

President Is Most Powerful Individual in U.S. Government

But executive branch shares powers with other two branches of government

Although the executive branch shares powers co-equally with the other two branches of government, the president is the most powerful individual in the U.S. government. Among the powers and roles of the president are:

Appointing Supreme Court justices and lower federal court judges, all of whom must be confirmed by the Senate;

- Appointing a Cabinet of department secretaries and agency heads who must be confirmed by the Senate;
- Acting as commander in chief of the military;
- Acting as titular head of state;
- Negotiating international treaties and treaties with American Indian tribes, both of which must be ratified by the Senate;
- Vetoing or approving legislation passed by Congress; and
- Granting pardons and reprieves for federal crimes (except impeachment).

In addition to these constitutional powers, the president, in practice, has other powers that are either informal or not expressly provided in the Constitution. First and foremost, the president may issue executive orders, which are directives that have the force of law. Executive orders commonly are used for purposes such as:

- Establishing new programs, offices, or commissions to promote or carry out the president's political agenda;
- Creating policies that affect how legislation passed by Congress is to be carried out or enforced; and
- Declaring when the federal work force will observe holidays.

EXECUTIVE ORDERS

Executive orders, which have the force of law, can be a powerful tool for the president to achieve policy objectives, and this power has been upheld by the Supreme Court.

Individual executive orders may be overturned or modified by congressional legislation, but such legislation requires the president's signature to have effect, unless Congress overrides a presidential veto. Executive orders also may be challenged in court if they are perceived to violate the Constitution or conflict with existing law.

Finally, the president serves as the head of his or her political party, and can use the stature and visibility of the presidency to articulate political views and advance political objectives, both with the public and with members of his or her party in Congress.