

CHAPTER 8

EXECUTIVE BRANCH AT WORK

Is the orange juice in your refrigerator really orange juice? Thanks to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), an agency in the executive branch, you can be sure that if a carton says it contains 100 percent orange juice, the product inside is indeed pure orange juice. If the product is less than 100 percent orange juice, the FDA requires that the total percentage of juice in the beverage be declared on the information panel on the container. Such a beverage may be called an orange juice drink, instead of orange juice.

Regulations like this affect almost every part of your daily life—from the food you eat to the clothes you wear to the compact disc player you buy. Among other things, regulations make sure that products are safe for you to use, that you are not discriminated against in the workplace, and that your savings deposits are insured. This chapter looks at how the executive branch is organized to meet these and other goals Congress has set by law.



Government Notebook

Look around your home tonight, and list in your Government Notebook all of the products you think are affected by federal regulations.



SECTION 1

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT AND THE CABINET

Political Dictionary

secretary
attorney general



Objectives

- ★ How is the Executive Office of the President organized?
- ★ What is the role of the vice president?
- ★ How does the cabinet help carry out the work of the executive branch?

To learn how the executive branch carries out its duties, you first need to know how it is organized. Two key parts of the executive branch are the Executive Office of the President and the cabinet.

Executive Office of the President

The Executive Office of the President is made up of several separate organizations, including the White House Office, the National Security Council, the Office of Management and Budget, the Council of Economic Advisers, and the National Economic Council. In addition, the vice president has taken on a key role in helping the Executive Office carry out its work.

White House Office A striking feature of the modern presidency is the growth of the White House Office staff. George Washington's staff consisted only of personal assistants, including nephews, whom he paid out of his own pocket. As one political observer noted of early presidents, they lacked "even so much as a receptionist or a personal guard to control access to [their] person."

As a result, early presidents spent much of their day meeting with visitors who came in off the street—"vendors, wayfarers, curiosity-seekers, and bearers of grievances of every conceivable [imaginable] sort." Not until after the Civil War did Congress appropriate funds for the president to hire White House personal staff and groundskeepers. Until then, he had to pay for them out of his own salary.

Today the White House staff serves as the president's personal staff and close advisers. They are appointed by the president without Senate confirmation. A chief of staff manages all of the White House staff and controls access to the president.

The people under the chief of staff are organized into groups that each handle a separate area, including national security issues, domestic policy, speechwriting, relations with Congress, and dealings with the press and the public. Given the influence of the media today, the White House press office is critical to a president's success. The press secretary, who heads the office and often presents televised briefings to the press, is one of the most visible members of the White House staff.

Speechwriting also is crucial to a president's success, particularly since speeches are a major means by which the president reaches the general public. President Warren Harding hired the first



POLITICAL PROCESSES *The White House chief of staff has many assistants, such as the two shown here, to help manage the White House. What are some of the responsibilities of the people who work under the chief of staff?*

White House Staff

Top Staff Positions

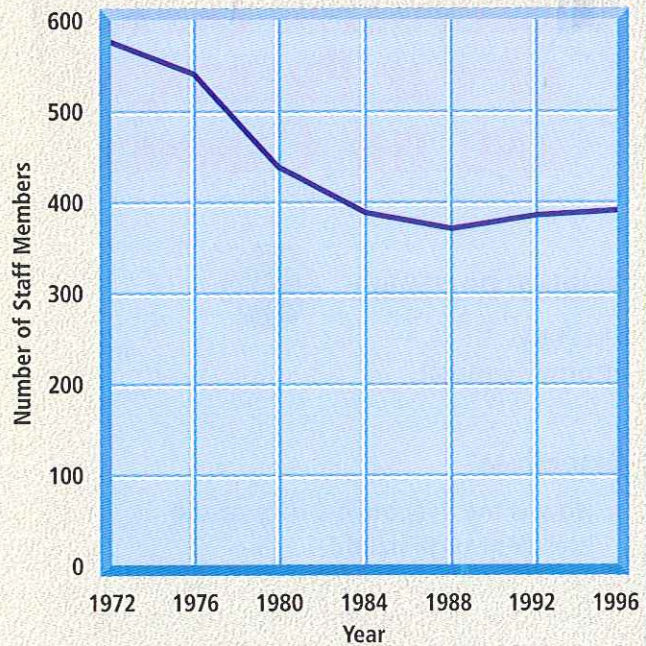
Chief of Staff
Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy
Chief of Staff for White House Operations
Counselor to the President
Senior Adviser on Policy and Strategy

ASSISTANTS TO THE PRESIDENT

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counsel to the President • Domestic Policy Council • Presidential Personnel • Press Secretary • Legislative Affairs • National Economic Policy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Planning • National Security • Staff Secretary • Political Affairs • Public Liaison • Management and Administration • Intergovernmental Affairs |
|---|---|

Source: *The World Almanac: 1997*

Decline in Staff



Source: *Vital Statistics on American Politics*

The size of the White House staff has grown a great deal since George Washington's administration. The chart on the left shows some of the chief assistants the president relies on for support. The chart on the right shows how White House staff numbers began to decline in the 1970s as presidents' staffing priorities changed. Which member of the White House staff might handle the president's media relations?

presidential speechwriter, called a literary clerk, in 1921. Prior to that, presidents generally wrote their own speeches.

Through President Lyndon Johnson's administration, important speeches were usually written by a senior adviser to the president, not by someone with the title "speechwriter." The task of speechwriting has now become a separate and distinct staff function. Speechwriters work on the Inaugural Address, as well as the annual State of the Union message and the greetings that presidents give to people—ranging from returning astronauts to college baseball champions—who are invited to meet the president at the Rose Garden, which is located outside the Oval Office.

An important part of the White House staff's work deals with the complicated day-to-day operation of the presidency. The Scheduling and Advance Office, for example, plans presidential trips. Once a site is selected, this office handles a mountain of details—from the exact timing and

route of the president's motorcade through city streets to the location of television cameras at speaking engagements.

Answering telephones and mail also are major jobs in the White House. Under President Bill Clinton, for example, the White House received some 20,000 letters a week. In 1993 it became possible to send the White House electronic mail. During the first nine months after the system was put in place, the White House received some 125,000 e-mail messages.

National Security Council The National Security Council (NSC) was set up in 1947 to improve coordination among the government departments that deal with national security issues—particularly the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the Departments of State and Defense. At first the NSC was made up of representatives from the various agencies as well as a permanent council staff. In 1949, however, the

Citizenship *in*



Presidential Recognition

Each year, the president honors teens around the country for their community service and scholastic efforts. For example, in 1994 President Bill Clinton issued Proclamation 6674, making January 16, 1994, “National Good Teen Day,” saying that young people “deserve our recognition and appreciation” for their community service. Presidential administrations support the awards programs that have been established to honor the accomplishments of certain teens.

On January 28, 1997, in a ceremony at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C., the President’s Environmental Youth Award was presented to the Mighty Duck Savers—a group of eight young women. The group earned the award for its efforts toward making people “aware of the threat humans pose to some animal life.”

One of the Duck Savers’ main goals was to clean up Culler Lake, an important duck habitat in Frederick, Maryland. In addition to cleaning up the lake, the young women worked to educate people about the dangers of feeding bread to ducks. For more than three years, these young volunteers created T-shirts, stamps, brochures, and signs informing the public that feeding bread to ducks encourages them to eat anything resembling bread, including harmful objects such as white plastic trash. The young women suggested that people feed the ducks cracked corn, a safe alternative to bread. As a result of their efforts, the city put up informational signs and cracked-corn dispensers around the lake.

The annual Presidential Scholars Program recognizes the scholastic talent of young people. In 1996, for example, 2,700 high school seniors from across the nation were selected to be part of the prestigious program. As a part of the selection process, the scholars were asked to submit an



President Clinton recognizes the outstanding service of several young people at a White House awards ceremony.

essay in which they held a conversation with any person in history. One scholar, 17-year-old Joshua Goodman, wrote an essay in which he held an imaginary debate with John C. Calhoun, vice president of the United States from 1825 to 1832. The debate centered on the issue of states’ rights versus those of the federal government.

Goodman advanced to become one of 500 semifinalists before being named a winner by a 32-member, presidentially appointed commission. The Harvard-bound New Yorker was among 141 graduating seniors chosen as Presidential Scholars. A perfect score on his Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), in addition to an exceptional essay, helped Joshua win the honor.

Presidential Scholars are invited to Washington, D.C., for a medallion ceremony with the president. Goodman and his fellow winners were also treated to a performance in their honor at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

What Do You Think?



1. Does presidential recognition of young people’s accomplishments promote community involvement? Why or why not?
2. Why is the support of programs that recognize the contributions of outstanding individuals part of the president’s role?



WORLD AFFAIRS In 1997 Vice President Al Gore met with Korean president Kim Young Sam (right front) during a tour of Asia. *Why do you think that vice presidents have become more involved as public spokespersons for the president in recent years?*

council was reorganized and placed in the Executive Office of the President. A national security adviser, who is appointed by the president, heads the NSC staff.

With this change, the NSC staff became part of the president's staff, and the national security adviser assumed a prominent role in making national security decisions. For example, when U.S. soldiers were sent in to stop a civil war in 1965 in the Dominican Republic, President Lyndon Johnson sent his national security adviser to hold talks with local political groups. This was the first time a national security adviser traveled to another country to take part in negotiations.

Office of Management and Budget Because executive branch agencies must submit their budget requests to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), this office is one of the president's key tools for influencing these agencies. For example, OMB could potentially withhold funding for a program that the president considers ineffective. The OMB staff also helps prepare the president's annual budget recommendations to Congress.

Council of Economic Advisers The Council of Economic Advisers was set up in 1946 to give expert economic advice to the president. It is made up of three members and a staff of about 40. The council participates with many other groups—such as the White House staff, the

Treasury Department, the National Security Council, and the OMB—in advising the president on economic policy.

▷ **National Economic Council** In January 1993 President Bill Clinton signed an executive order establishing another executive branch advisory body—the National Economic Council—to provide guidance on economic policy. The main goal of the council is to coordinate economic policy in the same way that the National Security Council coordinates advice on U.S. foreign policy. At the top of the council's list of duties is to monitor and advise the president on U.S. trade and industrial technology.

The Vice President

The Constitution states that the vice president is to preside over the Senate and to be first in line of succession to the presidency. As head of the Senate, the vice president can vote on legislation only when the senators' votes are tied, which does not happen often.

For many years the vice president's role in government did not amount to much more than the above two functions. The first vice president, John Adams, said of the position:

“My country has in its wisdom contrived [invented] for me the most insignificant office that ever the invention of man contrived or his imagination conceived.”

Usually asked to perform ceremonial tasks, such as representing the president at the funerals of foreign leaders, past vice presidents were seen rarely and heard even less.

Today, however, presidents often give their vice presidents an active role in and responsibility for a specific policy area. President Clinton, for example, had Vice President Al Gore head an effort to reduce government waste and help agencies run more smoothly. Vice presidents also have become more involved as public spokespersons for the president. Given these developments, the office is often seen as a path to the presidency itself. In fact, many vice presidents later run for president, with 14 out of 45 having received their party's nomination thus far. Some vice presidents,

Executive Branch Organization

PRESIDENT

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

- White House Office
- Office of the Vice President
- Office of Management and Budget
- Council of Economic Advisers
- Office of National Drug Control Policy
- Office of the U. S. Trade Representative
- Council on Environmental Quality
- Office of Science and Technology Policy
- Office of Administration
- National Security Council
- Office of Policy Development
- National Economic Council

VICE PRESIDENT

CABINET DEPARTMENTS

Department of Agriculture

Department of the Interior

Department of Commerce

Department of Justice

Department of Defense

Department of Labor

Department of Education

Department of State

Department of Energy

Department of Transportation

Department of Health and Human Services

Department of the Treasury

Department of Housing and Urban Development

Department of Veterans Affairs

Executive offices and cabinet departments were organized to help the president make and enforce policy in all areas of government. Which executive offices and cabinet departments advise the president on economic policy?

including Al Gore, have even run for president before becoming vice president.

CASE STUDY

Role of the First Lady

POLITICAL PROCESSES The role of the first lady is difficult to define. Some first ladies have taken an active role in the country's policy making. Others have promoted social causes. But each first lady has had to determine for herself how to define her role.

In the 1992 presidential campaign, Hillary Rodham Clinton took an active role in campaigning for her husband's election. During his first year in office, President Clinton gave his wife a key role in domestic policy making, naming her as head of the Task Force on National Health Care Reform, the most influential position ever awarded to a first lady. In this position, she sought to reorganize the nation's health care system.

Hillary Clinton is not the first presidential spouse to take an active role in politics, however. Eleanor Roosevelt paved the way by serving as President Franklin D. Roosevelt's "eyes and ears." Since he was partially paralyzed, President Roosevelt had difficulty traveling and relied on his wife to gather information about the needs of the people. Eleanor Roosevelt traveled the country, investigating the working conditions of Appalachian miners and migrant laborers in California. Her schedule was filled with a daily newspaper column, a weekly radio broadcast, lectures, and other responsibilities. Her activities brought her further into the public eye than any previous first ladies had been.

Many first ladies have used their visibility to advance various social causes. For example, Lady Bird Johnson embraced environmental issues and the beautification of the nation's interstate highways. The National Wildflower Research Center in Austin, Texas, is part of her legacy. Rosalyn Carter crusaded for mental health programs. Nancy Reagan established the Just Say No campaign

against drug use, and Barbara Bush promoted national literacy programs.

Some people believe that while working with charities is an acceptable role for the president's spouse, helping to establish national policy is not because the president's spouse has not been approved by the Senate as most high-level policy makers are. "I think the only answer is to be who you are and do what you do," Hillary Clinton said. Whether or not elected officials will act to limit the role in the future remains to be seen. Either way, however, the role will vary, depending on the experience, background, and interests of the person who performs the role.

The Cabinet

In addition to the Executive Office of the President, there are 14 cabinet departments that assist the president in carrying out the work of the executive branch. The heads of cabinet departments are called **secretaries**, the one exception being the **attorney general**, who is the head of the Department of Justice.

Cabinet departments are divided into units that perform the actual work of the government. These units may be called bureaus, administrations, offices, agencies, or services. Examples include the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) in the Department of Labor, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) in the Department of the Treasury, and the Patent and Trademark Office and the Minority Business Development Agency in the Department of Commerce.

Before the tremendous growth of the Executive Office of the President, the cabinet was the president's main advisory body. As the Constitution states, the president might "require the opinion, in writing, of the principal officer in each of the executive departments, upon any subject relating to the duties of their . . . offices." George Washington relied heavily on his cabinet as a body of advisers. He even requested that some of the members of his cabinet—Henry Knox, Alexander Hamilton, and Thomas Jefferson—meet with one another if important matters arose when he was traveling.

More than 200 years later, however, the cabinet's role as an advisory body is much less

significant. Cabinet meetings are now infrequent, and those that do occur are mainly ceremonial. Some secretaries, however, are still frequently consulted by the president—in particular, the attorney general and the secretaries of state, defense, and the treasury. The president relies more on these cabinet members' advice because their departments deal with areas of key

Comparing

Governments

Census Counting in the United States and Canada

Once every 10 years the U.S. Department of Commerce's Bureau of the Census takes a head count of the U.S. population. The census does much more than just count people, however. It also gathers information about them, including their age, occupation, ethnic origin, and whether they live in a city or rural area. In this way, the census provides an update on the ever-changing face of U.S. society. Perhaps the most important use of census information, however, is to determine the distribution of congressional representation among the states.

Canada also holds a census every 10 years. The first census in what is now Canada was taken in 1666, when Louis XIV ordered a population count of New France. Today, the Canadian census is used to determine boundary readjustments of electoral districts.

Census counting rarely draws much media attention, but in 1996 the Canadian census made world news when it tallied the number of hours that men and women spend on household chores. Initial analysis of the census results revealed that in Canada, women do two thirds of this work.

The new census questions are the result of what some call the "kitchen table revolution," a campaign to recognize the contributions of women in the home. Some consider the 1996 Canadian census to be a first step in gaining benefits such as pensions for women who work at home without pay.



POLITICAL PROCESSES Here President Clinton meets with members of his cabinet.
Why does the president rarely meet with all cabinet members at the same time?

national concern, including crime, foreign affairs, the military, and economic concerns.

Why do current presidents rely so little on the cabinet for advice? One reason is that they rely heavily on the advice of members of the White House staff, as you have read. Another is that cabinet meetings are both impractical and time-consuming. If the president needs advice on what position to take in trade negotiations with Japan, for example, he or she might consult with the secretary of commerce individually. However, a meeting including the secretary of veterans affairs and other cabinet members who may have

limited knowledge of the issue at hand would make little sense.

In addition, cabinet departments, like many other organizations, tend to be territorial. To protect their budgets and areas of influence, cabinet secretaries and their staffs may offer advice that is more beneficial to their specific areas of concern than to achieving the president's goals or to serving the public good. For example, officials in the Department of Health and Human Services might recommend improvements in health coverage programs without considering their costs, which is the concern of the Treasury Department and the OMB.

SECTION 1

REVIEW

1. Define the following terms: secretary, attorney general.
2. Name and describe the six main divisions in the Executive Office of the President. What is the newest group within this office?
3. How has the role of the vice president changed over time?
4. How is the cabinet organized? Why do presidents no longer rely on cabinet meetings for advice?

5. Thinking and Writing Critically

Do you think first spouses should play a role in making policy decisions? If so, should their "appointment" to a policy area be confirmed by the Senate? Explain your answer.

6. Applying **POLITICAL PROCESSES**



Conduct an Internet search using the name of the U.S. vice president as a search word. What information do you find? In what activities has the vice president recently been involved?

SECTION 2

THE FEDERAL BUREAUCRACY

Political Dictionary



bureaucracy
bureaucrat
public comment
independent agency
regulatory commission
government corporation
civil servant
spoils system
merit system

Objectives

- ★ How do government agencies help carry out the work of the executive branch?
- ★ Why does Congress set up independent agencies?
- ★ How are government positions filled?

The many agencies of the executive branch are important to the running of the government. In other words, these agencies perform much of the actual work of government. Most of the federal government consists of the cabinet departments. In addition, there are a number of independent agencies. Together these organizations make up the federal **bureaucracy**—a highly organized system of people and their work. People who work in a bureaucracy are called **bureaucrats**.

Government Agencies' Work

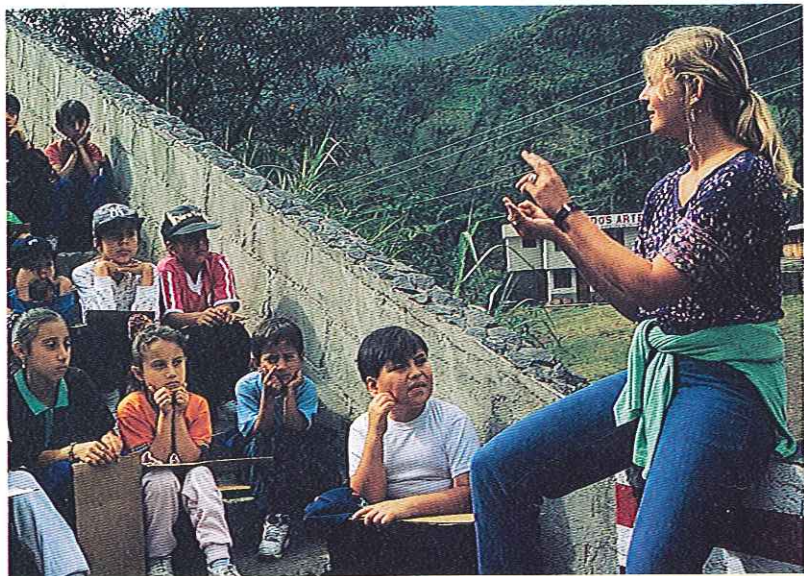
How do government agencies help the executive branch carry out its

duties? They do so by advising the president and Congress on policy decisions and by making and carrying out the rules and regulations needed to enforce the law.

Advising Government Officials Most of the government's expert knowledge is found in the executive branch agencies. Why is this so? Many mid- to lower-level employees in these agencies stay in their jobs until they retire. As a result, the agencies have a deep pool of experience and continuity that is needed for studying and managing the huge, complex programs of the federal government. These agencies share their knowledge by generating reports and statistics that the president and Congress need in order to make policy and legislative decisions.

Making Rules The rules made by executive branch agencies have the force of law, though they usually carry only civil, not criminal, penalties for any violations. Over the years, agencies have passed a tremendous number of rules, which appear in the Code of Federal Regulations. As of 1997 this publication ran to more than 204 volumes.

Agencies must follow set procedures for issuing a rule. For example, an agency cannot issue a rule without first giving notice and allowing a period for **public comment**, during which



POLITICAL PROCESSES Here a member of the Peace Corps, an executive branch agency, talks to children in Ecuador. What duties do other executive branch agencies perform?

interested parties can give their opinions on the proposed rule. After notification, the public has at least 30 days to submit written comments. For key proposals, however, agencies almost always hold public hearings as well, at which experts and other witnesses testify and deliver research reports.

The publication of a final rule must be accompanied by a “statement of reasons” explaining why each provision was adopted, as well as the evidence supporting those decisions. In addition, rules may be challenged in court. By allowing outside forces to examine the rule-making process, government provides a check on agency power.

The process from proposal to completion may take a long time and involve as much as 5,000 pages of recorded notes. Rule-making proceedings usually last a year or more. It is easy to see how citizens who want government to act quickly might become upset at what they see as the grinding—or spinning—of wheels. It is also understandable that the businesses, workers, and consumers whose lives are directly affected by a particular rule insist on its being thoroughly considered.

Implementing Rules Even after laws are passed and rules are written, government agencies still have a great deal of work to do. They must implement, or carry out, the rules they have created. This can be a difficult task. The Social Security Administration must provide checks to more than 43 million people each month. The armed forces must organize a fighting force of thousands of vehicles, weapons, and soldiers. The National Institutes of Health must decide who receives grants for medical research. The Immigration and Naturalization Service must patrol the nation’s borders. To accomplish these enormous tasks, agencies employ an army of people.

Independent Agencies

The executive branch agencies outside the cabinet departments are called **independent agencies**. Congress creates these agencies to help the president carry out the work of the executive branch. They are independent in the sense that they are separate from the cabinet departments—often because they perform duties that do not fall under the scope of a cabinet department or because they serve the interest of several departments. Thus,

they function best as separate and independent organizations.

Today there are more than 60 independent agencies. They include the Social Security Administration, which runs the Social Security system; the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), which hears job discrimination claims; the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which monitors air, water, and ground pollution; and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), which runs the nation’s space program. Other examples include the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the Peace Corps.

Regulatory Commissions Some independent agencies have a greater degree of autonomy, or self-rule, than others. The agencies that act with the least direction from the White House are called **regulatory commissions**—independent agencies that have the power to establish and enforce regulations.

Regulatory commissions maintain so much independence because of their leadership. They



POLITICAL PROCESSES *Family members of victims of a plane crash attend a hearing held by the National Transportation Safety Board. What are the functions of independent regulatory commissions?*

are usually headed by a set number of commissioners from each party who are appointed by the president for fixed terms and confirmed by the Senate. In fact, many commissioners serve longer than do the presidents who appoint them. Regulatory commissions are more strongly influenced by Congress than the White House but, on the whole, act independently of both.

Why is it particularly important that regulatory commissions be free of political pressure? The commissions monitor and police key areas of national interest. Members of these commissions thus must be free from political pressures so they can make unbiased and well-reasoned decisions.

There are around a dozen regulatory commissions, including the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), which regulates the stock market; the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), which oversees business practices; and the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), which

puts a stop to unfair labor practices. Other examples include the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) and the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC).

Government Corporations Some of these independent agencies—called **government corporations**—are run as nonprofit businesses. By far the largest of these corporations is the U.S. Postal Service. Others include the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), which guarantees people's bank deposits, and the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), which provides affordable electricity to many rural areas in the South. Believing that these corporations run more efficiently than most other government agencies, many people argue that new government corporations should be set up to take over agency functions such as the nation's air traffic control system. Government corporations generally are set up when an agency's business is mostly commercial, when an agency generates its own income, and when the agency's work requires more flexibility than government agencies usually have.

Government Employees

The question of how the federal government fills government jobs has long been a source of controversy. Will effective government best be achieved by lifetime employees or by political appointees who share the views of each newly and democratically elected administration? Will a government run by people owing their jobs to the party in power lead to corruption?

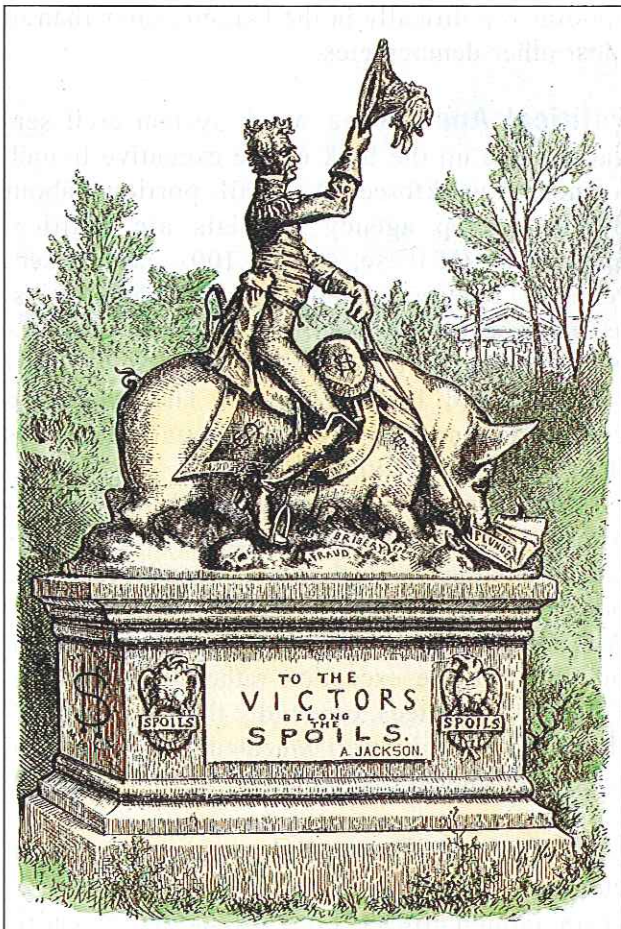
These questions have been answered differently at different times. As you will see, government positions today are filled with both politically appointed and nonappointed **civil servants**—people employed by the federal government.

The Spoils System Between 1789 and 1828 the number of federal employees was extremely small. Positions were primarily filled by wealthy citizens who stayed at their jobs despite changes in presidential administrations.

In 1829, however, when Andrew Jackson took office as president, a new system emerged. Jackson passed out a large number of government jobs to his political supporters. He believed that people who held office permanently might



PUBLIC GOOD *The Food and Drug Administration requires pharmacies to provide customers with prescription-drug information sheets. How does this regulation promote the public good?*



PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRACY *Many people criticized the way in which federal employees were selected under President Andrew Jackson. What was this cartoonist's opinion of the spoils system?*

turn their public offices into private property and become a type of aristocracy. Believing in the abilities of ordinary citizens, Jackson stated that the government jobs were “so plain and simple that men of intelligence may readily qualify themselves for their performance.” Jackson decided that the policy of keeping agency officials in their jobs permanently should be replaced by a policy of rotation in office. He believed that democratically elected officials should bring into office with them people who share the ideas for which a majority of the electorate voted.

This policy, of course, benefited Jackson by giving him more power and influence over government policies. As one senator stated it, Jackson’s doctrine was like the doctrine of governing the behavior of victorious armies—“to the victor belong the spoils of the enemy.” Soon,

Jackson’s system came to be known as the **spoils system**.

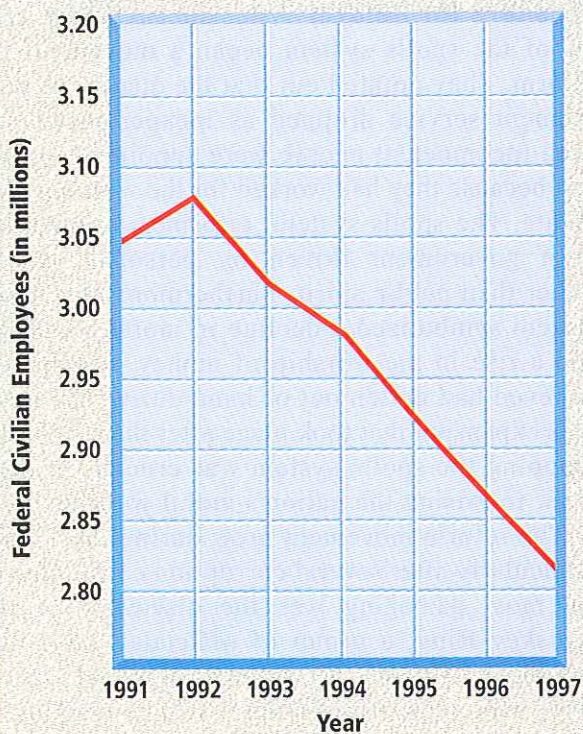
Pressure for Reform After the Civil War, critics of the spoils system began a movement for reform. They pointed out that the quality of government service dropped as inexperienced and even incompetent people were appointed to jobs just because they had worked for the winning candidate. The spoils system, reformers argued, led to a government driven by personal benefit rather than public spirit. Furthermore, the spoils system symbolized a decline in moral standards and a rise in the worship of money, which they believed had gotten out of hand during the business expansion that took place after the Civil War. Stopping the spoils system was crucial, in their view, to raising the nation’s moral well-being.

The reform movement grew during the 1870s, particularly after several corruption cases. One of the most damaging was the discovery of the Whiskey Ring, a group of officials—including President Ulysses S. Grant’s personal secretary—who took bribes from distillers wanting to avoid paying an alcohol tax. Even with these cases, however, reform might have failed had it not been for the assassination of President James



PUBLIC GOOD *Federal employees such as air traffic controllers often are required to pass an examination before they are hired for a government job. How has the merit system ensured that all applicants for federal jobs have an equal opportunity to be hired?*

Federal Civilian Employment (1991–1997)



Source: U.S. Office of Personnel Management

This graph illustrates the changes in federal civilian employment. The number of civilians employed by the federal government has decreased since 1992. What was one of the reasons for the downsizing of the federal work force in the 1990s?

Garfield in 1881. He was killed by a man who had tried unsuccessfully for a spoils job in the new administration.

The Pendleton Act The reform movement led to the Pendleton Act of 1883, which gradually replaced the spoils system with a more rational one. Under the **merit system**, federal employees secure jobs through competitive exams and then stay on the job even after new presidents take office.

At first, the Pendleton Act applied the merit system to only about 10 percent of government employees, but it was slowly expanded to cover most of the government workforce. In 1897 President William McKinley strengthened the goals of the Pendleton Act with an order prohibiting the dismissal of employees hired through the merit system, except for good cause. Even so, a larger number of officials continued to be

appointed politically in the United States than in most other democracies.

Political Appointees Merit system civil servants make up the bulk of the executive branch agencies' workforce. A small portion—about 3,000—of top agency officials are political appointees. Of these, some 1,100—cabinet secretaries, deputy secretaries, undersecretaries, assistant secretaries, and various agency heads—are appointed by the president. Around 700 must be confirmed by the Senate. The remaining 2,000 are named by the presidential appointees themselves, also without the Senate's approval.

It is no longer true, if it ever was, that most political appointees are unqualified and receive their jobs only as a reward for work in a presidential campaign or because they belong to a powerful interest group. A few political appointees may fit that description, but they are the exception rather than the rule. Political appointees, especially those in top positions, are generally well educated. Many have had prior government experience as well.

Civil Service Today The number of federal employees, has been fairly constant for about 25 years, though efforts at downsizing have steadily decreased this number throughout the 1990s. In addition, given steady population growth, the percentage of federal employees as part of the population as a whole has dropped.

As of 1993 there were 4.4 million federal employees, including political appointees and the military, making the federal government the single largest employer in the country. Many people believe that the majority of these employees work shuffling papers at a desk in Washington, D.C.

Actually, government jobs are as diverse as are the government's tasks. Federal workers include soldiers, police officers, drug agents, accountants, engineers, firefighters, rescue workers, park rangers, biologists, chemists, physicists, and doctors. Also, less than 16 percent of civil servants work in the Washington, D.C., area.

Most cabinet departments and many individual agencies have offices in federal buildings in 10 regional centers that the federal government runs across the United States: in Boston, New York City, Philadelphia, Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas/Fort Worth, Kansas City, Denver, San Francisco, and Seattle. (Some agencies put their regional offices in other cities, however.)

In addition, many government agencies have small local offices. For example, the Social Security Administration has more than 1,300 local offices that receive applications for Social Security cards and benefits, as well as answer questions from citizens. If you live in a city or large town, you might look in your telephone directory (under *U.S. government*) to find out what federal agencies have offices located in your city.

Downsizing of the Federal Government

With rising pressure for smaller, more efficient government, President Clinton announced in 1993 that the federal government would shed 272,900 workers by 1999, the first major downsizing of the federal workforce in decades. In 1994 Congress approved a proposal to offer selected federal employees “buyouts”—cash payments for voluntary retirement—similar to those that many private companies have used to reduce the size of their workforces.

The results of these efforts have been significant. By March 1997 the federal workforce numbered 2,807,077, down from 3,038,041 in January 1993. While most of these were civilian positions in the Department of Defense, the nondefense workforce also was cut significantly. All but one



POLITICAL PROCESSES *The federal government employs people in many different professions. These federal workers are scientists who inspect fruit trees and other crops. Do most federal employees work in Washington, D.C.?*

of the executive branch departments saw cuts in their staffs. The Agriculture Department, for example, was cut 15 percent, or by 17,136 workers, and the Department of the Interior also was cut 15 percent, or by 11,522 workers.

SECTION 2

REVIEW

1. Define the following terms: bureaucracy, bureaucrat, public comment, independent agency, regulatory commission, government corporation, civil servant, spoils system, merit system.
2. Who sets up the independent agencies of the executive branch? What types of activities do these agencies oversee?
3. What are the three main tasks of the government agencies?
4. How has the civil service system changed over time? What government positions are filled by political appointees?

5. Thinking and Writing Critically



How do you think most government positions should be filled—with career civil servants who are required to take a civil service exam and compete for jobs or with political appointees who share the views of the president? Explain your answer.

6. Applying POLITICAL PROCESSES



Conduct an Internet search for some of the agencies mentioned in this section. Are some of these agencies at work in your community? If so, which ones? What kind of work do they perform? What information do they provide on their Internet sites?

SECTION 3

THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH AND THE PUBLIC GOOD

Political Dictionary

privatization



Objectives

- ★ Is the presidency too powerful?
- ★ What are some common criticisms of government agencies?

Just as Congress has its critics, so does the executive branch. The principal criticisms of the executive branch center around the power of the presidency and the size, complexity, and maze-like procedures of the executive branch agencies.

The Presidency and the Public Good

One of the most powerful offices in the world, the presidency holds a great potential for abuse of power. For many years people have debated whether the president has too much power and what are appropriate ways of maintaining or reducing it.

Growth of Presidential Power

Some critics charge that the president today is exactly what the framers wished to avoid—a sort of elected monarch. These people believe that the growth of presidential power has upset the checks and balances set up by the Constitution. Is this the case?

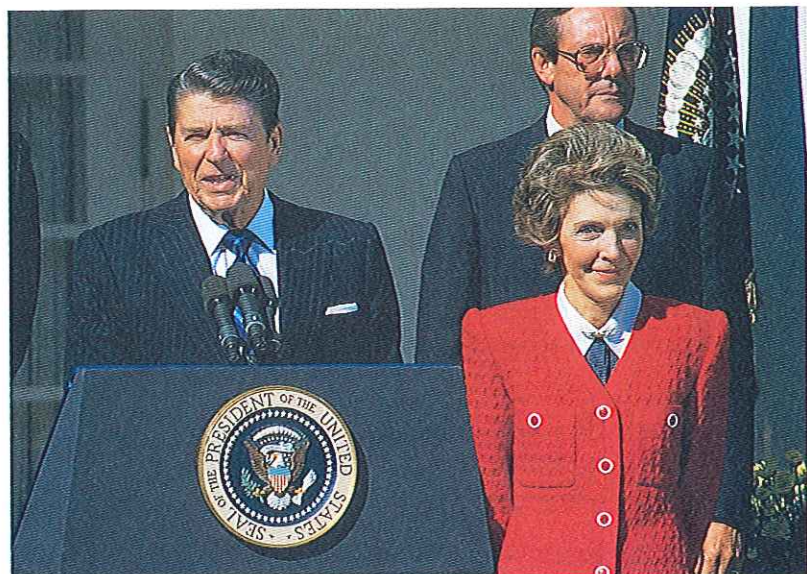
The president holds far-reaching foreign-policy powers, though they can be checked by Congress.

However, Congress has the power to decide domestic matters by passing laws, though the president can affect domestic policy by influencing, and creating public pressure on, Congress.

As noted in Chapters 5 and 6, the locally elected members of Congress provide a special voice for local concerns. The president, as a nationally elected official, balances this viewpoint by representing all of the nation's people. Thus, just as it is vital that Congress represent local concerns, it is crucial that the president have a strong enough voice and powers of office to represent the concerns of the country as a whole. This check and balance promotes the public good.

Reliance on Public Support Another criticism of the presidency is that in trying to act effectively as a representative of the nation, the president must work to gain majority support for policies. As noted in Chapter 7, Andrew Jackson was the first president to appeal directly to the public for support of his policies. Modern presidents have sharpened Jackson's technique by using more sophisticated and influential tools to help them reach the public.

Why do critics believe that such actions might harm the public good? While trying to gain public support, the president can spend a great deal of time on media relations—becoming more concerned with image than with the substance of



POLITICAL PROCESSES Ronald Reagan, like other modern presidents, carefully prepared for public appearances. How much time do you think presidents should spend on media relations? Why?

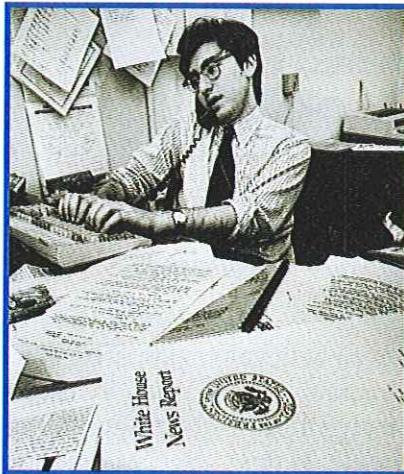
Careers in Government



Presidential Aide

Long days and a lot of responsibility—that is how one might describe the job of a presidential aide, whose role is to make the president's job easier. Though each president determines how heavily to rely on aides for assistance, high-level aides, such as the White House chief of staff, usually play a powerful role in assisting the president. The chief of staff often meets with the president several times a day; sets the president's daily schedule; arranges all of the president's trips; screens telephone calls, memos, and letters; and supervises the writing of speeches.

Presidential aides assist the president in almost every area of the job, from formulating policy to dealing with the media. Aides often work an average of 12 hours a day and six or seven days a week. Although presidential aides



A presidential aide works in the White House News Office.

work difficult hours, they do receive significant benefits. High-ranking aides have a great deal of power and prestige. They also enjoy other fringe benefits, such as large offices, the use of a chauffeur-driven car, and gourmet meals prepared by White House chefs.

Only a small percentage of the president's aides hold high-profile positions that bring "celebrity" status. Most of the president's staff work behind the scenes, assisting high-level aides with their responsibilities. Lower-level aides answer phones, write letters, help prepare speeches, research legislation, and answer questions from the media. All presidential aides are appointed by the president and generally are well educated and civic-minded.

While some aspire to political careers, others simply enjoy the experience of working for the nation's most important leader.

governing. In other words, as a president spends more time trying to present one side of an issue to the public, the facts and the importance of the issue can easily get lost in a battle of images. As Donald Regan's memoir of the Reagan presidency states,

“Every moment of every public appearance was scheduled, every word was scripted, every place where Reagan was expected to stand was chalked with toe marks. The President was always being prepared for a performance.”

The amount of time that a president spends presenting a certain image varies, and determining the degree to which such efforts affect the public good is difficult. No matter what the effect, however, the media will continue to play a large role in presidential politics.

Government Agencies and the Public Good

The executive branch agencies perform much of the day-to-day work of the government. As a result, they also receive the lion's share of criticism. Two major criticisms of these agencies are that they are staffed with nonelected officials and that they are inefficient.

Nonelected Officials Most of the millions of federal employees are civil servants. This means that much of the work of the government is carried out by nonelected officials. As critics point out, this situation contradicts a basic democratic idea: that government rules should be made by representatives of the people. Unless the people elect the rule makers, they cannot make sure that the government's rules promote the public good.



PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRACY *The cartoon above criticizes the wastefulness and inefficiency of federal agencies. According to this cartoonist, what is one of the causes of government inefficiency?*

Many critics of government agencies even believe them to be armies of arrogant bureaucrats who issue endless commands and trample civil liberties without having to answer to the people. Is this an accurate assessment?

In reality, delegating power to nonelected officials in government agencies is a democratic choice made by elected officials. Consider the many people who visit a certain doctor for an illness and instead see a physician's assistant who was hired by the doctor. This assistant is not the person whom the patients have "elected" to see. However, these patients may trust their doctor to hire only competent assistants, just as many voters trust Congress to make sure that the agencies to which it assigns rule-making powers will promote the public good.

One still may ask, however, whether this delegation of power promotes the public good or is simply unavoidable, given the high number of government activities and the time limits on members of Congress. There are in fact positive reasons for giving decision-making powers to agencies. Most elected officials are generalists concerned with a variety of issues. Agency officials, however, often devote their careers to just a few policy issues. Sensibly, these employees are given responsibility for areas in which they are experts.

Keep in mind also that government agencies do not work unchecked. Congress creates, oversees—and can dissolve—agencies. In addition, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB),

guided by the elected president, has control over the administration of the agency budgets. These checks ensure that agencies do not run wild in making and implementing rules.

Inefficiency People sometimes criticize government agency officials not for making too many rules, but for accomplishing too little. For example, a hurricane slams into the Atlantic coast, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) does not send relief quickly enough. In this case "the bureaucracy" might be denounced as being wasteful and inefficient.

However, most large organizations, public or private, are in some ways inefficient. Some civil servants are arrogant, some incompetent, and some wasteful. To paint all government officials in this image, however, is inaccurate.

Many government agencies in fact operate effectively. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has secured much cleaner air than the country had just 15 years ago. The Customs Service rapidly processes piles of paperwork on imports. Remember also that government agencies often tackle the hardest problems—if it were easy and



PUBLIC GOOD *The federal government funds programs to clean up pollution in the Florida Everglades. Do you think that government has found effective solutions to problems such as air pollution?*

profitable to deal with poverty and crime, the private sector would likely have done so long ago.

Improving Agency Management

While often successful, not all government agencies are managed as well as they could be and therefore do not promote the public good as well as they might. How can agency management be improved? Some people believe that the government should use performance measures, contract out some government functions, and turn others over to private companies.

Performance Measures One suggestion for improving agencies is to increase their accountability for their performance while giving them greater discretion in how best to do their job. In 1993 Congress attempted to implement this solution by passing the Government Performance and Results Act, which required agencies to set strategic goals, measure performance, and report on their progress in meeting those goals.

For many programs, measuring these accomplishments is a simple matter. People who call a Social Security hot line can be surveyed to find out how satisfied they are with the way their questions were answered. The amount of time it takes to process a veteran's benefit application can be measured. These sorts of standards can be used to rate agencies' performance and pinpoint areas needing improvement.

What about cases in which performance measures are more complicated? For example, how should a school's performance be measured? A survey of student satisfaction might show only a dislike for homework. Looking at scores from the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) would show only how well prepared some students were for admission into college. To fully evaluate a school, the Department of Education can develop a bundle of performance measures that take into account student, parent, and teacher satisfaction; SAT scores; graduation rates; and so on. Using performance measures becomes even more complicated when people disagree about what feature of performance is most important—should the government look first at how well a school prepares the brightest students or at whether it minimizes the dropout rate?

Some of the changes that performance measures require can be difficult for government agencies to make, but these changes may present opportunities

for the people working in the agencies. Results-oriented performance standards give people clearer goals for which to strive and greater freedom in deciding how to do their jobs.

Contracting Out Many people argue that government agencies are incapable of operating efficiently enough. The solution, they say, is to contract out as many government functions as possible. When government contracts out work, it hires a private company to produce a good or perform a service. For example, a city government might contract out its garbage collection to a private company, Acme Trash. Acme collects the garbage, and the city pays Acme with tax dollars. Thus, although a private company performs the service, the government retains the right to oversee the company's work.

Government in fact already contracts out many responsibilities. Private companies develop weapons systems for the Department of Defense, and the government buys services such as building management and debt collection from private firms. This practice is similar to that of private companies that contract out some functions to other private companies. Many companies, for example, hire advertising agencies to prepare marketing materials, and law firms to provide legal services.



POLITICAL PROCESSES *NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, located near Pasadena, California, is managed by the California Institute of Technology. Why do some people think that contracting out government work is a good solution to inefficiency?*



PUBLIC GOOD *In many states, trash collection and recycling services are provided by private companies. What government services in your community do you think could be better provided by a private company?*

Contracting out, however, is unlikely to work in all instances. There are several government activities—such as diplomacy and the arrest of criminals—that are undertaken in the name of the people of the United States as a whole and should not be handled by private parties. Do citizens, for example, want the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo staffed by employees of Diplomacy, Inc.? Would these employees represent the U.S. public or their company? In other cases, the performance of a job by U.S. government employees has symbolic value. By hiring its own rangers, the National Park Service shows that the national parks are the property of all U.S. citizens.


In addition, contracting out also presents its own problems. For example, the government has had great difficulties in dealing with defense contractors. On occasion, weapons systems created by these companies have not performed up to expectation. Because so few companies can make submarines and fighter planes, the government often has little leverage over the companies. In turn, as private companies, the defense contractors have conflicting goals—promoting the public good and trying to make as much profit as possible.

Privatization Another possible solution to problems in agency management is **privatization**—the turning of an entire government function over to a private company. In the case of city garbage collection, privatization would mean the government would no longer collect taxes to pay for garbage collection. Instead, Acme Trash would not only collect the garbage but also charge customers directly.

What services might be privatized? Rather than having the Forest Service manage the national forests, the Department of the Interior could sell them to private owners. Rather than having a national space program, space exploration could be left to private companies. In these cases, though, the forests might be cut down for timber, and space exploration might be stopped because of its enormous costs. By removing agencies from their role as overseer, some people argue that privatization takes away a major motivation for the companies to promote the public good.

SECTION 3

REVIEW

1. Define the following term: privatization.
2. Why do some people say that the presidency is too powerful? What is a possible effect of the president's reliance on public support?
3. Describe the major criticisms of government agency management.
4. What is the difference between contracting out a government service and privatizing it?
5. **Thinking and Writing Critically**  What kinds of government functions, if any, do you think should be privatized? How would

privatizing these functions promote—or threaten—the public good? Explain your answers.

6. Applying PUBLIC GOOD

As you have read, the president relies on public support to strengthen his or her position. Modern technology, such as television and the Internet, enables the president to get political messages out quickly and easily. Consider recent news stories that you have heard or read about the president. In your opinion, how are the stories influenced by the president's efforts to project a certain image?

SECTION 1 The executive branch is organized in two main parts: the Executive Office of the President and the cabinet. The Executive Office is made up of several separate organizations, including the White House Office, the National Security Council, the Office of Management and Budget, the Council of Economic Advisers, and the National Economic Council. The vice president also has taken on a key role in helping the Executive Office carry out its work.

The 14 cabinet departments assist the president in carrying out the work of the executive branch. The heads of cabinet departments are called secretaries, with the exception of the attorney general, who is head of the Department of Justice. Cabinet departments are divided into units—the bureaus, administrations, offices, agencies, and services—that carry out the actual work of the government.

Before the growth of the Executive Office of the President, the cabinet was the president's main advisory body. Today, however, the president relies mainly on some department heads, as well as the Executive Office staff, for advice. Another reason that the president relies so little on the cabinet for advice is that cabinet meetings are impractical and time-consuming. In addition, cabinet departments can be territorial and may tend to try to protect their budgets at the expense of other agencies' projects.

SECTION 2 The cabinet departments combine with the independent agencies of the executive branch to make up the federal bureaucracy. Independent agencies are set up by Congress and include regulatory commissions and government corporations. Government agencies advise the president and Congress on legislation as well as make and implement rules to carry out federal law.

Government agencies are staffed by civil servants. The bulk of them are merit system employees, while about 3,000 top officials are

political appointees. Today there are more than 4 million federal government employees, including political appointees and the military.

SECTION 3 There are several criticisms of the executive branch. The first major criticism concerns the power of the presidency. Many people believe that the president is too powerful. Although the president's foreign-policy powers are indeed far-reaching, his or her powers overall are greatly checked by Congress. In addition, a strong president is necessary to check congressional powers.

A second criticism of the executive branch relates to its attempts to represent majority opinion. Many people believe that the president, in trying to gain public support for his or her policies, spends too much time on media relations and his or her image. These people argue that when this occurs, the facts and importance of an issue can get lost in a battle of images.

The executive branch also is criticized for the size, complexity, and procedures of its agencies. However, executive branch agencies are more efficient than people give them credit for being. Government has attempted to improve agency management in several ways, such as by adopting performance measures and contracting out and privatizing some government functions.

Government Notebook

Review what you wrote in your Government Notebook at the beginning of the chapter about the products in your home that are affected by federal regulations. Now that you have studied this chapter, would you revise your list? Research which agency in the executive branch is responsible for regulating each product you have listed. Record your findings in your Notebook.

REVIEW

REVIEWING CONCEPTS

1. How has the role of the vice president changed in recent years?
2. Of what elements does the Executive Office of the President consist?
3. What functions do independent agencies serve? Name three of these agencies.
4. Describe one major criticism of the presidency.
5. What is a civil servant? What is a political appointee?
6. What is the role of the cabinet?

THINKING AND WRITING CRITICALLY



1. **POLITICAL PROCESSES** Do you think the president should rely on the advice of the White House staff rather than executive branch agencies in the policy-making process? Why or why not?
2. **POLITICAL PROCESSES** Do you think the privatization and contracting out of government functions, such as developing weapons systems, is a good solution to inefficiency in the federal government? Explain your answer.
3. **PUBLIC GOOD** Why is it important for regulatory commissions to be free from political pressures? How could political influence over regulatory agencies jeopardize the public good?

CITIZENSHIP IN YOUR COMMUNITY



Many cabinet departments have offices located in cities and towns across the country, giving the

public better access to important services. The Department of State, for example, has visa and passport offices located in many major U.S. cities. Check the local telephone directory for the community offices of a cabinet department of your choice. Then research the services provided by these offices. Afterward, use the information you gather to create a brochure informing the public of the community services provided by the cabinet department you selected.

INDIVIDUAL PORTFOLIO PROJECT



With a group, create a handbook on federal regulatory commissions. Your guide should list three or four of the commissions that oversee business and labor issues and briefly describe the functions of each. Be sure to include specific examples of regulations implemented by each commission. Your handbook should be clearly written, well designed, and easy to follow. You might want to use photos to illustrate the different types of goods or services regulated by the commissions.

THE INTERNET: LEARNING ONLINE



Conduct an Internet search to find information about the president's cabinet. Specifically, look for the names and e-mail addresses of the current cabinet members. You might start by using search words such as *executive departments*, *president's cabinet*, and the name of each executive department. After making a list of the current cabinet members and their e-mail addresses, send an e-mail message to one of the cabinet members, requesting information about the department he or she heads.

PRACTICING SKILLS: CONDUCTING RESEARCH



The table below displays information on volunteer and community service work among young people. Read the labels and study the figures in the table to answer the questions that follow.

Percentage of High School Seniors Participating in Volunteer or Community Service Work: 1984–1994

	Almost Every Day	At Least Once a Week	Once or Twice a Month	A Few Times a Year	Never
1984	2.6	7.4	14.1	44.9	31.0
1986	1.7	8.4	14.0	44.9	31.0
1988	2.6	6.3	13.4	45.4	32.3
1990	1.8	6.9	13.0	43.3	35.1
1991	2.4	5.9	14.6	44.6	32.4
1992	2.8	7.4	16.5	41.7	31.6
1993	2.7	8.0	15.0	44.0	30.3
1994	3.2	7.6	17.2	44.8	27.2

Source: University of Michigan Institute for Social Research

1. In which year did the highest percentage of high school seniors volunteer almost every day?
2. Between 1990 and 1994, did the amount of volunteer work and participation in community affairs by high school seniors increase or decrease?
3. According to these statistics, in which year did the smallest percentage of high school seniors perform volunteer work?

ANALYZING PRIMARY SOURCES



A PRESS BRIEFING

In 1997 Madeleine Albright became the first female secretary of state. As a member of the president's cabinet, the secretary of state is responsible for advising the president on the country's foreign policy. The following excerpt is from a press briefing at which Albright presented

the U.S. Department of State's annual report on human rights. Read the excerpt and answer the questions that follow.

"I'm pleased today to release officially the State Department's Annual Country Report on Human Rights. These reports reflect the American people's commitment to high standards of respect for human dignity and freedom for all people. . . .

When human rights standards are observed, sustainable economic progress is more likely; violent conflicts are easier to prevent; terrorists and criminals find it harder to operate, and societies are more fully able to benefit from the skills and energy of their citizens.

In such an environment, Americans are safer, and we are more likely to find good partners with whom to pursue shared economic, diplomatic, and security goals. That is why human rights are and will remain a key element in our foreign policy, both in our bilateral [two-sided] relationships and in our leadership with international organizations. . . .

Open economic and political systems contribute to national well-being in a host of ways. Women and men who are free to think for themselves and who have fair access to the levers of economic and political power will be more productive and have a more stabilizing impact than those whose creativity is shut down. . . .

We live at a time when democratic principles and respect for human rights have greater reach than at any previous time in history. This is due not simply to what governments have done but to what people around the world have done either within their own countries or through non-governmental organizations to elevate, monitor, and enforce human rights standards."

1. What is more likely to occur when human-rights standards are observed?
2. How do open economic and political systems contribute to national well-being?
3. Why is it important for the U.S. government to set a standard for human rights?