

THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH

Is It Lonely at the Top?

No way! That's because in our government there is no "top." The President is our leader, but our government was specially designed so the executive branch must share power with the legislative and judicial branches.

Yeah, sure, but...

No, really! The Constitution of the United States gives the President "**executive power**," which means the President's job is to carry out laws passed by the legislative branch. The Constitution gives the President very few powers of his own. Most of the time, the

President has to work closely with the legislative branch in order to accomplish anything. For example, the President can appoint new justices to the Supreme Court... but only with the Senate's approval. Or the President can make treaties with

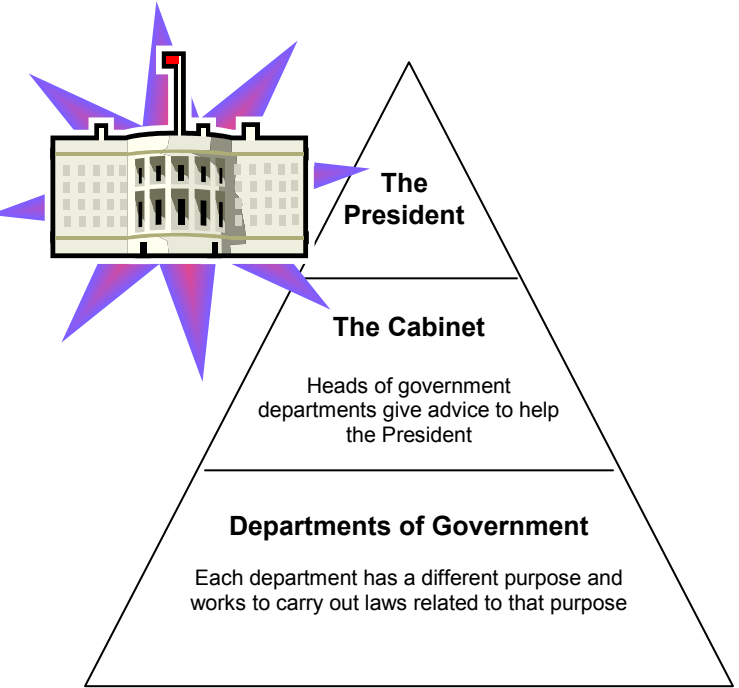
"Execute" means "to carry out"

other countries... but only with the Senate's approval. The President has the power to order troops into battle, but only Congress can declare war. And the President can veto laws that Congress passes, but he cannot make laws.

Short End of the Stick?

Don't start feeling sorry for the President yet. The President has lots of special jobs. One of the most important is deciding which issues the country should focus on. There are many problems that need to be solved, and the President sets an **agenda** for the country by deciding which problems deserve the most attention. Then he will suggest ideas for laws that Congress should pass to help solve those problems. In the process, the President communicates with the American people about the issues he believes are important for the country. Often the President will hold a **press conference** to make announcements and answer questions from newspaper and television reporters. Also, once a year the President gives a **State of the Union Address** to discuss important issues facing our nation and what should be done about them.

The most



- To-Do List*
- Set agenda*
 - Hold press conference*
 - Veto bill*
 - Meet with cabinet*
 - OK treaty with Senate*
 - Welcome foreign leader*
 - Suggest new law*
 - Run for reelection!*

But Wait—There's More!

As **Commander in Chief**, the President is in charge of the entire military. The President also has the power to pardon people who have committed crimes, which means they get to go free. In addition, when leaders of foreign countries visit the United States, the President receives them and makes them feel welcome.

Getting the Work Done

There's more to the executive branch than just the President. The executive branch is huge! That's because it's mostly made up of many **departments** that are in charge of carrying out different kinds of laws. For example, the Department of Education carries out education laws. The Department of Homeland Security carries out laws designed to secure our borders and keep the country safe from terrorism. Each department has lots of employees that do the everyday work of carrying out laws.

Advice, Please!

Nobody could carry out the laws of the United States all alone! That's why the President gets lots of advice from the people who are in charge of the departments. This group is called the **cabinet**. Each department head keeps the President updated about issues facing that department and offers advice about what should be done to carry out the laws more effectively.

That was Fun—Can I Do it Again?

A President and Vice-President get elected as a team, and they serve a four-year term. At the end of the four years they can run for office again, and if they win they will serve four more years. Eight years is the limit, though—nobody is allowed to be President longer than that. A new President brings a new agenda for the country and chooses new leaders for each department of government.

