**UNDERSTANDING THE PRESIDENCY**

1. The difference between a President and a Prime Minister
2. In a parliamentary system, like in Europe, the legislature, not the people, chooses the leader (the prime minister), who in turn chooses the other ministers from parliament members.

1. The prime minister stays in power as long as his supporting party or stays in

power

3. The President cannot choose Congressional members to be a part of his cabinet, but a prime minister’s cabinet can come from the parliament.

4. The Prime minister’s party always controls parliament, and thus, in a parliamentary system, much work can be done quickly while the American system of checks and balances can slow down legislation drastically.

a. Even when the executive and legislative branches are manned by the same party, there can be friction, and very little may be done (as in the Kennedy and Carter administrations).

b. A divided government occurs when the president’s party is not the same as the party that controls the House or Senate

  c. Unified governments, where the same party controls the presidency and

    Congress, are relatively rare.

1. How the Presidency was envisioned
2. The Founding Fathers feared both anarchy and monarchy about equally
3. Many wanted an executive that was checked by a council that would

have to approve all executive decisions

b.  Few listened to Alexander Hamilton’s pleas for something that was very

    similar to an elective monarchy like in Britain.

1. Those who believed that a large nation could only be successfully ruled

by single president with significant powers won out

d. The American president was the first leader of its type ever, and the Framers could not have predicted all consequences that it could have, but they did know that they had to create a balanced position, so that neither he could dominate Congress nor the other way around

2.  The Framers decided to create a president elected by an Electoral College, thus allowing people to indirectly choose their leader.

1. The presidency was also kept simple and modest, so that there would not be any of the glitz, ego, and glamour associated with royalty

C. The Powers of the President

1. Only the president of the United States can:

a.  Serve as commander in chief of the armed forces

b.  Commission officers of the armed forces

c. Grant reprieves and pardons for all federal offenses except impeachment

d. Convene Congress in special sessions

e. Receive ambassadors

f. Take care that the laws be faithfully executed

g.  Appoint officials to lesser offices

2. The president AND the Senate can

1. make treaties

1. appoint ambassadors
2. appoint judges
3. The president and all of Congress can approve legislation.

1. The Office of the President

1.The President's staff has gotten bigger over time

a.  1857:  President was allowed a personal secretary paid by public funds

b.  1901 The President got a Secret Service bodyguard

c 1921 President allowed to submit a presidential budget.

2. Today, the president has a HUGE staff that he can use the people around the

    President include:

a.  The White House Office

The people in the White House Office can be hired and fired by the president at will.

Most presidents appoint a chief of staff who leads all and can become very influential.

Senior White House staff members are usually long-time friends or associates, but some are experts in a certain field—one that the president happens to need advice on.

1. Members of the Executive Office

They are not as close to the president and must have their appointments approved by the Senate.

The principle agencies of the Executive Office are: Office of Management and Budge, Central Intelligence Agency, Council of Economic Advisors, Office of Personal Management, and Office of the U.S. Trade Representative.

c .The Cabinet members are basically the leaders of 14 important government departments who can advise the president when he needs it.

1. Presidential appointments

1.  The president rarely knows more than a few of the people that he appoints and is lucky if more than a most of them agree with his decisions,

1. Most cabinet members come from private business, universities, law firms, labor unions, and other private sectors where they have not really worked with the president on many, if any matters.

a. The president wants to appoint cabinet members who are experts in their

    respective fields

b. He also wants to recognize various politically important groups, regions,

and organizations.

1. The Power to Persuade
2. The president’s ceremonial powers allow him to use his powers of persuasion to accomplish a lot of what he wants to and needs to do
3. Congress seems to have little incentive to support a president’s popularity, since their seats are secure and they don’t have to fear any party boss that might deny them of power.

a.  Congressional members do have a sense that it is not wise to oppose the

     policies of a popular president

b.Popular presidents get their bills passed by Congress more often.

3.  Presidential popularity tends to be the highest right after an election, a period

     called the “honeymoon” between the public and Congress and the president, but

     the popularity is bound to drop eventually.

1. Executive Privilege

1.  The president has a huge power in the veto (which can be overidden by 2/3

     majority of Congress ); is ability to “say no” can be considered “executive

     privilege.”

a.  a veto message is a direct statement that the president sends to Congress within ten days of receiving a bill saying that he vetoes it;

b.  he can also pocket veto a bill by not signing it AND Congress has adjourned or recessed ten or less days after the bill was introduced.

The pocket veto can only be used during certain times of the year.

If a bill is not signed or vetoed within ten days, and Congress is still in session, it automatically becomes law.

Less than 4% of vetoed bills have every been overruled by Congress; such overrule is rare.

2  The Constitution says nothing about whether a president must divulge private

    communications between himself and his main advisors.

1. The President’s Program

1. Once elected, a president (helped by aides) must put together a program that:

* 1. helps him appoint hundreds of posts
  2. makes a State of the Union address

* 1. forms a complicated budget

2.  To develop policies quickly, a president will draw on interest groups, aides and campaign advisors and academic, and other specialists and experts

1. A President can develop a program by having a policy on almost

everything OR simply focus on three or four broad subjects and leave the rest to subordinates.

b. A President also has to sell his ideas out to the public to get support for

them

H.  From one President to Another

1. The presidents have been re-elected have mostly either been the Founding

    Fathers, presidents during wartime, or presidents during especially prosperous

    times

2. When the country was deeply divided, presidents were rarely re-elected.

3.The vice president has assumed the presidency eight times due to the death of his predecessor.

4. All “civil officers of the United States” can be removed through impeachment

    (trying a president or official) AND conviction (deciding he’s actually guilty).

a. Impeachment doesn’t mean automatic removal from office; it’s simply the

    voting of charges by the house and the trial in the Senate

b.  The Senate must have 2/3 majority to convict*.*