

THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH

Introduction

(See Article II, Section 1)

As you have seen, the job of the legislative branch is to make the laws. It is the job of the executive branch to carry out, or execute, those laws. They enforce, or make sure people are obeying, the laws made by the legislative branch.

If the Congress makes it a law that the speed limit should be 70 m.p.h., then it is the job of the executive branch and its offices to make sure that the citizens of the United States are obeying the speed limit.

The executive branch of the United States is very large today. The head of the executive branch is the president, but many thousands of people work for him. The executive branch handles much of the day-to-day work of the federal government.

The president is the chief executive, and he is elected for a four-year term. His second-in-command is called the vice president. They are both elected at the same time.

The president and vice president are chosen by the electoral college. The electoral college is made up of men and women from the different states. Each state gets a certain number of people, or electors. That number is determined by the total number of representatives and senators a state has. For example, if Illinois has 22 representatives and 2 senators, then Illinois would get 24 electors, or people, to vote for the president.

When we go to the polls in a presidential election, our votes are counted and the electors take those totals and elect the president based on who the people have selected. Since the common people were poorly educated and informed in the early years of our nation, the electoral college was originally established to keep the common people from making a mistake and electing a disastrous leader. Many people argue that voters today are better informed and should be allowed to elect the president directly. However, attempts to change the way the president is elected have failed.

If there is a tie in a presidential election, or no one candidate receives a clear majority, then the House of Representatives, with each state having only one vote, elects the president.

