The Job of the President
Constitutional Powers

• The president is the most powerful public official in the United States.
• Article II invests the office with certain powers.
• His main job is to execute, or carry out the laws.
• He is the head of the executive branch-the law-enforcing branch of government.
Three Branches of Government

CONSTITUTION

LEGISLATIVE
- CONGRESS
  - HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
  - SENATE

EXECUTIVE
- PRESIDENT
- VICE PRESIDENT

JUDICIAL
- SUPREME COURT
Constitutional Powers

• The President may:
  – Veto, or reject, bills passed by Congress
  – Call Congress into special session
  – Serve as Commander in Chief of the armed forces
  – Receive leaders and other foreign officials
Constitutional Powers

• The President may:
  – Make treaties with other countries - with Senate approval
  – Appoint heads of executive agencies, federal court judges, ambassadors, and other top government officials
  – Pardon or reduce the penalties against people convicted of federal crimes
The Constitution also requires the president to give a yearly State of the Union address. This lays out the most important issues facing the nation and describes a new program of legislation that he would like Congress to pass.
Roles of the President

• The president fills several different roles while in office.

• Some roles come directly from the Constitution, while others are not established in the Constitution but presidents have taken on over the years.
Role #1: Chief Executive

• Most would consider this the President’s primary role.
• In it, the President carries out the laws passed by Congress.
• In this role, the President controls the 14 executive cabinet departments and around 3 million civilians who work for the federal government.
Role #1: Chief Executive

• The President appoints many of these officials.

• The Constitution also gives the President the power to appoint judges to the Supreme Court and other federal courts, but the appointments must be approved by the Senate.

• This gives the President much more power.
Role #1: Chief Executive

• The U.S. Supreme Court has the final authority to determine whether a law is acceptable under the Constitution - this gives the court a lot of power.
• Supreme Court justices serve for life so that is a way to extend the President’s influence for possible decades.
• Presidents try to appoint justices that share similar views with their own.
Role #1: Chief Executive

• One power the President has to carry out the laws is the power to issue executive orders.

• Executive Orders are rules or commands that has the force of law but comes directly from the President and does not go through Congress.

• Most executive orders deal with administrative issues, but some have a larger-scale effect.
Role #1: Chief Executive

- Truman integrated the armed forces in 1948 through an executive order.
Role #1: Chief Executive

• The President can also grant *pardons*, or declarations of forgiveness or freedom, to those accused and charged with a crime.

• The President can grant pardons to a group - this is called *amnesty*.

• The President can also issue *reprieves*, which delay a person’s punishment.
Role #2: Chief Diplomat

- As Chief Diplomat, the President directs U.S. foreign policy.
- Foreign policy is how we deal with other nations.
  - President Carter filling his role as Chief Diplomat
Role #3: Commander in Chief

- As Commander in Chief, the President is the chief of the nation’s armed forces.
- The President can then back up foreign and domestic policy with force when needed.
- The top commanders of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Coast Guard are subordinate to the President.
Role #3: Commander in Chief

- Congress and the President share the power to make war.
- Only Congress can declare war, but only the President can order American troops into battle.
- Congress has declared war only 5 times, but Presidents have sent troops into action more than 150 times since 1789.
Role #3: Commander in Chief

• Congress passed the War Powers Act in 1973, after the Vietnam War (which Congress never declared) was coming to a messy close.

• This act said that the President must notify Congress within 48 hours of troop deployment and troops must be brought home after 60 days unless Congress gives the approval for a longer stay or declares war.
Role #4: Legislative Leader

• Although the President is the head of the Executive Branch, he still plays a role in the Legislative Branch.
• Most of the bills that Congress considers come from the executive branch.
• Only members of Congress can introduce a bill, however.
Role #4: Legislative Leader

• Every president has a plan for what legislation he wants passed - this is called his legislative program.
• The president tries to persuade key senators and representatives and has staff to help as well.
• The President appeals to members of Congress as well as to the American people to influence them.
Role #4: Legislative Leader

- Often, the President and Congress disagree, particularly if they are of different political parties (split government).
- Also, the President represents the entire nation while Congressmen represent districts and Senators represent states.
- Senators and Congressmen also have no term limits and are not often in as big of a hurry to get things passed as the president who is in office for only two terms tops.
Role #4: Legislative Leader

- The President also plays a role in the law-making process.
- He signs a bill that has passed both houses to make it a law or blocks it through a veto.

Above, President Clinton signed a defense bill into law in 1999.
Role #5: Head of State

• When people think of the United States, they think of the President.
• The President is the living symbol of our nation and represents us to the rest of the world.
• He meets with diplomats and foreign leaders and he carries out ceremonial roles.
Role #5: Head of State

• The President performs many ceremonies such as lighting the national Christmas tree and awarding medals to heroes.
Role #6: Economic Leader

• The President tries to improve the economy and make the country prosper.
• Voters expect the President to lower unemployment, taxes, and prices.
• Every year, the president must plan the federal budget - no small feat.
Role #7: Party Leader

• The President is generally considered the leader of his or her political party.
• Members of the party work hard to get the president elected and in return expect the president to represent them well and help fellow party members gain positions.
• The president makes appearances and helps raise money for candidates from his or her party.
Role #8: Judicial Leader

• Since the president may grant pardons, reprieves, or amnesty, he is involved in the Judicial branch.
• The President also may appoint Supreme Court and federal judges, giving him a great deal of influence over the courts.

President Gerald Ford pardoned former President Nixon in the seventies (Ford pictured above)
Checks and Balances

• The president, as the head of the executive branch, plays a major role in the system of checks and balances.
• His many roles give him the power to check the power of Congress and the federal courts.
• Likewise, they can also check his power.
Congress approves presidential nominations and controls the budget. It can pass laws over the president’s veto and can impeach the president and remove him or her from office.

LEGISLATIVE BRANCH
The Congress
House of Representatives; Senate.
House and Senate can veto each other’s bills.

The president can veto congressional legislation.

EXECUTIVE BRANCH
The President
Executive office of the president; executive and cabinet departments; independent government agencies.

JUDICIAL BRANCH
The Courts
Supreme Court; Courts of Appeal; District courts.

The Senate confirms the president’s nominations. Congress can impeach, The Court can declare laws unconstitutional.

The president nominates judges. The Court can declare presidential acts unconstitutional.

The Court can declare presidential acts unconstitutional.