

## Summary

### 7.1 The Design and Evolution of the Presidency

The delegates at the Constitutional Convention proposed creating the office of the president and debated many forms the role might take. The president is elected for a maximum of two four-year terms and can be impeached by Congress for wrongdoing and removed from office. The presidency and presidential power, especially war powers, have expanded greatly over the last two centuries, often with the willing assistance of the legislative branch. Executive privilege and executive orders are two of the presidency's powerful tools. During the last several decades, historical events and new technologies such as radio, television, and the Internet have further enhanced the stature of the presidency.

### 7.2 The Presidential Election Process

The position of president of the United States was created during the Constitutional Convention. Within a generation of Washington's administration, powerful political parties had overtaken the nominating power of state legislatures and created their own systems for selecting candidates. At first, party leaders kept tight control over the selection of candidates via the convention process. By the start of the twentieth century, however, primary and caucus voting had brought the power to select candidates directly to the people, and the once-important conventions became rubber-stamping events.

### 7.3 Organizing to Govern

It can be difficult for a new president to come to terms with both the powers of the office and the limitations of those powers. Successful presidents assume their role ready to make a smooth transition and to learn to work within the complex governmental system to fill vacant positions in the cabinet and courts, many of which require Senate confirmation. It also means efficiently laying out a political agenda and reacting appropriately to unexpected events. New presidents have limited time to get things done and must take action with the political wind at their backs.

### 7.4 The Public Presidency

Despite the obvious fact that the president is the head of state, the U.S. Constitution actually empowers the occupant of the White House with very little authority. Apart from the president's war powers, the office holder's real advantage is the ability to speak to the nation with one voice. Technological changes in the twentieth century have greatly expanded the power of the presidential bully pulpit. The twentieth century also saw a string of more public first ladies. Women like Eleanor Roosevelt and Lady Bird Johnson

greatly expanded the power of the first lady's role, although first ladies who have undertaken more nontraditional roles have encountered significant criticism.

## 7.5 Presidential Governance: Direct Presidential Action

While the power of the presidency is typically checked by the other two branches of government, presidents have the unencumbered power to pardon those convicted of federal crimes and to issue executive orders, which don't require congressional approval but lack the permanence of laws passed by Congress. In matters concerning foreign policy, presidents have at their disposal the executive agreement, which is a much-easier way for two countries to come to terms than a treaty that requires Senate ratification but is also much narrower in scope.

Presidents use various means to attempt to drive public opinion and effect political change. But history has shown that they are limited in their ability to drive public opinion. Favorable conditions can help a president move policies forward. These conditions include party control of Congress and the arrival of crises such as war or economic decline. But as some presidencies have shown, even the most favorable conditions don't guarantee success.

### Key Terms

#### **bully pulpit**

Theodore Roosevelt's notion of the presidency as a platform from which the president could push an agenda

#### **cabinet**

a group of advisors to the president, consisting of the most senior appointed officers of the executive branch who head the fifteen executive departments

#### **executive agreement**

an international agreement between the president and another country made by the executive branch and without formal consent by the Senate

#### **Executive Office of the President**

the administrative organization that reports directly to the president and made up of important offices, units, and staff of the current president and headed by the White House chief of staff

#### **executive order**

a rule or order issued by the president without the cooperation of Congress and having the force of law

#### **executive privilege**

the president's right to withhold information from Congress, the judiciary, or the public

**going public**

a term for when the president delivers a major television address in the hope that public pressure will result in legislators supporting the president on a major piece of legislation

**impeachment**

the act of charging a government official with serious wrongdoing, which in some cases may lead to the removal of that official from office

**king caucus**

an informal meeting held in the nineteenth century, sometimes called a congressional caucus, made up of legislators in the Congress who met to decide on presidential nominees for their respective parties

**line-item veto**

a power created through law in 1996 and overturned by the Supreme Court in 1998 that allowed the president to veto specific aspects of bills passed by Congress while signing into law what remained

**Office of Management and Budget**

an office within the Executive Office of the President charged with producing the president's budget, overseeing its implementation, and overseeing the executive bureaucracy

**rally around the flag effect**

a spike in presidential popularity during international crises

**signing statement**

a statement a president issues with the intent to influence the way a specific bill the president signs should be enforced