

## Chapter 13

# Chief Executives and Bureaucracies

*What qualities do modern presidents need to fulfill their many roles?*

### ■ 13.1 Introduction

April 28, 1975, was a day like many others for President Gerald Ford. He rose early and had his breakfast. By 7:30 A.M., he was hard at work in the Oval Office. He met with advisers and other officials that morning and later gave a speech at the annual meeting of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

More appointments filled Ford's afternoon schedule, including a brief photo opportunity with Lisa Lyon, the Miss National Teenager of 1974–1975. Later the president attended a meeting on the economy and energy policy in the White House Cabinet Room.

But no day, however typical, is ordinary for the president of the United States. In the spring of 1975, the Vietnam War was entering its final days. The communist forces of North Vietnam were advancing on Saigon, the capital of U.S.-backed South Vietnam. It was clear that South Vietnam could fall at any moment. When that happened, the remaining Americans in Saigon would have to evacuate the city.

Just after 7:00 P.M., President Ford learned that the North Vietnamese were shelling the U.S. air base at Saigon, making evacuation by plane impossible. He convened a meeting of the National Security Council to discuss the unfolding crisis.

The White House, the home and office of the U.S. president.

### Speaking of Politics

#### **reprieve**

A postponement of punishment for a crime. A person convicted of a capital crime, for example, may receive a reprieve from execution.

#### **pardon**

A decree that frees a person from punishment for a crime. A pardon is often granted when a criminal sentence is considered unjust.

#### **cabinet**

The heads of the executive departments. The president appoints members of the cabinet.

#### **executive order**

A rule or regulation issued by a president or governor that has the force of law.

#### **bureaucracy**

A large, complex organization that functions under uniform rules and procedures. The many workers in a government bureaucracy carry out the daily business of that government.

#### **pocket veto**

The automatic killing of a bill by refusing to either sign it or veto it. A pocket veto can occur only in the final days of a congressional session, as a president must normally act on a bill within ten days or it becomes law.

#### **administration**

The president, along with his or her personal staff and advisers. The term can also refer to a president's time in office.

#### **whistle-blower**

An employee or former employee who exposes wrongdoing within an organization in the hope of stopping it.

During the Vietnam evacuation crisis, President Gerald Ford met repeatedly with his close advisers. Here, Ford (right) attends a cabinet meeting with Secretary of State Henry Kissinger (left).



By 11:30 P.M., the shelling had stopped. But there was another problem, as Ford later wrote about in his autobiography:

*Refugees were streaming out onto the airport's runways, and our planes couldn't land. The situation there was clearly out of control. The only option left was to remove the remaining Americans, and as many South Vietnamese as possible, by helicopter from the roof of the U.S. embassy in Saigon. Choppers were standing by on the decks of U.S. Navy ships steaming off the coast, and just before midnight I ordered the final evacuation. Over the next sixteen hours we managed to rescue 6,500 U.S. and South Vietnamese personnel without sustaining significant casualties.*

—*A Time to Heal: The Autobiography of Gerald R. Ford*, 1979

With the crisis resolved, Ford retired to his upstairs White House residence. It was 12:05 in the morning.

As this day in the life of President Ford illustrates, the job of president involves many tasks and responsibilities. Some are routine, while others are immensely challenging. All require the skills of an effective leader. This chapter examines the qualities necessary in chief executives, along with the main features of the bureaucracies they run.

## 13.2 Chief Executives: Mayors, Governors, and Presidents

The president is the national government's **chief executive**, the top elected official in charge of enforcing laws and carrying out government policy. State and local governments also have chief executives. In the states, this official is the governor. At the local level, it is usually a mayor.

### Formal Qualifications: Age, Citizenship, and Residency

Adlai Stevenson, who ran for president twice in the 1950s, once said, "In America, anyone can become president." That is not quite true. Any candidate seeking the presidency must satisfy certain qualifications laid down in the Constitution. The president must be a native-born citizen, be at least 35 years of age, and have lived in the country for at least 14 years.

The Twenty-second Amendment, ratified in 1951, added another rule: no one who has been elected president twice or who has served one full term plus more than half of another term can seek the office again. This amendment formalized the custom of a two-term president. This custom, established by George Washington, was broken only once, by four-term president Franklin Roosevelt, prior to ratification of the amendment.

Most state and local governments set less stringent requirements for their chief executives. In Kentucky, for example, candidates for governor need only be 30 years old and must have lived in the state for 6 years. California has no minimum age or residency requirements. In that state, candidates for governor must simply be U.S. citizens and registered voters. In contrast to presidential requirements, such citizenship can be by birth or naturalization. That is why Austrian-born Arnold Schwarzenegger was able to become the governor of California but cannot be president of the United States.

Requirements for mayors are even looser. Many towns and cities require only that mayors be legal adults. Several high school seniors and college students have served as mayors. For example, in 2011, Jeremy Minnier was just 18 when he was elected mayor of Aredale, Iowa.

### Informal Qualifications: Experience, Education, and Other Factors

Like lawmakers, chief executives must also satisfy certain informal qualifications for office. These are traits that voters expect in their political leaders. This graph shows the essential qualities Americans wanted their next president to have in 2007.

Typically, chief executives have backgrounds in business, law, or public service. Most are well educated. Nearly three-quarters of all presidents have earned college degrees. Most have worked their way up the political ladder by holding other elective offices.

There are exceptions, however. Abraham Lincoln, one of this country's most admired presidents, had little formal schooling. Although he had served as an Illinois legislator and a member of Congress, he had lost several political races before winning the presidency.

Historically, most chief executives have been white, male, and from the middle or upper class. In fact, all U.S. presidents were white males until 2009 when Barack Obama took office and became the first African American president. Chief executives in states and cities, however, have made even greater progress in representing a broad spectrum of the American population.

Women have made significant strides at both state and local levels. The first female governor,

Nellie Tayloe Ross, was elected in Wyoming in 1924. Since then, 35 more women had been elected governor of their states or the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. In 2007, a record 9 of the 50 state governors were women. At the local level, female mayors led over 17 percent of American cities with populations greater than 30,000 in 2012.

Ethnic minorities have also had increasing success in gaining chief executive positions. Only two African Americans—Douglas Wilder of Virginia and Deval Patrick of Massachusetts—have been elected governor. But many blacks have been elected mayor of major cities such as New York, Philadelphia, Detroit, and Washington, D.C. In 2011, Susana Martinez assumed the gubernatorial office in New Mexico and became the first Latina governor in the United States. In 2005, Antonio Villaraigosa became the first Latino mayor of Los Angeles in more than a century. Nikki Haley, a South Asian American, was elected governor of South Carolina in 2010.

Religious affiliation can be another informal qualification, especially for presidential candidates.

### Essential Qualities of the Next President

In a survey conducted in 2007, the Gallup Organization asked Americans what qualities they were looking for in their next president. Of those surveyed, 77 percent said that it is essential that the next president is a strong and decisive leader.

Percentage who say it is essential that the next president . . .



Source: The Gallup Organization, 2007.

Almost all U.S. presidents have been Protestant. Until John F. Kennedy's election in 1961, it was assumed that a Catholic candidate could never win the presidency. Kennedy succeeded, in part, by promising to keep his religious and political beliefs separate. "I am not the Catholic candidate for president," he declared. "I am the Democratic Party's candidate for president, who happens also to be a Catholic." Even today, a non-Protestant candidate would likely face an uphill battle in winning the presidency.

### Gaining Office: Election and Succession

Most chief executives, including governors and mayors, are elected by popular vote. The president, in contrast, is chosen by the Electoral College, based on the popular vote count in each state.

In some state and local elections, the candidate who wins a plurality of the vote is declared the winner. In other states and cities, however, the candidate must receive a majority of the votes cast to win. If that does not happen, the top two candidates must compete in a **runoff election**, which is designed to produce a clear winner.

Succession rules for the presidency are spelled out in the Constitution and federal law. Should a president be unable to complete a four-year term because of death, disability, resignation, or removal from office, the law provides clear guidelines for replacing the chief executive.

The **line of succession** for the presidency begins with the vice president. If the vice president cannot serve, the next successor is the speaker of the House, followed by the president pro tempore of the Senate, and then by the secretary of state. Other cabinet members continue the line of succession in a specific order.

It is often said that the vice president is "a heart-beat away" from the presidency. Indeed, the main job of the vice president is to take over if something should happen to the president. The Constitution gives the vice president almost no formal powers other than this one.

For that reason, some politicians have shunned the chance to run for vice president. In 1848, Daniel Webster refused to become a vice presidential candidate, saying, "I do not propose to be buried until I am really dead." Nevertheless, 14 vice presidents



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The vice president holds little formal power under the Constitution. For that reason, as this cartoon suggests, the position has often been regarded as unimportant. Nevertheless, the vice president is first in line to succeed the president, which gives holders of this office enormous responsibility.

have gone on to become chief executive. In addition, recent vice presidents have been given substantial responsibilities by the president. During George W. Bush's administration, Vice President Dick Cheney held a significant amount of power and played a key role in shaping national security policy.

In most states, a lieutenant governor holds a comparable position to that of the vice president. This official stands in for the governor when necessary but generally has few formal duties.

### Staying in Office: Impeachment, Recalls, Term Limits, and Incumbency

If a president, vice president, or other official in the executive branch is suspected of wrongdoing, that person may be impeached and removed from office. The framers made the impeachment process difficult, however, to prevent it from being used for frivolous reasons. To be removed, an official must be convicted of "Treason, Bribery, or other high Crimes and Misdemeanors."

Impeachment begins in the House of Represent-

tatives. A majority of House members must vote to impeach, or formally accuse, the president or other officer of wrongdoing. The trial is then held in the Senate. Two-thirds of the senators must find the official guilty to remove that person from office.

The House has impeached only two presidents—Andrew Johnson and Bill Clinton—and the Senate found neither guilty. Richard Nixon resigned rather than face impeachment during the Watergate scandal.

But what if citizens are simply unhappy with the job their chief executive is doing? For presidents, there is no provision for midterm removal based on job performance. Many states and cities, however, do have procedures by which voters can order a recall of elected officials. The California recall took place in 2003, in which the voters chose to replace Governor Gray Davis with actor Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Almost a decade later, in 2012, Wisconsin attempted to recall a governor in a special election, but failed. As governor of Wisconsin, Scott Walker proposed a plan to help balance the state budget. This plan cut benefits for public employees and greatly limited the ability for unions to bargain. As a result,

disgruntled workers and unions organized protests. United Wisconsin, a grassroots organization, led a recall effort and petitioned for signatures, eventually gathering enough to hold a special election. Still, many Wisconsin voters supported Walker's attempts to reduce government spending. When the recall election took place on June 5, 2012, Walker won, retaining his position as governor.

Many chief executives are also subject to term limits. As noted previously, presidents are restricted to no more than two terms in office. Many states and cities also set term limits on their governors and mayors. In most cases, governors are held to two consecutive terms in office. However, in some states, they may run for reelection four years after their last term.

The power of incumbency in winning reelection is not as strong for chief executives as it is for legislators. That may be because chief executives serve as a "lightning rod" for voter discontent. When voters are dissatisfied with government, they often blame their chief executive. Since World War II, three presidents have been defeated in their run for a second term: Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, and George H. W. Bush.



Demonstrators protested Governor Scott Walker's budget and limitation of bargaining rights for unions. However, not all Wisconsin voters agreed with the demonstrators. Many approved of Walker's efforts to reel in government spending. Some others disliked Walker's policies but also felt wary of recalling an elected official so soon. Ultimately, voters elected to keep Walker in office.

## 13.3 The Growth of Presidential Power

The U.S. president today is often viewed as the most powerful national leader in the world. At one time, however, the U.S. president held far less power. During the 1800s, with a few exceptions, presidents acted mainly as “chief clerks.” Other than carrying out the will of Congress, they assumed little authority other than those powers explicitly granted them by the Constitution.

### Powers Granted the President Under the Constitution

The Constitution spells out the president’s formal powers, which are listed in this diagram. One of the most important powers is that of commander in chief of the armed forces. The president, a civilian official, maintains control over the military and has ultimate responsibility for military decisions.

The president also has the power to grant **reprieves** and **pardons**. A reprieve is a postponement of punishment, whereas a pardon is a release from punishment. Presidents may also grant **amnesty**, or a blanket pardon, to people facing prosecution. President Jimmy Carter, for example, granted amnesty to young men who had fled the country to avoid the military draft during the Vietnam War.

The president’s greatest formal power stems from Article II, Section 3 of the Constitution. This section directs the president to “take Care that the Laws be faithfully executed.” Much as the Elastic Clause gives broad powers to Congress, this “Take Care” Clause grants the president flexible powers to enforce the law and fulfill other executive duties. Not surprisingly, the first president to define how the powers of the office would be used was George Washington.

### George Washington (1789–1797): Establishing Precedents

As the nation’s first president, Washington knew that his every action would help shape the office for future generations. “I walk on untrodden ground,” he observed. “There is scarcely any part of my conduct which may not hereafter be drawn into precedent.”

One precedent involved his formal title. Washington insisted on being addressed simply as “Mr. President,” rather than “Your Highness” or some other majestic title. Rather than ruling like an aloof monarch, Washington traveled the country to maintain contact with citizens. He also declined to seek reelection after serving two terms in office, setting a precedent that would last until 1940.

Washington established the model for how the executive branch should be run. He appointed the

## Presidential Powers

The Constitution lists various presidential powers, either exercised by the president alone or shared with Congress. The president also has many other powers that have evolved over time through custom and practice.

### Powers of the President

#### Sole Powers

- Act as commander in chief of the armed forces
- Commission military officers
- Grant reprieves and pardons for most federal offenses
- Call Congress into special session
- Receive foreign ambassadors
- Ensure that laws of Congress are faithfully executed
- Exercise executive power
- Appoint officials to executive office



#### Powers Shared with the Senate

- Make treaties
- Appoint ambassadors, judges, and high officials

#### Powers Shared with Congress as a Whole

- Approve legislation



George Washington's great dignity and sense of authority lent power to the office of president. He was immortalized in numerous statues and sculptures. This 1882 statue of him stands outside of Federal Hall in New York in the same spot he stood when he was inaugurated.

first department heads and brought them together to create the first **cabinet**. He negotiated the new government's first treaty. He appointed its first judges. He received its first ambassadors. He signed its first laws. And he issued the first veto.

Perhaps most importantly, Washington made sure that the president would be respected as a figure of authority. He did this by projecting an air of great dignity and strength. In addition, he took tough action when necessary to ensure that acts of Congress were "faithfully executed."

Washington's determination to enforce the law was tested by the Whiskey Rebellion. In 1791, Congress passed a law that taxed sales of whiskey. Farmers in western Pennsylvania who made whiskey refused to pay the tax and even attacked federal tax collectors. Washington personally led 13,000 militia troops into western Pennsylvania to put down the rebellion. In this way, he affirmed the power of the president as the nation's chief law enforcer and commander in chief.



Andrew Jackson was a powerful president who often battled with Congress and used his veto power to block legislation. Critics called him "King Andrew." But his use of the veto to shape public policy set a precedent for future presidents.

### **Andrew Jackson (1829–1837): Champion of "The People"**

Like Washington, Andrew Jackson believed in using the powers given to the president to the fullest. Jackson was elected president at a time when many states had eliminated property requirements for voting. As a result, he was the first occupant of the White House who could claim to have been elected by "the people."

Once in office, Jackson saw his role as the champion of the common people. As such, he often clashed with Congress. In these power struggles, he turned to a tool seldom used by earlier presidents: the veto. Previous presidents had vetoed acts of Congress only when they viewed them as unconstitutional. Jackson vetoed legislation simply because he disagreed with it or thought it ran counter to the people's interests.

During his two terms in office, Jackson vetoed 12 bills, more than the total number of bills struck down by all of his predecessors combined. His most famous veto involved a bill renewing the charter of

the National Bank of the United States. Supporters of the bank argued it was needed to stabilize the nation's economy. Jackson believed that the bank was designed to benefit the wealthy at the expense of the people. In a message explaining his veto, Jackson wrote,

*It is to be regretted that the rich and powerful too often bend the acts of government to their selfish purposes. Distinctions in society will always exist under every just government . . . But when the laws undertake to . . . make the rich richer and the potent more powerful, the humble members of society—the farmers, mechanics, and laborers—who have neither the time nor the means of securing like favors to themselves, have a right to complain of the injustice of their Government.*

—Andrew Jackson, 1832

Critics of Jackson's use of this presidential power dubbed him "King Andrew." Nevertheless, since Jackson's day, the idea that presidents can and will use their veto power to shape public policy has become an accepted feature of American politics.

#### **Abraham Lincoln (1861–1865): Savior of the Union**

Abraham Lincoln became one of the most powerful presidents in U.S. history, in large part because his election triggered a national crisis. By the time he took office in 1861, seven southern states had seceded from the United States. In his inaugural speech, Lincoln argued that no state "can lawfully get out of the Union." He went on to say,

*I therefore consider that . . . the Union is unbroken; and to the extent of my ability, I shall take care, as the Constitution itself expressly enjoins upon me, that the laws of the Union be faithfully executed in all the States. Doing this I deem to be only a simple duty on my part; and I shall perform it, so far as practicable, unless my rightful masters, the American people, shall . . . direct the contrary.*

—Abraham Lincoln,  
First Inaugural Address, 1861

Lincoln used all of his powers to carry out this duty. Once in office, he spent money. He raised an army. He ordered the navy to blockade southern ports. He declared **martial law** in Maryland and

other states, placing the people there under military rule. He shut down newspapers that advocated secession. He suspended habeas corpus so that people suspected of treason could be arrested and jailed by the military without worrying about due process.

All of these actions were taken by the new president without prior approval of Congress. Moreover, when a federal court ruled in *Ex parte Merryman* (1861) that suspension of habeas corpus was unconstitutional, Lincoln ignored the ruling.

Likewise, Lincoln issued his Emancipation Proclamation without approval from Congress or even his full cabinet. When the president showed a draft of the proclamation to his cabinet members, their response was mixed. Some members supported it, while others were strongly opposed. Nevertheless, Lincoln went ahead with the plan. On January 1, 1863, he released the proclamation as an **executive order**, a rule issued by the president that has the force of law. With the order, Lincoln transformed the war for the Union into an antislavery crusade.

Lincoln's many critics argued that he had far exceeded his constitutional powers. Lincoln, however, believed that extreme measures were justified to preserve the Union and the Constitution. By his actions, he demonstrated that during a national emergency, a president might exercise almost unlimited powers.



Abraham Lincoln expanded the power of the presidency during the Civil War. Here, he meets with officers at Antietam in 1862.





Theodore Roosevelt was a powerful president who used the office as a "bully pulpit" to advance his reform agenda.

### Theodore Roosevelt (1901–1909): The "Bully Pulpit"

The presidents who followed Lincoln acted more as clerks than executive officers. Then, in the early 1900s, Theodore Roosevelt breathed new life into the office. Roosevelt used the presidency as a platform from which to speak out on important public issues. "I suppose my critics will call that preaching," he said, "but I have got such a bully pulpit!"

Roosevelt was a stirring speaker who loved being seen and heard. He also knew how to work the media. He held daily press briefings. He let photographers take pictures of him at work and play. As a result, his name and smiling image were everywhere.

Roosevelt believed the president should act as a "steward of the public welfare." To fulfill that role, he took a broad view of his powers. He later wrote,

*I did and caused to be done many things not previously done by the President . . . I did not usurp [seize] power, but I did greatly broaden the use of executive power. In other words, I acted for the public welfare, I acted for the common well-being of all our people, whenever and in whatever manner was necessary, unless prevented by direct constitutional or legislative prohibition.*

—Theodore Roosevelt: *An Autobiography*, 1913

As the public's steward, Roosevelt created government agencies to ensure safer food and drugs. He promoted conservation of the nation's resources. He pursued an active foreign policy in the belief that the

United States was destined to be a great power. The public was so impressed by his energetic leadership that he was reelected in 1904 by the greatest margin of votes in U.S. history up to that time.

### Franklin D. Roosevelt (1933–1945):

#### Maker of the Modern Presidency

Theodore Roosevelt planted the seeds that would flower during the presidency of his distant cousin, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, commonly known as FDR. More than any president before him, FDR transformed the role of chief executive from chief clerk to what we think of as the modern presidency.

Like Lincoln, FDR came into office during a time of crisis: the Great Depression. During his first 100 days in office, Roosevelt called Congress into special session and presented it with 15 major bills. Congress passed them all. Later, he won passage of such groundbreaking programs as Social Security and unemployment insurance. In promoting his New Deal reforms, he dramatically expanded the role of the president. As political scientists have put it,

*The president's constitutional obligation to see "that the laws be faithfully executed" became, during Roosevelt's presidency, virtually a responsibility to shape the laws before executing them.*



Franklin Roosevelt's great personal charm helped win public support for expanded government power. Here, he sits by a microphone as he gives the first of his famous fireside chats.

Part of FDR's power lay in his style as president. Whereas previous presidents had used formal speeches to get their ideas across, FDR addressed the American people directly, in their own homes, through a series of radio broadcasts known as "fireside chats." In these chats, Roosevelt spoke to listeners in a warm, engaging manner, explaining his ideas and asking for their support. In this way, many Americans came to see the president not as a distant leader, but as a friend who understood their concerns.

During World War II, FDR expanded his powers still further. But rather than objecting to this growth of presidential power, most Americans applauded Roosevelt as a "savior." As one political scientist observed, "The argument was simple: The more power the executive had, the more good he could do."

Since the end of World War II, the presidency has been powerful, no matter who is in the White House. By the 1970s, some critics of presidential power voiced concerns about the rise of an "imperial presidency," meaning presidents acted more like emperors than constitutional leaders. Nonetheless, the president today is still limited in his powers to those set down in the Constitution more than two centuries ago.

## ■ 13.4 The Modern President's Job

President John F. Kennedy once said, "No easy problem ever comes to the President of the United States. If they are easy to solve, somebody else has solved them." Lyndon Johnson, who assumed the presidency after Kennedy's assassination, called the job an "awesome burden." After looking at the modern president's many duties, one scholar noted, "All that is missing is Mover of Mountains and Raiser of the Dead."

### The Many Roles of the President

Given the complexities of the modern world, the job of president has grown more challenging. To carry out their duties as chief executive, presidents must assume many different roles. The diagram "The President's Many Roles" shows the various roles the president plays on any given day.

**Chief executive.** As the country's chief executive, the president acts much like the head of a large

corporation. In this role, the president presides over the federal **bureaucracy**, or the various agencies and organizations that carry on the daily business of government. To keep that bureaucracy running, the president is responsible for appointing close to 2,000 federal officials. These officials, in turn, oversee the work of nearly 2 million civilian employees of the federal government.

As chief executive, the president has the power to issue executive orders. A president is most likely to use this power during an emergency or when Congress fails to take action on an important issue. For example, in 1948, Congress was divided over a bill to desegregate the armed forces. Rather than waiting for Congress to act, President Harry Truman issued an executive order abolishing segregation in the military.

**Chief of state.** The president also acts as chief of state, the ceremonial leader of the government. In many countries, different individuals hold the positions of chief executive and chief of state. In Great Britain, for example, the prime minister is the chief executive, while the monarch is the chief of state. In the United States, however, the president wears both hats.

As chief of state, the president represents the United States at official functions, both at home and abroad. For example, the president greets foreign leaders and hosts state dinners at the White House. Chief of state duties also include acts to promote national spirit, as when the president lights the national Christmas tree or throws out the first pitch of the major league baseball season.

**Commander in chief.** The job of commander in chief is one of the president's most challenging roles. As head of the armed forces, the president is responsible for the operations of the U.S. military and the overall security of the nation.

The framers believed it was important for the nation's top civilian leader to have control over the armed forces. But they also set limits on the president's control by giving Congress the power to declare war. Since World War II, however, the president has often committed troops to action without a formal declaration of war. In 1973, Congress passed the War Powers Act, which requires the president to get congressional approval to wage war.

But presidents still find ways to stretch this law. As one scholar noted, the military role of the president is "whatever Congress lets him get away with."

**Chief diplomat.** Another key role for the president is that of the nation's chief diplomat. In this role, the president oversees U.S. foreign policy, holds talks with foreign leaders, and negotiates treaties.

The Constitution directs the president to seek the advice and consent of the Senate in making treaties. Taking this wording literally, President Washington went to the Senate in 1789 to seek its advice on a proposed treaty with the Creek Indians. After some debate, the senators referred the matter to a committee. Washington left in disgust, preferring after that

## The President's Many Roles

The president performs many roles as head of the executive branch. Here are the most important roles the president plays.



to communicate with the Senate in writing. All other presidents have followed his example. Presidents do consult with individual senators, however, and they must still obtain the consent of the Senate to get any treaty approved.

**Chief policymaker.** Since Franklin Roosevelt's administration, the president has served as chief policymaker for the nation. Although Congress makes the laws, the president has significant influence over the legislative process. The president normally sets a policy agenda for Congress in the annual State of the Union address. The president may also propose legislation or pressure members of Congress to support or oppose certain bills. Other executive powers, such as the power to call Congress into special session and to veto bills, are more key tools the president can use to shape policy.

**Chief manager of the economy.** The president has no formal power over the economy. However, the president does work with Congress to write a federal

budget and set tax policy. The president also appoints members of the Federal Reserve Board, which works to control the money supply and keep the economy growing at a sustainable pace.

**Chief of party.** The president is the leader of his or her political party. Presidents tend to have deep loyalty to their party and exert great influence over party members in Congress. They typically work to ensure that their party does well in congressional elections, in hopes of gaining or strengthening a congressional majority. They may take part in campaign fundraising or other campaign events. They also typically reward loyal party members with political favors or appointments to federal office.

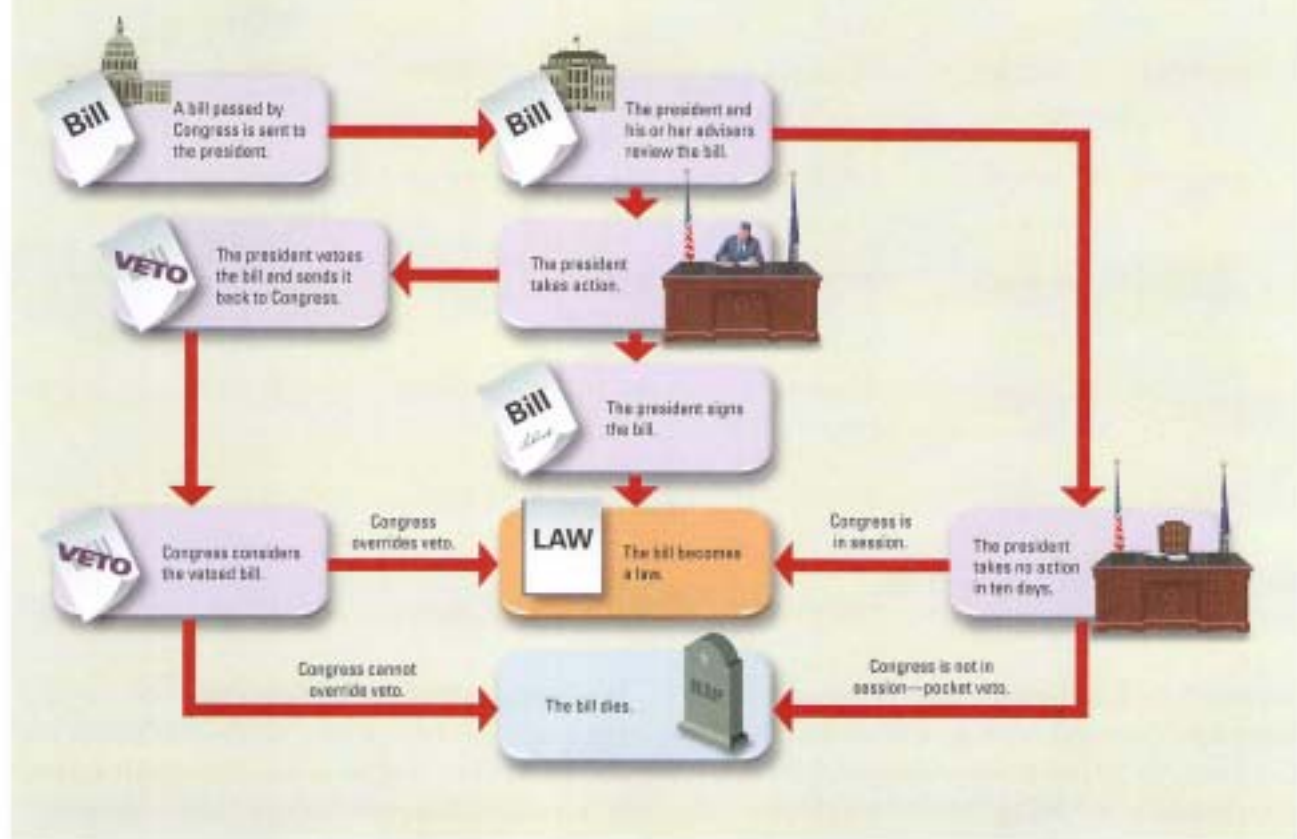
**Chief citizen.** The president is also the nation's chief citizen. In that role, the president strives to embody American ideals and to serve the nation by acting in its best interests. In times of crisis or tragedy, the president as chief citizen works to inform, inspire, and comfort the American people.



One of the president's roles is to reassure and comfort the nation at times of crisis. Barack Obama fulfilled this duty in 2012 after Superstorm Sandy hit parts of the Northeast. Here, Obama and Governor Chris Christie console residents of New Jersey.

## How a Bill Lives or Dies at the Hands of the President

The president's power to approve or veto legislation gives the chief executive an important role in the legislative process. As this diagram shows, a bill may pass through various steps after it is sent to the White House.



### Presidential Checks on the Other Branches

The president also plays an important role as head of the executive branch in the federal system of checks and balances. As chief executive, the president can check the power of the legislative branch by approving or vetoing legislation passed by Congress. Likewise, the president can influence the power of the judicial branch by nominating judges to the Supreme Court and other federal courts.

The presidential veto is a powerful tool for influencing policy. The president is required to sign or veto a bill within ten days of receiving it from Congress. If the president fails to act within that time, the bill automatically becomes law. However, the president only needs to veto the bill if Congress is in session. If Congress adjourns during those ten

days, the president can do nothing and simply let the bill die. This is known as a **pocket veto**.

The president can also check the power of Congress by invoking executive privilege. Although this power is not formally granted in the Constitution, it has developed over time through custom and practice. Executive privilege allows the president to deny access to White House documents, even when Congress wants to see them, on the grounds that keeping such records confidential is vital to the operations of the executive branch. The Supreme Court has recognized the right of presidents to invoke executive privilege, though not in all cases. For example, the Court refused to back President Nixon's use of executive privilege during the Watergate Scandal.

## The White House

The White House complex consists of the executive residence at the center, with the West Wing and East Wing at either side. The West Wing contains the president's Oval Office, the vice president's office, and the Cabinet Room. The East Wing contains additional office space.



### 13.5 The Organization of the Executive Branch

Without help, the president could never wear so many hats, much less faithfully execute the laws of Congress. As chief executive, the president both oversees and is assisted by the vast bureaucracy that makes up and manages the executive branch. This branch consists of four main groups: the White House staff, the Executive Office of the President, the executive departments, and independent agencies. The diagram "The Executive Branch" shows how the executive branch is organized.

#### The White House Staff

The White House staff consists of about 400 people. It includes the president's personal lawyer, press secretary, various speechwriters, and many assistants. Many of these staffers have offices in the West Wing of the White House. The most powerful staff member is the **chief of staff**, who is considered the president's most loyal aide.

Presidents depend on the White House staff to provide them with guidance and advice on a wide range of issues. The chief of staff also serves as a

"gatekeeper," controlling who gets to talk to the president and who does not.

#### The Executive Office of the President

The Executive Office of the President (EOP) was created in 1939 by Congress to provide support staff to the president. Today it has about 1,800 employees.

The agencies that make up the EOP perform a variety of specialized tasks for the president. The largest, the Office of Management and Budget, helps the president prepare an annual budget proposal to Congress.

Other key agencies within the EOP include the Council of Economic Advisers (CEA) and the National Security Council (NSC). The CEA provides advice on the economy. The NSC advises the president on foreign and defense policy.

Presidents can also add new agencies to the Executive Office of the President to carry out specific goals of their **administration**. For example, George W. Bush created the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, which coordinates public and private efforts to provide social services. Later, Barack Obama established the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau to educate consumers about financial products and services.

## The Executive Branch

As head of the executive branch, the president oversees the work of many executive officials, staff members, and departments, some of which are listed below. There are 15 executive departments, each led by an official appointed by the president. The heads of departments make up the president's cabinet.



### White House staff

Chief of Staff  
 Director of Communications  
 Press Secretary  
 White House Counsel  
 Staff Secretary

### Executive Office of the President

Office of the Vice President  
 National Security Council  
 Council of Economic Advisers  
 Council on Environmental Quality  
 Office of Administration  
 Office of Management and Budget  
 Office of National Drug Control Policy  
 Office of Science and Technology Policy  
 Office of the United States Trade Representative



### Independent Agencies

Corporation for National and Community Service  
 Environmental Protection Agency  
 Farm Credit Administration  
 Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation  
 Federal Labor Relations Authority  
 Institute of Museum and Library Services  
 National Aeronautics and Space Administration  
 National Endowment for the Arts  
 Peace Corps  
 Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation  
 Selective Service System  
 Social Security Administration  
 U.S. Postal Service



### Executive Departments

**Agriculture:** Inspect food and help farmers  
**Commerce:** Promote trade and technology  
**Defense:** Provide military forces for national defense  
**Education:** Fund and develop public education  
**Energy:** Advise on energy policy and development  
**Health and Human Services:** Promote national health programs and services  
**Homeland Security:** Monitor and provide security within U.S. borders  
**Housing and Urban Development:** Enforce housing laws and manage public housing  
**Interior:** Manage natural resources and public lands  
**Justice:** Enforce federal law and handle federal court cases  
**Labor:** Enforce labor laws and promote worker welfare  
**State:** Advise on foreign policy and foreign affairs  
**Transportation:** Develop and regulate highway and transit systems  
**Treasury:** Formulate tax and financial policy  
**Veterans Affairs:** Provide benefits and services to military veterans



## The Executive Departments

The **executive departments** make up a third group of organizations in the executive branch. These departments carry out the work of government in broad areas of public policy, such as agriculture, commerce, and labor.

Each department also contains federal agencies that target more specific policy areas within the department's general focus. For example, the Federal Bureau of Investigation is an agency that exists within the Justice Department, while the U.S. Mint is part of the Treasury Department.

During Washington's presidency, there were just three executive departments: War, State, and Treasury. Washington met with these departments regularly to debate issues. Today there are 15 executive departments. The newest is the Department of Homeland Security, created in 2003. All 15 department heads are members of the cabinet, which may also include the vice president and the national security adviser. As cabinets have grown in size, presidents have become less inclined to hold regular meetings. Instead, they are more likely to turn to White House staff and other personal advisers for help in crafting policy.

## Independent Agencies

The executive branch also includes dozens of **independent agencies** that help implement federal policy. These groups are considered independent because they do not fall within executive departments, though they answer directly to the president. These groups go by various names, including agency, commission, administration, authority, and corporation.

One of the largest independent agencies is the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). This agency was created in 1958 to help the United States compete with the Soviet Union in the space race. Other well-known independent agencies include the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the Peace Corps, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

Some independent agencies create and enforce regulations. The FCC, for example, has jurisdiction over channels of communication, including radio and television, and the FDA was established to promote public health through regulating consumable food and pharmaceutical products.

A few federal agencies are run like businesses. They depend on revenues that they generate themselves rather than on tax dollars. The U.S. Postal Service is one such agency.

## 13.6 Local, State, and Federal Bureaucracies

Government at every level depends on a bureaucracy to carry out public policies. Yet bureaucracy is one aspect of government that Americans love to hate. According to critics, government bureaucracies are too large, too impersonal, and too self-serving to accomplish much. As Senator Eugene McCarthy once quipped, "The only thing that saves us from the bureaucracy is its inefficiency." But is this a fair assessment of local, state, and federal bureaucracies?

### Who Are Civil Servants, and What Do They Do?

Bureaucracies are run by **civil servants**, or civilian employees working in government agencies. In popular culture, civil servants are often portrayed as mindless paper pushers who insist on following petty rules and creating mounds of paperwork, all while ignoring human needs. In reality, most government employees are hardworking, highly skilled individuals who are dedicated to their jobs.



AmeriCorps is a volunteer service organization run by a federal agency, the Corporation for National and Community Service. Here, AmeriCorps volunteers gather for a national day of service in honor of Martin Luther King Jr.

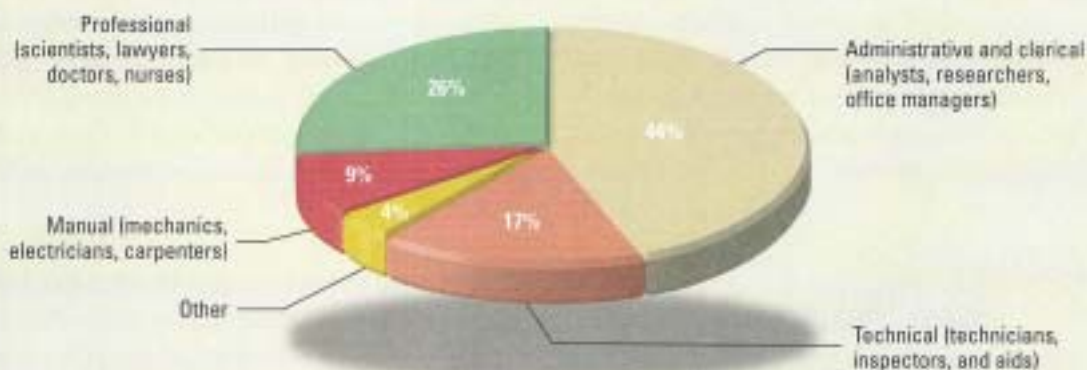


## Federal Workers

The federal government employs many kinds of workers, including this ranger leading a tour at a national park. The graph shows the percentage of government workers in various fields.



The Federal Workforce, 2012



Source: U.S. Office of Personnel Management.

The work done by civil servants ranges from nursing and photography to engineering and economic analysis. Civil servants are responsible for providing many of the government services that Americans need and want. For example, public school teachers, park rangers, firefighters, and health inspectors are all government employees.

### What Are the Sources of Bureaucratic Power?

For a bureaucracy to be effective, it must have the power it needs to do its job. This power stems from various sources, including those described here.

**Legislative and budgetary support.** A bureaucracy relies on laws and adequate funding to support its work. Without adequate funds, for example, a public school district may not be able to hire enough teachers for its students.

**Interest group support.** Government agencies can gain or lose power depending on the response of interest groups to their work. For example, the power of the Environmental Protection Agency may

be enhanced by support from environmental groups. Or opposition from interest groups that favor fewer environmental controls may weaken it.

**Expertise of bureaucrats.** The ideal bureaucracy is staffed by workers who are expert at their jobs. For a bureaucracy to work well, employees must know what they are doing. For that reason, many government jobs require applicants to pass competitive exams.

**Longevity or permanence.** The longer a government agency exists, the more likely it is to enjoy substantial power. In the same way, seniority strengthens the hand of government workers, who tend to stay in their jobs for many years. The average federal employee has been at his or her job for around 17 years.

**Effective leadership.** Federal agencies typically thrive under effective leaders. Conversely, they flounder when their leadership is poor. Without effective leadership, NASA would not have been able to land a man on the moon in 1969, just eight years after President Kennedy made that achievement a national goal.

*Citizen demand.* Concerned citizens can help expand and strengthen bureaucracy by demanding government action to solve a problem. For example, public concerns about the safety of workers led Congress to form the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) in the early 1970s. This federal agency enforces health and safety regulations in the workplace.

The power of bureaucracies is not unlimited, however. Ultimately, bureaucracies work under the direction of an elected or appointed chief executive, whether a mayor, a city manager, a governor, or the president. Legislative bodies also monitor their operations. On several occasions, Congress has held hearings to investigate the work of federal agencies. To help weed out corruption, Congress has also passed laws to protect **whistle-blowers**, or employees who expose wrongdoing.

### Is the Growth of Bureaucracy Out of Control?

Bureaucracy has grown at all levels of government since this country was founded. Much of this growth has occurred since World War II, particularly since the 1960s, as government has provided more services to the American people. Although many people complain about the growth of bureaucracy, they still want the services that civil servants provide.

In recent years, the number of federal civilian government employees has leveled off. The size of the federal workforce today is about the same as it was in 1960. This shrinking of the federal bureaucracy has been made possible by **privatization**, or the practice of contracting private companies to do jobs once done by civil servants. Some 13 million people now work indirectly for the federal bureaucracy, either on contract with private companies or as state and local employees working under federal funding.

## Teen Workers! You have a right to a safe and healthy workplace.



- Know your workplace rights.
- Talk to your employer about safety and health issues at work.
- Stay alert and work safely.
- Get safety and health training.
- Visit the OSHA Teen Workers website at [www.osha.gov/teens](http://www.osha.gov/teens)

**OSHA** Occupational Safety and Health Administration  
U.S. Department of Labor

OSHA is the federal agency that helps ensure the safety and health of all workers, including teens, on the job. OSHA provides information, resources and guidance to employers and employees.

For more information, talk to your employer or call

**1-800-321-OSHA**

[www.osha.gov/teens](http://www.osha.gov/teens)

(TTY) 1-877-684-6822

### How Have Bureaucracies Affected Our Lives?

Many Americans have a story to tell about a negative experience with a public agency. At the same time, most can also recall a time when they desperately needed the services that civil servants provide. New Yorkers felt this way in 2005, when public transit workers went on strike. Some 7 million commuters suddenly lacked public transport. Many had to walk miles to get to work. When the strike ended two days later, commuters had a new appreciation for the value of public services.

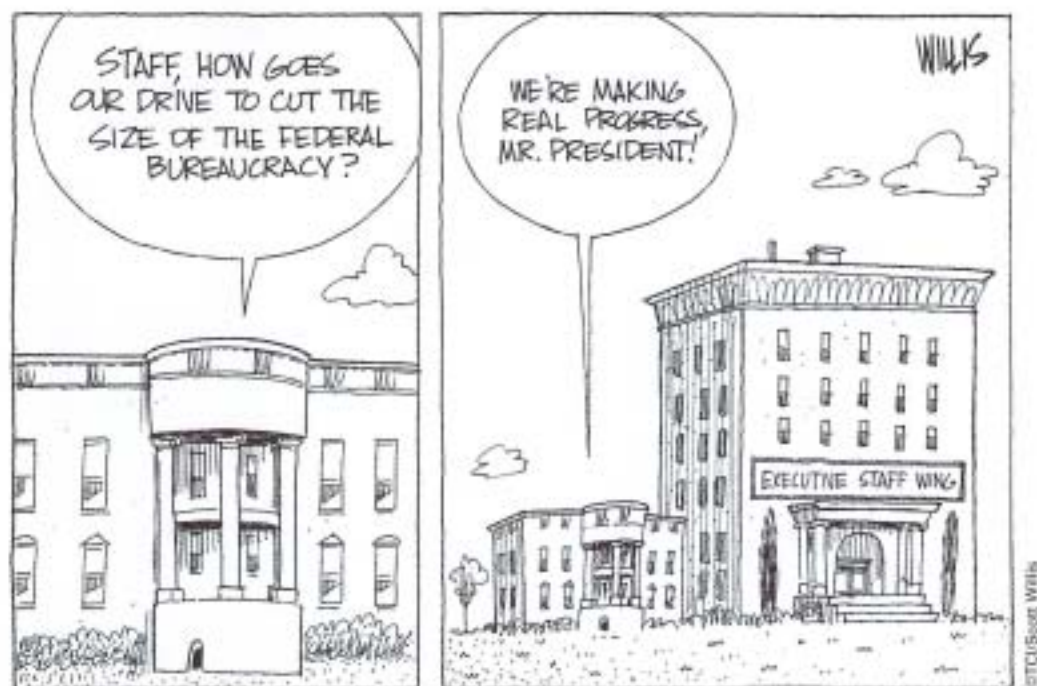
On the other hand, government bureaucracy has improved the lives of many Americans. In the past few decades, it has helped achieve the following:

- fewer people living in poverty
- better air and water quality
- more rights for women and minorities
- better access to health care for the elderly
- safer food and drugs
- lower crime rates
- higher high school graduation rates
- elimination or prevention of diseases such as polio
- higher rates of home ownership
- development of the Internet
- safer highways
- more children in preschool

Concerns about workplace safety led to the creation of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) during the 1970s. Today, OSHA continues to ensure safe workplaces for Americans. This poster informs teens about their rights at work.

A century ago, many Americans lived in filthy slums that bred disease and worked in dangerous factories with few safety provisions. That has all changed for the better through the efforts of

government agencies. Despite frequent complaints about bureaucratic waste and mismanagement, most Americans would be reluctant to give up the benefits that bureaucracy provides.



Presidents often talk about reducing the federal bureaucracy, but most find it difficult to cut executive staff.

## Summary

The executive branch enforces the laws and carries out government policy. A chief executive leads this branch and oversees the work of the government bureaucracy.

**Chief executives** Mayors, governors, and presidents are all chief executives. They manage executive affairs at their level of government.

**Presidential power** The president has certain powers under the Constitution. Over time, however, presidential power has expanded as a result of custom and practice. Today the president enjoys powers beyond those listed in the Constitution.

**Presidential roles** The president plays many roles as head of the executive branch. Among these are chief executive, commander in chief, chief diplomat, and chief policymaker.

**Organization of the executive branch** The executive branch contains many officials, departments, and agencies. The president oversees the operations of these various groups, with assistance from advisers.

**Bureaucracy** Most Americans benefit from the services that local, state, and federal bureaucracies provide, despite complaints about bureaucratic inefficiency.

## Do you want to be president?

It is often said that any person born in the United States can grow up to be president. This is part of the "American dream." But do young people today want the job? To answer that question, ABC News and *Weekly Reader* conducted an opinion poll of teenagers.

The following article describes the results of that survey. As you read it and look at the graphs, ask yourself, **Would I want the job of president someday? If the answer is no, ask, What kind of person should be elected to that powerful office?**

## Run the Country? Most Teens Would Pass

by Dalia Sussman

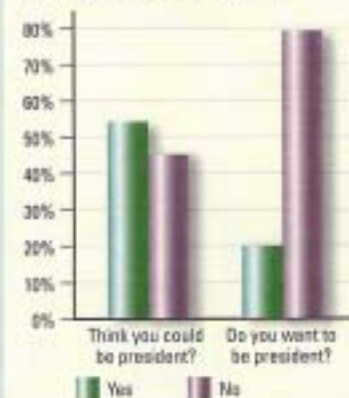
At least one aspect of the American dream isn't quite what it's cracked up to be: While most teenagers in this country do think they could grow up to be president of the United States, the vast majority wouldn't want the job.

Fifty-four percent of 12- to 17-year-olds in this ABC News/*Weekly Reader* poll think they could grow up to be president. That includes equal numbers of boys and girls, and more, 62 percent, of teens of color, despite a history of white male presidents.

But an overwhelming majority of teens—nearly eight in 10—aren't interested in the job.

Why not? The top reason by far, cited by 40 percent, is either a lack of interest in politics or other career plans. An additional 20 percent say there's too much pressure or responsibility in the

Growing Up to Be President

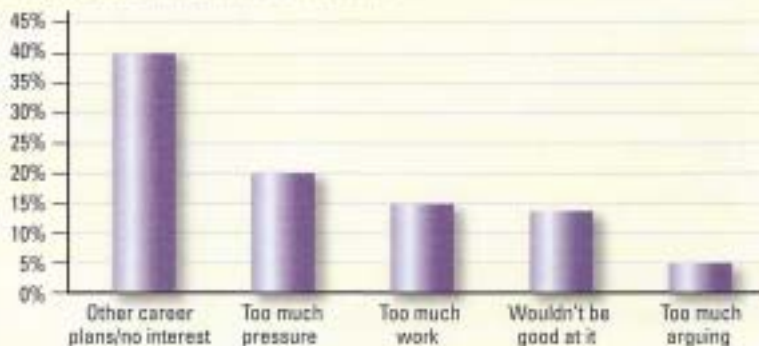


Source: ABC News/*Weekly Reader*.

job, 15 percent say it's too much work, and 14 percent think they wouldn't be good at it. Five percent say there's "just too much arguing" involved . . .

Younger teens are somewhat more optimistic about their prospects of getting elected president, and are twice as likely to want the job. Kids age 12-14 say they could be president by

Why Teens Don't Want to Be President



Source: ABC News/*Weekly Reader*.

a 17-point margin (58–41 percent); those age 15–17 are evenly split. And 26 percent of the younger group would like to be president, compared with 13 percent of older teens.

Girls are 15 points more likely than boys to say they're not interested in the country's top job because of other career plans or a disinterest in politics. Boys are more apt than girls either to say that it's too much responsibility or too much work . . .

But lack of interest in politics does not translate into lack of interest in this year's [the 2004] presidential election.

Indeed, most teens, 57 percent, say they're at least somewhat interested in the campaign. And for good reason: seventy-two percent say that in terms of an impact on their lives, it does matter who gets elected . . .

Interest is higher among teens with college-educated parents—and it's twice as high (66 to 32 percent) among kids who think it matters in their life who's president, compared with those who don't . . .

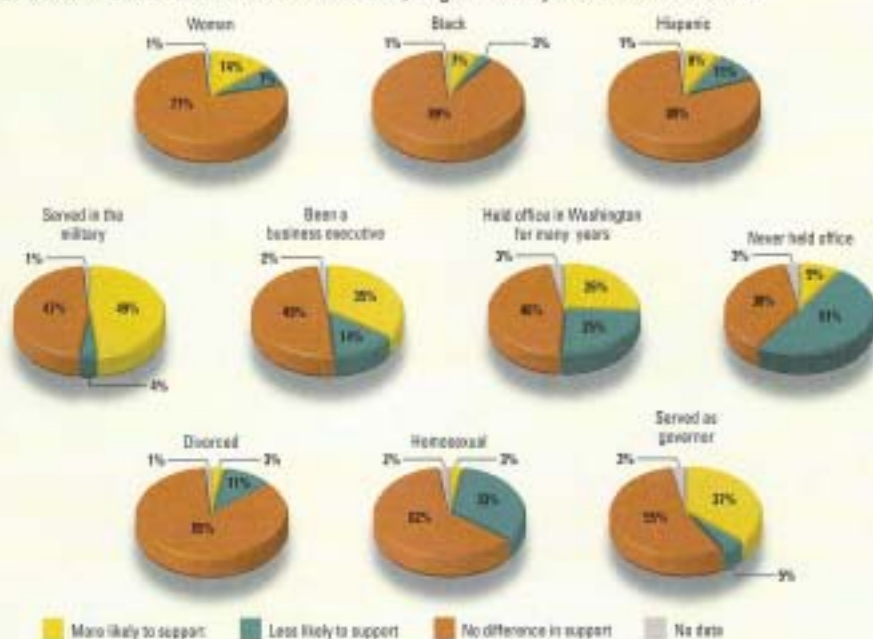
In addition to the responses mentioned above, some respondents gave other reasons for not wanting to be president. Some

reflect the current state of the world—"I don't like war"; another, perhaps reflecting the Clinton years, was "too many scandals." One respondent cited security fears—"I don't want to get assassinated." Another critiqued the country's political structure: "I think that no one should have that much power." And one other summed it up neatly: "It doesn't sound like fun."

*The poll was conducted by telephone January 7–11, 2004, among a random national sample of 505 12- to 17-year-olds. The results have a 4.5-point error margin.*

### Traits that Appeal to Voters—or Not

In a 2011 survey, voters indicated their degree of willingness to support presidential candidates with certain traits. Below are the results, organized by candidates' traits.



Source: Pew Research Center for the People and the Press.