Presidential Power

How do presidents get things done?

Understanding Presidential Power

The presidency was designed by people who feared a strong executive.

What does the Constitution say?

* Lead the armed forces as commander in chief
* Grant reprieves and pardons
* Request opinions in writing from executive officials
* Make treaties with the advice and consent of two-thirds of the Senate
* Appoint major executive and judicial officials with Senate approval
* Give Congress information on the state of the Union
* Recommend measures for congressional consideration
* Call emergency sessions of Congress
Commander in Chief

Over time, the role of commander in chief has given presidents opportunities to develop power.

- Teddy Roosevelt and the Great White Fleet
- The Korean Conflict
- An undeclared war in Southeast Asia

War Powers Resolution (1974)

The president can commit U.S. forces but...

- Must notify Congress within 48 hours.
- Must cease the operation in 60 days unless congressional authorization is given.
  - The president can extend the period for 30 days in order to protect the involved forces.
- Congress may cut off such involvement at any time by passing a joint resolution that the President cannot veto.

Emergency Powers

- Powers that may be exercised by the president in the case of emergencies.
Executive Orders

★ Orders that direct specific federal agencies to carry out the president’s wishes.
★ Must be based on Constitutional power or powers delegated by Congress

With Executive Order No. 9981 Harry Truman ended the segregation of the Armed Forces and created the President’s Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Forces.

Executive Agreements

Agreements with the chief executives of other countries that may have the force of a treaty without having to be approved by the Senate.

Impoundment

★ While the president cannot spend money unless it has been appropriated by Congress, presidents do not have to spend all of the money appropriated by Congress.
★ Restricted by Budget and Impoundment Act of 1974. The president may now postpone spending ("deferrals") or cancel spending ("rescissions") to Congress.
Executive Privilege
Right of the president to withhold from other branches confidential communication.

The Power to Persuade
“I sit here all day trying to persuade people to do things they ought to have sense enough to do without my persuading them… That's all the powers of the president amount to.”
President Truman

The President and the Public
The President and the Public

The founders feared a demagogue.

Two definitions of “demagogue”:
- A leader who gains power through appeals to the emotions and prejudices of the populace.
- A leader of the common people.

Andrew Jackson

Jackson was the first president to claim to represent the people.
He also vetoed bills on grounds other than constitutional.
He set up partisan newspapers to carry his message to the people.

“While the magnitude of their interests convinces me that no thanks can be adequate to the honor they have conferred, it admonishes me that the best return I can make is the zealous dedication of my humble abilities to their service and their good.”

Andrew Johnson

Among the impeachment charges against Johnson were charges of stirring public passions.
The “Modern” Presidency

Presidents McKinley and Teddy Roosevelt began to establish the relationship between the president and the public.

The modern presidency

- Electronic communication would cement the relationship between president and public.

The Modern Presidency

- As presidential selection became more democratic, the presidency became more democratic.
- The “rhetorical presidency”
  - Have we violated the Founders' wishes?
Illusions of Intimacy

Franklin Roosevelt could sit down with the entire nation for a “fireside chat” with a public that never knew he was in a wheelchair.

Presidential Popularity

Bush 43’s Job Approval

Gallup Poll: “Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling his job as president?”
Clinton’s Job Approval

Leading Congress

Powers
State of the Union Address
Adjourn and Convene Congress
Recommend Legislation
Vetoes

Barriers
Separation of Powers
Different Constituencies
Different Terms in Office
Divided Government
Leading Congress

★ Formal Powers
- State of the Union Address
- Adjourn and Convene Congress
- Recommend Legislation
  ◦ Vetoes

Presidential Vetoes

★ When the president gets a bill from Congress there are three possible actions
- Reject (Veto)
- Accept (Sign)
- Ignore (Pocket Veto)
★ Veto Overrides
★ Veto Threats

Who Vetoes Bills
Which presidents would you expect to have to veto the most bills?
Line Item Veto

The power of an executive to veto individual lines or items within a piece of legislation without vetoing the entire bill.

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How Does the President Influence Congress?

**Old Style**
- Congressional Liaison Staff
- Hidden Hand Leadership
- Granting Favors
- Maintaining Favor
- Party Leadership
- Interest Group Lobbying
- Presidential Aura

**New Style**
- Merchandising
- Prestige
- Special Publics

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Success in Congress

![Success in Congress Graph](graph.png)