but not convicted in 1868, and Bill Clinton was acquitted by the Senate in 1999.

12.2

Learning Objective 12.2: Evaluate the president’s constitutional powers and the expansion of presidential power. (p. 405)

Presidential Powers

- The Constitution grants the president fairly limited powers that were designed to prevent him or her from gaining too much authority, thus maintaining the balance of power among government institutions.
- The power to “take care that the laws be faithfully executed,” as specified in the Constitution, is one of the more overlooked responsibilities of the president.
- As the bureaucracy has grown, it has become nearly impossible for the president alone to execute and enforce all laws; instead, the president now appoints numerous administrative officials, including cabinet members and department heads.
- Some have argued that during the 1950s and 1960s the presidency became “imperial” in nature, taking nearly full control over American politics.

- Since then, the power waned considerably but grew again with concerns about national security after the September 11 attacks.

12.3

Learning Objective 12.3: Describe the roles of the vice president, cabinet, Executive Office of the President, White House staff, and First Lady. (p. 408)

Running the Government: The Chief Executive

- Vice presidents traditionally have few responsibilities and little political prominence.
- Vice presidents are second in line to assume the presidency if the president is unable to fulfill the duties of office.
- The vice president is the president (presiding officer) of the Senate and casts a vote whenever there is a tie.
- Today, vice presidents assume more responsibilities, depending on how the president they are serving entrusts functions to them.
- Vice presidents may serve as diplomats representing the president, take part in important policy meetings, or help raise funds for their party.
- The cabinet is a group of officials who act as advisors to the president.
- The cabinet is not mentioned in the Constitution, but it quickly became an institution that has accompanied every presidency.
- The modern cabinet is composed of the attorney general and the heads, or secretaries, of the 13 executive departments.
- The president has the power to appoint all of these officials, but each appointment must be confirmed by the Senate.
- Each cabinet member heads a department that deals with a different policy area.
- The departments, created by Congress, carry out all the administrative work necessary to enforce laws or assist the president in his executive duties.
- The Executive Office of the President (E.O.P) is a collection of administrative and advisory bodies that assist the president in overseeing policy.
- The EOP includes the National Security Council, the Council of Economic Advisors, and the Office of Management and Budget.

- The White House Staff includes important personal and political advisors to the president, such as the legal counsel to the president, the president's personal secretary, and the chief of staff.
- This office takes care of the president's political needs and manages the press.

12.4

Learning Objective 12.4: Assess the impact of various sources of presidential influence on the president's ability to win congressional support. (p. 414)

Presidential Leadership of Congress: The Politics of Shared Powers

- Though not a member of the legislative branch, presidents do have a role to play in the legislative process.

Chief Legislator

- The power to veto legislation can be an effective tool of intimidation.
- Because a veto rejects a bill in its entirety, the president can have a good deal of influence over the shaping of each specific provision.
- If the president does veto a bill, it goes back to Congress, which, by a two-thirds vote, can override the veto; however, this rarely happens.
- The president also has the power to reject any legislation submitted at the end of the congressional session without the possibility of his veto being overruled.
- If he does not sign a bill submitted by Congress within 10 days of its adjourning, the bill is automatically rejected, which is a **pocket veto**.

Party Leadership

- To influence policy, presidents must work closely with Congress.
- Specifically, they rely on close ties with members of Congress who are members of their political party.
- Political parties help bridge the gap between the legislative and executive branches.
- A president and a representative of the same party were most likely elected by the same body of people, or by voters who have similar political views, so they probably share political priorities.

- Members of Congress who support the president's legislative agenda are likely to receive support for some of their projects and initiatives in return.
- A close relationship with a popular president can also be beneficial to members of Congress during reelection (**presidential coattails**).
- The president must rely on members of Congress to introduce legislation for him or her and to win support for it during the legislative process; therefore, the president must work closely with party leaders to convince representatives to vote the party line.
- Even if a president's party is the majority party in either or both houses, he may not necessarily have the full support of representatives, who might not vote with the party line.

Public Support

- Public support for the president factors heavily in his congressional support.
- Representatives are much more likely to vote in favor of the initiatives of a president who is popular with the electorate, and presidents are well aware that public opinion is an incredibly powerful tool of persuasion.
- Public approval gives a president more leeway in pursuing policy goals, because representatives are more likely to support his objectives in the hope of being reelected by an electorate that has confidence in their president.
- Public support lends a president a greater degree of legitimacy. Congress is more likely to respond to the will of a president who was elected by a large margin, especially on legislation proposed early in his term.
- The policies of a president who is perceived as weak are more likely to be cast into doubt by Congress, making it harder for the president to garner legislative support.

Legislative Skills

- Presidents may also exert their influence over the political agenda by employing specific strategies at key times in the legislative process.
- To strengthen a presidential coalition, presidents often bargain with representatives by offering support on one piece of legislation in exchange for receiving it on another.

- Members of Congress may also receive certain presidential favors, such as joint public appearances during campaigns.
- Presidents present many proposals to Congress soon after their election during what is called the “honeymoon period,” when there is a fresh sense of community in Washington.
- Presidents work hard to focus the attention of Congress on their own specific agendas.
- By setting priorities, they are able to concentrate their resources to push through a few key policy objectives.

12.5

Learning Objective 12.5: Analyze the president’s powers in making national security policy and the relationship between the president and Congress in this arena. (p. 422)

The President and National Security Policy

- The president is both the commander in chief of the armed forces and the chief U.S. diplomat.
- The diplomatic powers of the president include establishing formal recognition of other governments, negotiating treaties, formulating **executive agreements** with other foreign leaders (which, unlike treaties, do not require congressional approval; most executive agreements are administrative in nature), and using U.S. influence to arbitrate conflicts between other nations.
- Military powers include the decision to use weapons of mass destruction, authorizing military actions during war, and sending troops into specific areas of conflict.
- The **War Powers Resolution**, passed in 1973, was intended to limit this power by requiring that these troops be withdrawn within 60 days unless Congress declares war or issues an extension.
- Many believe that it is unconstitutional, and all presidents have treated it as such.

Power from the People: The Public Presidency

- Because presidents know that public approval works enormously in their favor, they work hard to sell their agenda to the public.
- A voter's approval of the president is determined by whether the voter identifies with the political party of the president.
- A voter's approval of the president is determined by how the president responds to economic shifts or handles other current issues.
- A voter's approval of the president is determined by how effective a public speaker the president is, and his appearance in front of the cameras.
- A voter's approval of the president is determined by whether the president appeals to the public directly, in which case the public usually responds positively.
- A voter's approval of the president is determined by how the media interprets the actions of the president.
- The efforts of the White House to influence public opinion are not always successful, however. The public tends to be fickle in its approval, and the media often mislead the public by oversimplifying political and economic issues.

Learning Objective 12.7: Characterize the president's relations with the press and news coverage of the presidency. (p. 434)***The President and the Press***

- The press is the principal intermediary between the president and the public.
- Presidents and the press are frequently in conflict over the amount, nature, and tone of the coverage of the presidency.
- There has been an increase in the negativity of coverage and there are an increasing number of ideologically biased sources of news.

12.8

Learning Objective 12.8: Assess the role of presidential power in the American democracy and the president's impact on the scope of government. (p. 436)

Understanding the American Presidency

- There is always a fear of a presidential power that is harmful to democracy, however, there are many checks on presidential power.

For Additional Review

Take notes on the following areas of increased presidential power:

1. war powers
2. diplomacy by executive agreements
3. secrecy and executive privilege
4. government by veto

For each of the above areas of presidential power, explain how it has increased presidential power. Use these notes to help prepare for the unit test and the AP Government and Politics Exam.

Create a chart listing the roles of the president. Under each role, list the powers the president exercises when performing the duties for each role. Use this chart when reviewing and studying for the unit test and the AP Government and Politics Exam.

□ Review Questions

Multiple-Choice Questions

1. Congress can override a presidential veto of legislation
 - a. by appealing to the U.S. Supreme Court.
 - b. by negotiating a deal with the vice president.
 - c. by getting approval of the bill in three-fourths of the state legislatures.
 - d. with a majority vote of the House Rules Committee.
 - e. with a two-thirds vote in both houses of Congress.

2. According to the Constitution, the vice president
 - a. chairs all cabinet meetings.
 - b. is ineligible to run for president after two terms as vice president.
 - c. is the president of the Senate.
 - d. must be of the same party as the president.
 - e. is an ex officio member of the Council of Economic Advisors.