

THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH

Organization of the Executive Branch and the Cabinet

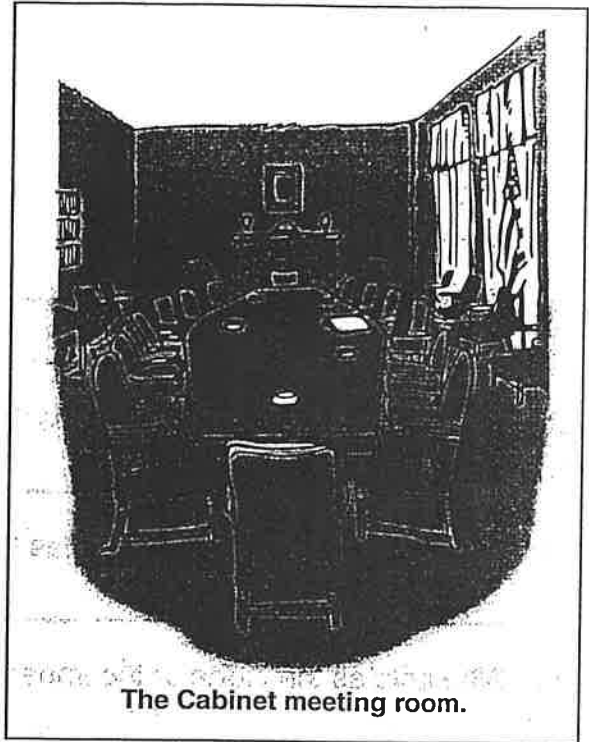
(See Article II, Section 2.3)

As we have seen, the executive branch of the United States government is quite large. Let's look now at what makes up the executive branch and the Cabinet.

There are four divisions of the executive branch: the Cabinet departments, independent agencies, government corporations, and regulatory agencies.

While the Constitution did not specifically create the Cabinet, President Washington in 1789 felt he needed advisors. The Cabinet is a group of men and women who are the president's closest advisors. They are each in charge of one of the fifteen departments. A list of the Cabinet departments may be found on page 66 of this workbook. The most important Cabinet departments are the Department of State, Department of Defense, and the Department of the Treasury. The Department of Homeland Security, which was added to deal with terrorist threats to our nation after the attacks of September 11, 2001, has also become an important part of the Cabinet.

Each advisor is given the title of "Secretary." If you were head of the Department of State, for example, you would be known as the Secretary of State. Each department head, or secretary, has many people working under him or her to keep the government running smoothly. Each Cabinet department deals with specific areas of national concern.



The Cabinet meeting room.

Another section of the executive branch overseen by the president is the independent agencies. These agencies are not as important as Cabinet departments, but are essential to the mission of the United States. One example of an independent agency is the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

A third category is known as government corporations. These are businesses run by the United States government in order to provide specific services to the people. The United States Postal Service is a government corporation. Another example is the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), which insures the money that is deposited in banks.

The final division of the executive branch is the regulatory commissions. These groups make sure that the rules set for certain large industries are being followed and that the safety of the public is not in jeopardy. Examples are the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), which licenses radio and television stations, and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), which makes sure airports, aircraft, and pilots are safe.

As you can see, the president has a great deal of responsibility and a large number of people to oversee to ensure that the government is functioning properly.