

Head of State

As head of state, the president represents the nation and performs many ceremonial roles; some of these roles include serving as host to visiting kings, queens, and heads of governments. Other ceremonial duties may include such events as throwing out the first pitch at a baseball game, lighting the national Christmas tree, awarding medals and awards, or making important public service statements. This role of the President is crucial because for many in the United States, and especially those billions of people outside the United States, the President is the collective image of the United States. As Head of State, the President isn't a politician, he or she is America.



President Ford welcomes the Queen of England

Chief Executive

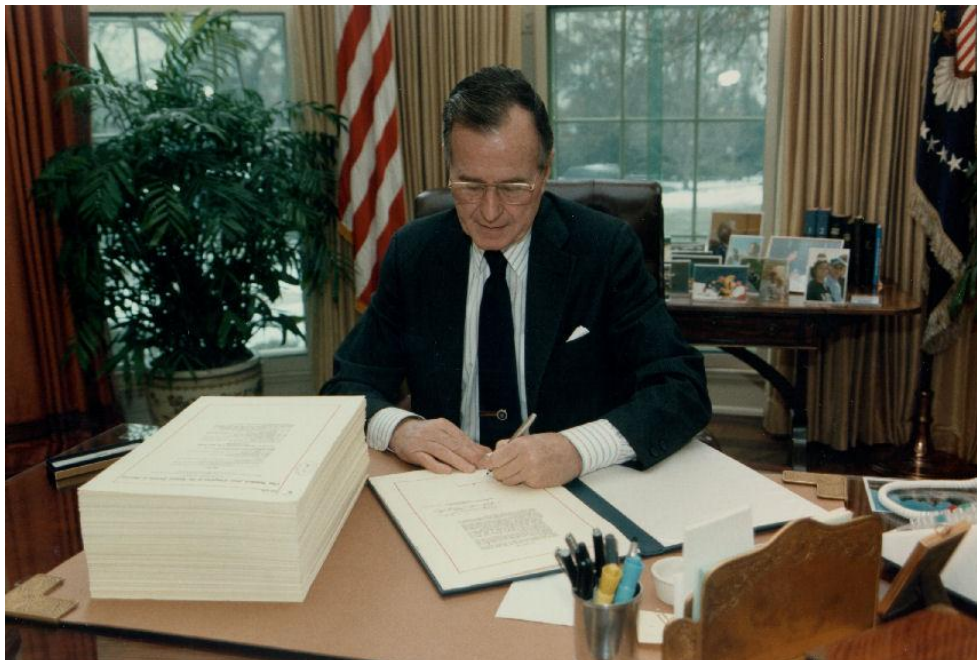
As the Nation's Chief Executive, the President sees that the laws of Congress are carried out. This is a responsibility defined in the nation's Constitution. The laws range over a wide array of areas of public concern – from Social Security, taxes, housing, environmental concerns, energy, and civil rights to health care, education and consumer safety. To oversee the laws, the President indirectly is in charge of more than 2,000,000 employees of the federal government that have jobs in the many departments in the executive branch. The President may also issue executive orders – which are orders that have the force of law. In seeing that the orders and laws are carried out, the President has the power to appoint and remove federal officials. Additionally, as Chief Executive, the President wields the power grant reprieves or pardons from legal punishment for federal crimes. The President may also grant amnesty to a group.



President Kennedy meets with Civil Rights Leaders regarding federal action

Chief Legislator

While the President and the Executive Branch of the government do not write or pass the laws, the President is still considered the Chief Legislator due to the enormous influence the President has. Congress expects the executive branch to propose legislation it wishes to see enacted. The President often uses the State of the Union address to Congress to announce what he or she wishes to work on during the upcoming year. The President can also influence the legislative process by handing out political favors such as a visit to the home state of a member of Congress, support for a re-election campaign, or proposing a new federal project that could bring millions of dollars and jobs to a member's state or district. However, the most powerful weapon that the President has as Chief Legislator is the powerful veto which can strike down new legislation. A threat of a veto can often alter legislation well before a President would ever have to use the veto.



President George H.W. Bush Signing a Bill into Law

Economic Planner

The role of Economic Planner is one that was new to the Presidency in the 20th Century. With the Presidency of Franklin Roosevelt, the role of Economic Planner was established through Roosevelt's New Deal. The President has steadily gained power since the 1940s to deal with economic issues and problems. Today's Presidents prepare the federal budget for each fiscal year – deciding what the government will spend on its many programs and services. Depending on the level of income, the job can be extremely complicated due to having to decide how to divide, expand, or cut money from the programs.



President Clinton discusses his plan for cutting the Federal Deficit

Party Leader

The President's political party expects the chief executive to be a party leader. The President is the most visible member of the political party, so many will judge the party on the President's actions, behaviors, successes, and failures. The President will give speeches to help party members, may attend fund-raising activities for the party or candidates, and will also select the national chairperson for the party. One of the aspects of Party Leader is that the President will appoint members of their party to powerful government jobs that are available. This ensures that supporters will remain committed to a President's programs. Key jobs that the President fills include the Cabinet positions such as the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Labor.



President Bush and his Cabinet

Chief Diplomat

The President directs the foreign policy of the United States, making key decisions about the relations the United States has with other countries in the world. In this role, the President is the Chief Diplomat. Congress also has powers relating to foreign policy, so it is a constant tug of war with the President over who will exercise control of the country's foreign policy. The President has the advantage because they have access to more information such as classified information from the CIA, the State Department, the Defense Department, and the National Security Council. In addition, the ability to take quick and decisive action gives the President the advantage. There is only one President, but 435 representatives and 100 senators, so the process is much easier with the President on deciding what to do. In addition, the President has the ability to make treaties, make executive agreements, and can recognize the legitimacy of foreign governments.



President Carter brokering the Israel-Egypt Peace Accords

Commander in Chief

The Constitution makes the President the Commander in Chief of all the armed forces of the United States. Generals, admirals, and other military leaders are responsible for the day-to-day duties of the armed forces, but the President is responsible for key military decisions. Only Congress can declare war, but the President may send in the armed forces into different conflicts without the approval of Congress for certain situations. The President has the authority to use nuclear weapons, which may be the most daunting responsibility of the Presidency. The President may also use the armed forces for domestic purposes such as stopping rioting in cities, for aid during natural disasters, or very rarely to put down unrest when states cannot or will not do it themselves.



President Johnson meeting Troops in Vietnam

Crisis Manager

The role of Crisis Manager is an ever increasing role in the age of information. Presidents routinely respond to sudden and unpredictable events with rapid action, potentially based on limited information regarding the specifics. Such events are uniquely suited for the President, who as a single individual, can make a decision much faster than bodies of individuals such as Congress. The role often requires swift and decisive decisions which may include use of force (military conflict), immediate physical appearance (observing aftermath of a natural disaster), implementing a . Crisis' can be domestic or foreign, and the President's ability to rally local or foreign leaders can help or hinder chances of the crisis being handled smoothly and ultimately leading to a successful outcome. The President may also handle a crisis by setting a moral example, giving affected parties confidence and support, or merely recognizing an issue in some cases.



President Obama quells panic by publically meeting with an Ebola survivor



Roles of the
President of the United States of America