
The Executive Branch

I. ARTICLE II OF THE CONSTITUTION

A. THE EXECUTIVE

1. Article II of the U.S. Constitution creates and defines the executive branch of the federal government.
2. Section 1 states that “the executive Power shall be vested in a President of the United States of America,” which forms the basis for most of the formal and informal powers of the president.
3. Section 1 outlines the process for choosing the president through the Electoral College, and not by direct popular vote.

B. QUALIFICATIONS AND TERMS

1. The Constitution mandates that a president meet three specific qualifications.
 - a. Natural-born citizen (born on U.S. soil or born to a parent who is a citizen)
 - b. 35 years of age
 - c. 14 years of residency in the United States
2. The president and the vice president serve four-year terms. Although the original Constitution placed no limit on the number of terms an individual could serve, this was limited by passage of the 22nd Amendment.

C. COMPENSATION AND OATH OF OFFICE

1. Congress determines the salary of the president. Congress may not raise or lower the salary of a serving president.
2. The Constitution spells out the oath of office for the presidency in which the elected individual may either choose to swear or affirm.

"I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute the Office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my Ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States."

D. REMOVAL FROM OFFICE

1. The president, vice president, and other civil officers can be removed from office through impeachment and conviction.
2. Article II provides that "[t]he President, Vice President, and all civil Officers of the United States shall be removed from Office on Impeachment for, and on Conviction of, Treason, Bribery, or other high Crimes and Misdemeanors."
 - a. The role of the House in impeachment is to bring charges. Once articles of impeachment are passed by the House, the officer charged has been "impeached" (but not convicted).
 - b. The role of the Senate in impeachment is to conduct a trial. In the event of impeachment of the president, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court presides over impeachment trials in the Senate.
 - c. The impeachment trial results in conviction or acquittal. Conviction requires a two-thirds vote of the Senate.
 - d. The penalty for conviction on impeachment charges is removal from office.
 - e. The term "high Crimes and Misdemeanors" is a traditional legal term meaning any serious crime.
3. Only two presidents have been impeached (Andrew Johnson and Bill Clinton). Neither was convicted and removed from office.

E. OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT

1. According to the Constitution, the duties of the vice president include serving as the president of the Senate (largely ceremonial and usually a role served by the president pro tempore), breaking any tie votes in the Senate, helping to decide questions of presidential disability (Twenty-Fifth Amendment), and taking over the presidency if the president is unable to finish his or her term.
2. Informally, the role of the vice president is determined by the president and can involve either a domestic or international focus, often serving ceremonial purposes.

3. The vice president often plays a role in the election process, and presidential candidates often choose running mates that differ from them in areas such as geographic region, party subgroup, or experience in order to balance the ticket and expand their electoral appeal.

II. ROLES AND POWERS OF THE PRESIDENT

A. PRESIDENTIAL ROLES

1. **Chief Executive:** The president directs the activities of the several million federal employees to implement and carry out federal laws.
2. **Chief of State:** The president is a symbol of the nation, representing the American people to the world.
3. **Chief Legislator:** The president plays a leading role in setting the country's legislative agenda by attempting to successfully shepherd his or her party's policy initiatives through Congress.
4. **Chief Diplomat:** The president conducts relations with the other countries of the world and sets U.S. foreign policy agenda.
5. **Commander-in-Chief:** The president holds decision-making authority and operational control over all branches of the armed forces.
6. **Party Chief:** The president is the de facto leader of his or her political party, leading in policy development and electoral strategy.

B. PRESIDENTIAL POWERS

1. Each president takes office with a policy agenda, a set of policies that he or she would like the government to pursue. Accompanying the president's roles are numerous powers, both formal and informal, that he or she may use to attempt to achieve adoption of his or her policy agenda.
2. Formal powers are also called constitutional powers, because they are areas of authority granted to the president by the Constitution.
 - a. **Executing the Law:** The president is charged with taking care that laws be faithfully carried out (executed). The president oversees the fulfillment of legislation passed by Congress and manages relevant agencies and programs.

- b. **Appointing Power:** The president appoints candidates (often with Senate approval required) for public office, including:
 - the heads of executive departments and their top aides
 - the heads of independent agencies
 - ambassadors and other diplomats
 - all federal judges
 - U.S. marshals and attorneys
- c. **Recess Appointments:** The president may appoint people to fill administrative vacancies that occur when Congress is not in session. This type of appointment is called a recess appointment because it occurs when Congress is in recess. These appointments are not permanent; they last until the end of the next congressional session or until the Senate confirms a replacement.
- d. **Requesting Written Opinions:** The president may request the written opinion of government officials.
- e. **State of the Union:** The president must periodically address Congress to report on the country's needs and conditions. The State of the Union address is given annually (by tradition) to a joint session of Congress, normally in late January or early February. Presidents use this opportunity to generate support for their policy agendas.
- f. **Power to Recommend Legislation:** The president may recommend legislation to Congress. Note that this is a "soft" power. The president may not demand or require that any particular legislation be introduced or enacted.
- g. **Power to Convene Congress:** The president may convene Congress. That is, he or she may call Congress into session while it is in recess.
- h. **Power to Adjourn Congress:** The president may adjourn Congress in cases where the two houses cannot agree on a time of adjournment. This power has never been exercised by the president.
- i. **Veto Power:** The president may veto legislation passed by Congress. (Congress may override with a two-thirds vote.)



*The line item veto is a long-debated power, but not currently held by the president. This power would allow the president to cancel individual spending items in a budgeting or appropriations bill, thereby vetoing part, but not all, of the bill. Its purpose is to allow the executive to reduce wasteful spending (pork) by Congress. Although Congress granted this power to the president by statute in 1996, it was struck down as unconstitutional in *Clinton v. City of New York* (1998). Many state governors have this power.*

- j. **Commander-in-Chief Power:** The president serves as commander-in-chief of the armed forces. That is, he or she is the supreme commander of all branches of the United States military. Civilian control of the military is a critical feature of liberal democracy. The actual extent of the president's military powers has been a subject of contention throughout our history.
- The Constitution grants Congress the power to declare war, but names the president as the commander-in-chief of the armed forces.
 - The War Powers Resolution of 1973 (also known as the War Powers Act) was enacted in response to growing congressional concern about presidential overreach in use of the military, both during the Korean War and the Vietnam War. The law, which was passed over Nixon's veto, includes the following requirements:
 - The president must inform Congress within 48 hours of committing military forces to action.
 - If Congress does not authorize the action within 60 days, forces must be withdrawn.
 - An additional 30 days are allowed for the troops to make a safe withdrawal.
- k. **Treaty Power:** The president may make treaties with other countries. This requires approval by a two-thirds vote of the Senate.



Remember that the Senate alone approves treaties and appointments (not Congress as a whole; the House has no role in these procedures). Treaties must be approved by a two-thirds vote of the Senate. Presidential appointments of cabinet officers, ambassadors, federal judges, and other officials may be approved by a simple majority (51%).

- i. **Recognition Power:** The president receives ambassadors, which means that the president chooses whether to formally recognize a foreign government. Recognition simply means that the United States acknowledges the legitimacy, or legal basis, of a government and agrees to do business with it. The United States recognizes many governments that are not democratic or that do not meet modern western standards in other respects, such as individual rights and freedoms.
- m. **Pardon Power:** The president may grant pardons (legal forgiveness) for federal crimes, except in cases of impeachment. The president's formal pardoning power can take several forms, including individual pardons, amnesty, commutations, and reprieves, which all serve as checks on the judicial branch. Presidents may only pardon federal offenses, and not crimes charged under state laws.
 - **Pardon:** An order from the president granting a person release from punishment and total legal forgiveness for a crime. The only exception to the pardon power involves cases of impeachment. The most famous pardon was granted by President Ford to former President Richard Nixon for any misconduct related to the Watergate affair. Ford justified his actions by expressing a desire for closure, saying, "It could go on and on and on, or someone must write the end to it. I have concluded that only I can do that, and if I can, I must." Nixon had resigned to avoid impeachment, thereby allowing for a pardon from Ford.
 - **Amnesty:** Amnesty allows the president to grant pardons to a group of individuals all convicted of the same crime. For example, President Carter granted amnesty to all of the individuals who avoided the draft during the Vietnam War, either by not registering or leaving the country.
 - **Commutation:** The power of a president to reduce the punishment (e.g., time in jail, fines) without removing the guilty verdict of the courts.

- **Reprive:** The power of the president to delay punishment, without removing the guilty verdict of the courts.
3. Informal powers are those powers not explicitly granted by the Constitution. Article II of the Constitution states that “[t]he executive power shall be vested in a President of the United States of America.” Known as the “Vesting Clause,” this clause, along with the directive requiring the president to ensure that the laws are faithfully executed, forms the basis for the president’s informal powers.
- a. **Executive Orders:** In many circumstances, the president may issue executive orders, directives that have the force of law.
 - Executive orders are normally used in the process of carrying out the president’s duties—for example, by enforcing the Constitution or legislation passed by Congress.
 - Executive orders are often used when Congress refuses to enact the president’s agenda or negotiate a solution.
 - Some presidents have issued executive orders that seem to exceed their constitutional authority or contradict the legislature.
 - Congress has several checks on the use of executive orders, including the ability to refuse to fund these directives or to invalidate them through the passage of legislation.
 - Executive orders may be challenged in the courts as well. They may be found unconstitutional or in conflict with federal law (judicial review).
 - b. **Signing Statements:** When signing a bill into law, a president may issue a written statement offering his or her interpretation of the law and how it is to be executed.
 - Signing statements are advisory in nature and do not have the force of law.
 - Signing statements give presidents the opportunity to express their interpretations and plans for execution of laws to the public and the legislative branch.
 - Signing statements may be used by a president to indicate disapproval of all or part of a bill in the event that a veto would likely face an override.

- Signing statements are not mandatory. Most legislation is not accompanied by a signing statement.
- c. **Executive Agreements:** Presidents may make executive agreements with heads of government of other countries.
 - These agreements are similar to treaties, but do not require Senate approval.
 - They are typically made under the authority of an existing treaty to deal with bureaucratic issues and minor details.
 - Occasionally, a president may conclude significant international business in the form of an executive agreement.
 - Since executive agreements are not approved by the Senate, they may be altered or canceled by subsequent presidential administrations. They may also be altered or canceled by heads of state in countries that are party to the agreement.
- d. **Removal Power:** Generally, the president has the power to remove, or dismiss, without cause, any high-level federal official that he or she has the power to nominate. Although not mentioned in the Constitution, it has been inferred from the appointment power and the power to execute the law. Supreme Court rulings have placed restrictions on the president's ability to fire various types of executive officers, especially without cause. The president does not have the power to dismiss federal judges, or the heads of regulatory commissions.
- e. **Power of Persuasion:** The president's central role in the federal government requires that he or she is at the center of constant negotiations. The president is expected to demonstrate bargaining skills and to persuade other members of the executive and legislative branches to support his or her party's policies.
- f. **The Bully Pulpit:** The president has the ability to speak directly to the American people at will, which is an important informal power. The term "bully pulpit" was coined by Theodore Roosevelt to refer to the presidency as a highly visible position that could be used to speak out and persuade. Note that "bully" in the usage of the early twentieth century was used as an adjective meaning "excellent," or "superior." A pulpit, of course, is an elevated position from which preachers speak.

- g. **Global Leader:** The president is recognized as an important global leader, holds discussions with other world leaders, and builds international coalitions.
- h. **Crisis Manager:** The president is required to respond to crises, both international and domestic. The president's role as crisis manager provides the opportunity to enhance his or her reputation, power, and agenda.
- i. **Emergency Powers:** Presidents have claimed various emergency powers to deal with situations of rebellion, war, and terrorism. These have included the suspension of habeas corpus (Lincoln), internment of Japanese Americans (Franklin D. Roosevelt), and holding enemy combatants without trial (George W. Bush).

Presidential Powers

Type of Power	Formal	Informal
Executive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - execute laws - nominate officials - request written opinions - make recess appointments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - executive orders - signing statements - crisis manager - emergency powers - removal power
Legislative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - give State of the Union address - recommend legislation - call special sessions - adjournment - veto 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - bargaining/negotiation - bully pulpit
Foreign Policy/Military	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - command military (Commander-in-Chief) - make treaties - nominate ambassadors - recognize diplomats and foreign governments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - executive agreement - bargaining/negotiation - world leader - meets with heads of foreign governments - coalition builder - crisis manager
Judicial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - nominate judges - pardon federal crimes, except involving impeachment 	



Be aware that various sources use different names for types of presidential powers, which can be confusing. The two main categories of presidential powers are:

- *formal or constitutional powers, which are defined in the Constitution*
- *informal or inherent powers, which are not spelled out in the Constitution, but based on the Vesting Clause and the president's duty to execute laws passed by Congress*

III. EXECUTIVE INTERACTIONS WITH CONGRESS AND THE COURTS

A. DIVIDED GOVERNMENT/POLICY CONFLICTS

1. Each president enters office with a policy agenda, or set of initiatives, which he or she would like Congress to enact into law. In the event that Congress is uncooperative, the president may sometimes enact his or her preferred policies through executive orders.
2. The president often clashes with Congress over a policy initiative or executive order. This happens most frequently when one or both houses of Congress are controlled by the opposition party to the president (divided government).
3. Although the president's position is the most untenable when both houses of Congress are controlled by the opposition party (often resulting in gridlock), each house also has specific areas of authority which it may use to impede the president's agenda.
 - a. With sufficient opposition in both houses, the president's policies, including executive orders, may be countered by the passage of legislation. The president's veto of legislation may be overridden by a two-thirds vote in both houses. Sometimes the threat of an override may be sufficient to dissuade the president from using the veto.
 - b. The House holds unique powers to restrain the president's agenda, including limiting taxation and spending (power of the purse).

- c. Unique powers of the Senate to check the president include the ability to refuse to confirm appointments and treaties.

B. THE SENATE AND PRESIDENTIAL APPOINTMENTS

1. The president has the responsibility of appointing thousands of federal officials, including the heads of the executive departments, federal judges, military leaders, and many other categories of employees within the federal bureaucracy. About 1,200–1,400 of these positions require Senate approval.
2. When a new president takes office, he or she has the formidable task of immediately appointing qualified individuals to thousands of positions. Most significant are the positions that form the president's team: the top leadership of the executive departments (the president's cabinet), the staff of the Executive Office of the President, and other high-level positions.
3. The level of Senate scrutiny applied to presidential nominations can vary with the type of appointment. Higher-level, critical appointments, such as Supreme Court justices, receive the most intense examination and may involve Senate hearings and investigations.
4. Senate confirmations may be more contentious when the Senate is not controlled by the president's political party.
 - a. Generally, the president has the right to assemble his or her own administrative team. The Senate has traditionally shown considerable deference to the president's choices for top-level administrative officials, particularly White House staff, regardless of party.
 - b. The president's cabinet includes the heads of the 15 executive departments and various other officials, including top intelligence officers. The role of the cabinet is to serve as an advisory body to the president. Cabinet members are generally afforded considerable deference by the Senate in recognition of their key roles in the president's executive responsibilities. Very rarely is this type of appointment seriously challenged in the Senate.
 - c. The president appoints ambassadors, top-level diplomats assigned to conduct relations with foreign governments. Ambassadors are often political appointees who have supported the president's election campaign financially, but lack diplomatic or other relevant experience. In spite of this, ambassadors are almost always confirmed.

C. JUDICIAL APPOINTMENTS

1. Judicial nominations, particularly those for the Supreme Court, receive the highest levels of Senate scrutiny. This is true because federal judges receive life tenure and may only be removed through the impeachment process.
2. For presidents, the appointment of federal judges is an important power, as it gives them the ability to install like-minded individuals who will continue to influence policy for decades to come.
3. In Supreme Court confirmation hearings, nominees are questioned regarding their political views and their positions on high-profile issues. Judicial nominees with extremely liberal or conservative views are less likely to be confirmed, particularly when the Senate is controlled by the other party.
4. Although not in the Constitution, the custom of senatorial courtesy requires that any judicial nomination for a district (trial level) judge must be acceptable to senators of the president's party from the state where the judge will serve. Note that this is a custom, or tradition, and not a rule or law, but one that has a long history and is generally followed.
5. Prior to 2013, all presidential appointments were subject to filibuster, effectively requiring 60% support for approval. In that year, a Democratic-controlled Senate, frustrated by Republican filibusters of President Obama's judicial nominees, changed the rule. (The filibuster is a Senate rule, not a law or constitutional procedure.) The new rule allowed approval of presidential appointments by a simple majority, with the exception of Supreme Court justices. In 2017, a Republican-controlled Senate, facing a filibuster of Trump Supreme Court nominee Neil Gorsuch, changed the rules so that a simple majority vote would be sufficient to confirm Supreme Court nominees.
6. The Senate has increasingly sought input from interest groups during judicial confirmation hearings, especially for appointments to the Supreme Court. For example, the American Bar Association (an interest group for lawyers) has published ratings for potential judges as Highly Qualified, Qualified, or Not Qualified.
7. During judicial confirmation hearings (particularly those for Supreme Court nominees), senators frequently ask probing questions of nominees to elicit information regarding their judicial philosophies and political tendencies (liberal or conservative). Often referred to as litmus tests, these are questions about controversial and polarizing issues, which can be utilized as a kind

of shorthand to describe the judge's political viewpoint and to anticipate how he or she would rule on a variety of issues.

8. The Constitution gives the Senate the power to reject a presidential nominee to the federal courts, including the Supreme Court. But can the Senate refuse to even consider a presidential nominee? In 2016, Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia died. With 10 months left in his term of office, President Obama nominated Judge Merrick Garland. The Republican-controlled Senate refused to hold any hearings on Garland and announced that the process would be delayed until after the next presidential election. President Trump was elected and nominated Neil Gorsuch for the Supreme Court position, who was confirmed by the Senate.

D. PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF THE PRESIDENT

1. The president's approval ratings—the percentage of the public that approves of the president's job performance—have been monitored by polling organizations for decades.
2. Factors that tend to increase approval ratings include:
 - a. Honeymoon period: the time immediately following election when the president is granted greatest deference in terms of policy and performance
 - b. foreign policy successes
 - c. rally-around-the-flag effect: crises that create feelings of national unity
 - d. strong economic growth and low unemployment
 - e. positive media coverage
3. Factors that tend to decrease approval ratings include:
 - a. scandals involving the president or his or her top aides
 - b. expectations gap: the president does not achieve anticipated success
 - c. foreign policy failures/extended armed conflict without resolution or success
 - d. weak economic growth and high unemployment
4. A president's approval rating affects his or her relationship with Congress. High approval ratings can enhance the president's bargaining power, as a popular president can more effectively

use the bully pulpit to appeal to voters. Low approval ratings can reduce a president's ability to push his or her agenda through Congress.



The AP® Exam requires you to be able to interpret graphs and charts and relate them to course concepts. Be prepared to identify trends in presidential approval ratings when presented in a graph.

IV. IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS RELATING TO THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH

A. **“Federalist No. 70: The Executive Department Further Considered” (1788)** is an essay written by Alexander Hamilton defending the creation of a single president, as described in Article II of the Constitution, against critics who feared that the president would become, in effect, a king. Hamilton, writing under the pen name Publius, argues that a single executive is the best method to lead the government with efficiency and energy.

1. **Efficiency:** A single president is able to respond to a crisis faster and work with more secrecy (if necessary) than an executive branch run by a group of individuals. Spreading executive authority among several individuals will reduce effectiveness and decisiveness in executing the law.

That unity is conducive to energy will not be disputed. Decision, activity, secrecy, and dispatch will generally characterize the proceedings of one man in a much more eminent degree than the proceedings of any greater number; and in proportion as the number is increased, these qualities will be diminished.

2. **Accountability:** A single president is preferred because one corrupt or ineffective leader cannot hide within a group, and he or she would be easy to identify and vote out of office.

It is evident from these considerations that the plurality of the executive tends to deprive the people of the two greatest securities they can have for the faithful exercise of any delegated power, first, the restraints of public opinion, which lose their efficacy, as well on account of the division of the censure attendant on bad measures among a number

as on account of the uncertainty on whom it ought to fall; and, second, the opportunity of discovering with facility and clearness the misconduct of the persons they trust, in order either to their removal from office or to their actual punishment in cases which admit of it.



The argument essay requires you to state a defensible claim that is supported with evidence from one of the required foundational documents including the Constitution. Be prepared to utilize information from "Federalist No. 70," Article II of the Constitution, and the constitutional amendments related to the presidency (12th, 20th, 22nd, 23rd, and 25th) if you are given an argumentative essay related to the executive branch. Excerpts from "Federalist No. 70" are also likely to be used for qualitative analysis questions related to the justifications for creating a single executive.

B. CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS AND THE PRESIDENCY

1. **Twelfth Amendment:** An early correction to the procedures of the Electoral College so that electors voted separately for president and vice president.
2. **Twentieth Amendment:** Moved the date for the start of the terms for the new Congress and the new president from March to January 20, thus reducing the lame duck period.



The term lame duck refers to the time period in which an elected leader (often the president) is holding his or her position after having lost a bid for reelection or not seeking reelection. The time period during which an official is a lame duck often results in reduced effectiveness. However, lame duck presidents or members of Congress are still able to exercise their constitutional powers. At the same time, the lame duck period may also liberate an officeholder to use powers or act in ways that he or she would not if anticipating future time in the office.

3. **Twenty-second Amendment:** Limits individuals to a maximum of two terms of office or a total of 10 years as president. Because George Washington served only two terms, subsequent presidents

followed that example until Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR) was elected four times, creating impetus for an amendment.

4. **Twenty-fifth Amendment:** Clarifies vice presidential succession to the presidency, vice presidential vacancies, and the procedures related to cases of presidential inability.
 - a. Makes clear that the vice president actually assumes the office of the president in the event of presidential death or disability.
 - b. Establishes a procedure for filling a vice presidential vacancy whereby a new vice president is appointed by the president and approved by a majority of both houses of Congress.
 - c. Presidential disability may be determined by either (1) the president declaring himself or herself unable to discharge duties of office; or (2) the vice president and a majority of the heads of the executive departments (or another body designated by Congress) declare the president to be disabled. If this declaration is contested by the president, the issue is ultimately decided by Congress.



The Presidential Succession Act of 1947 (amended in 2006) determines who becomes president in the case of the death, resignation, disability, or removal of both the president and the vice president. This law, Article II, section 1, clause 6 of the Constitution, and the Twenty-Fifth Amendment outline the order of succession for the presidency as follows: the Vice President, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, and then eligible members of the president's Cabinet beginning with the Secretary of State.

V. COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY AND THE PRESIDENCY

A. METHODS OF PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATION

1. **State of the Union:** The Constitution requires that the president "from time to time" provide Congress with information about issues facing the country. In modern times, this typically occurs annually when the president proposes his or her policy goals to a joint session of Congress. The televised event allows the president to address Congress, the nation, and the world. The president may also use the State of the Union to place pressure on Congress

about policy direction and indicate legislative action that he or she would likely support or veto.

2. Sophisticated technology has allowed for easier communication between the president and the public. During the Depression and World War II, President Roosevelt began speaking directly to the public on a regular basis using the new medium of radio, which had penetrated 90% of U.S. households. The use of radio to speak directly to citizens revolutionized presidential communications.
3. Later presidents used television to reach a broad audience about policy goals. The addition of a visual element changed Americans' perceptions of politics, as presidential appeal and effectiveness became increasingly related to physical appearance and demeanor. While earlier presidents spoke to the public on only a handful of television networks, the modern media includes a 24-hour news cycle feeding thousands of radio and television stations, as well as social media, blogs, and podcasts.
4. In the age of the Internet and the 24-hour news cycle, presidential administrations have been forced to adapt in order to effectively communicate with the nation.
 - a. President Obama, in particular, took advantage of new communications technologies. He established the White House Office of Digital Strategy and used various digital avenues to exchange information with the public.
 - b. Social media allows presidents to speak directly to citizens without the filter of television coverage, print media, and journalists. Social media is cheap, efficient, and instantaneous. As a result, presidents may be able to retain greater control over their messages, but the press may feel that there is diminished opportunity for examination and critical journalism.

B. THE FORMAL STRUCTURE OF WHITE HOUSE COMMUNICATIONS

1. Several offices within the White House Office coordinate and disseminate messaging for the president and his or her administration. These include the Office of White House Communications, the White House Press Office, and the Office of Digital Strategy.
2. Presidents beginning with John F. Kennedy have regularly held televised press conferences as a way of communicating with media outlets and citizens. The number of annual press conferences has steadily declined from a high of about 84 per year under FDR to

about six per year under Ronald Reagan. President Obama held about 20 press conferences per year.

3. Although members of the White House press corps look forward to opportunities to directly question the president, most press briefings are conducted by the White House Press Secretary. Traditionally, press briefings are a daily or near-daily event, but the frequency varies with the administration.