

THE PRESIDENTIAL ESTABLISHMENT

AS THE RESPONSIBILITIES AND SCOPE of presidential authority grew over the years, so did the executive branch, including the number of people working directly for the president in the White House. The vice president and his staff, the Cabinet, the first lady and her staff, the Executive Office of the President, and the White House staff all help the president fulfill his duties as chief executive.

The Vice President

For many years the vice presidency was considered a sure place for a public official to disappear into obscurity. When John Adams wrote to his wife, Abigail, about his position as America's first vice president, he said it was "the most insignificant office that was the invention of man . . . or his imagination conceived."²⁰

Historically, presidents chose their vice presidents largely to balance—politically, geographically, or otherwise—the presidential ticket, with little thought given to the possibility that the vice president would become president. Franklin D. Roosevelt, for example, a liberal New Yorker, selected John Nance Garner, a conservative Texan, to be his running mate in 1932. After serving two terms, Garner—who openly disagreed with Roosevelt over many policies, including Roosevelt's decision to seek a third term—unsuccessfully sought the 1940 presidential nomination himself. The Bush/Cheney

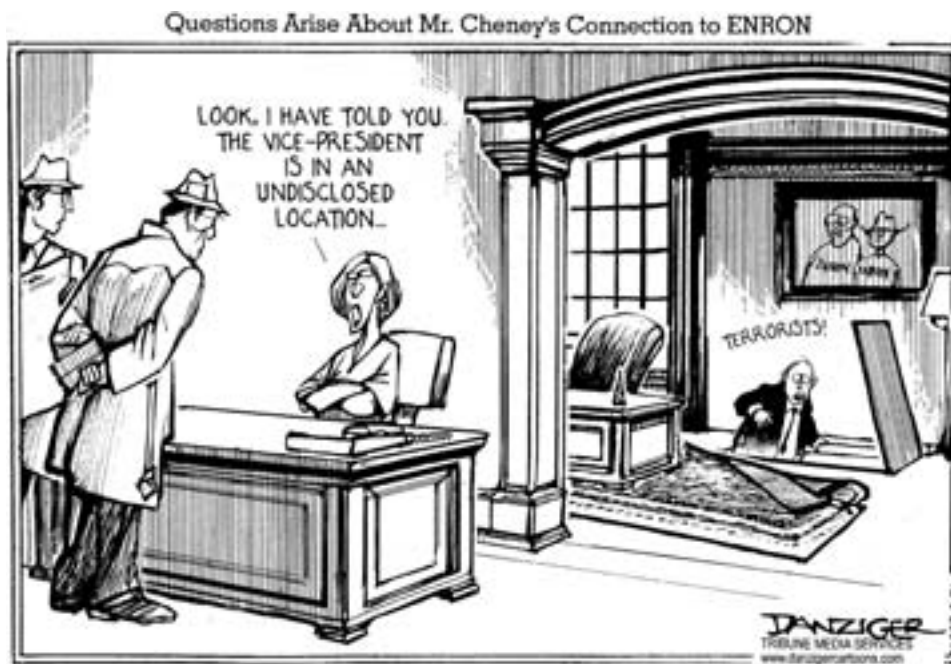


Photo courtesy: Danziger/© Tribune Media Services, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Reprinted with permission

■ Immediately after 9/11, Vice President Dick Cheney was moved to what was called an "undisclosed location." The formerly very visible vice president was no longer around, and in the wake of a Government Accounting Office request for documents about his and the administration's connections to the oil industry, political cartoonists used his being unavailable at an undisclosed location for continued security reasons as an opportunity to poke fun at him.

ticket in 2000 showed an effort to balance the ticket in ways different from the past. Most commentators agreed that Dick Cheney was chosen to provide “gravitas”—a sense of national governmental experience, especially in foreign affairs, that Governor Bush neither had nor claimed. Similarly, Senator John Edwards (D–NC) was selected as John Kerry’s 2004 running mate to soften Kerry’s somewhat aloof demeanor.

How much power a vice president has depends on how much the president is willing to give him. Jimmy Carter was the first president to give his vice president, Walter Mondale, more than ceremonial duties. In fact, Walter Mondale was the first vice president to have an office in the White House. (It wasn’t until 1961 that a vice president even had an office in the Executive Office Building next door to the White House!) The Mondale model of an active vice president has now become the norm.

The question still exists, however, as to whether the vice presidency is a stepping stone to the presidency. As the 2000 campaign underscored, the vice president of a very popular president at a time of unprecedented economic prosperity, Al Gore, was unable to translate that good will into election for himself.

The Cabinet

The Cabinet, which has no basis in the Constitution, is an informal institution based on practice and precedent whose membership is determined by tradition and presidential discretion. By custom, this advisory group selected by the president includes the heads of major executive departments. Presidents today also include their vice presidents in Cabinet meetings, as well as any other agency heads or officials to whom they would like to accord Cabinet-level status.

As a body, the Cabinet’s major function is to help the president execute the laws and assist him in making decisions. Although the Framers had discussed the idea of some form of national executive council, they did not include a provision for one in the Constitution. They did recognize, however, the need for departments of government and departmental heads.

■ President George W. Bush with Vice President Dick Cheney chats with Secretary of State Colin Powell and National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice. When Powell resigned after the president’s re-election, Rice was appointed and confirmed as the first African American female secretary of state.

Photo courtesy: Mark Wilson/Getty Images



TABLE 8.6 The U.S. Cabinet and Responsibilities of Each Executive Department

<i>Department Head</i>	<i>Department</i>	<i>Date of Creation</i>	<i>Responsibilities</i>
Secretary of State	Department of State	1789	Responsible for the making of foreign policy, including treaty negotiation
Secretary of the Treasury	Department of the Treasury	1789	Responsible for government funds and regulation of alcohol, firearms, and tobacco
Secretary of Defense	Department of Defense	1789, 1947	Created by consolidating the former Departments of War, the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force; responsible for national defense
Attorney General	Department of Justice	1870	Represents U.S. government in all federal courts, investigates and prosecutes violations of federal law
Secretary of the Interior	Department of the Interior	1849	Manages the nation's natural resources, including wildlife and public lands
Secretary of Agriculture	Department of Agriculture	Created 1862; elevated to Cabinet status 1889	Assists the nation's farmers, oversees food-quality programs, administers food stamp and school lunch programs
Secretary of Commerce	Department of Commerce	1903	Aids businesses and conducts the U.S. Census (originally the Department of Commerce and Labor)
Secretary of Labor	Department of Labor	1913	Runs labor programs, keeps labor statistics, aids labor through enforcement of laws
Secretary of Health and Human Services	Department of Health and Human Services	1953	Runs health, welfare, and Social Security programs; created as the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (lost its education function in 1979)
Secretary of Housing and Urban Development	Department of Housing and Urban Development	1965	Responsible for urban and housing programs
Secretary of Transportation	Department of Transportation	1966	Responsible for mass transportation and highway programs
Secretary of Energy	Department of Energy	1977	Responsible for energy policy and research, including atomic energy
Secretary of Education	Department of Education	1979	Responsible for the federal government's education programs
Secretary of Veterans Affairs	Department of Veterans Affairs	1989	Responsible for programs aiding veterans
Secretary of Homeland Security	Department of Homeland Security	2002	Responsible for all issues pertaining to homeland security

As revealed in Table 8.6, over the years the Cabinet has grown as new departments have accommodated for new pressures on the president to act in areas that initially were not considered within the scope of concern of the national government. As interest groups, in particular, pressured Congress and the president to recognize their demands for services and governmental action, they often were rewarded by the creation of an executive department. Since each was headed by a secretary who automatically became a member of the president's Cabinet, powerful groups including farmers (Agriculture), business people (Commerce), workers (Labor), and teachers (Education) saw the creation of a department as increasing their access to the president.

The size of the president's Cabinet has increased over the years at the same time that most presidents' reliance on their Cabinet secretaries has decreased, although some individual members of a president's Cabinet may be very influential. Former Secretary of Commerce Don Evans, for example, was an old friend of George W. Bush's. Evans served as secretary for Bush's whole first term before resigning. (Chapter 9 provides a more detailed discussion of the Cabinet's role in executing U.S. policy.)

The First Lady

From the time of Martha Washington, first ladies (a term coined during the Civil War) have assisted presidents as informal advisers while making other, more public,



Photo courtesy: Stock Montage, Inc.

■ In 1919, President Woodrow Wilson had what many believed to be a nervous collapse in the summer and a debilitating stroke in the fall that incapacitated him for several months. His wife, Edith Bolling Galt Wilson, refused to admit his advisers to his sickroom, and rumors flew about the “First Lady President,” as many suspected it was his wife and not Wilson who was issuing the orders.

significant contributions to American society. Until recently, the only formal national recognition given to first ladies was an exhibit of inaugural ball gowns at the Smithsonian Institution. In 1992, in keeping with increased recognition of the many roles of first ladies, the Smithsonian launched an exhibit that highlighted the personal accomplishments of first ladies. This 1992 exhibit was built around three themes: (1) the political role of the first ladies, including how they were portrayed in the media and perceived by the public; (2) their contributions to society, especially their personal causes; and, (3) still, of course, their inaugural gowns.

Hillary Rodham Clinton was not the first first lady who worked for or with her husband. Abigail Adams was a constant sounding board for her husband, John. An early feminist, as early as 1776 she cautioned him “to Remember the Ladies” in any new code of laws. Edith Bolling Galt Wilson was probably the most powerful first lady. When Woodrow Wilson collapsed and was left partly paralyzed in 1919, she became his surrogate and decided whom and what the stricken president saw. Her detractors dubbed her “Acting First Man.”

Eleanor Roosevelt also played a powerful and much criticized role in national affairs. Not only did she write a nationally syndicated daily newspaper column, but she traveled and lectured widely, worked tirelessly on thankless Democratic Party matters, and raised six children. After FDR’s death, she shone in her own right as U.S. delegate to the United Nations, where she headed the commission that drafted the covenant on human rights. Later, she headed John F. Kennedy’s Commission on the Status of Women. Rosalyn Carter also took an activist role by attending Cabinet meetings and traveling to Latin America as her husband’s policy representative.

Initially, Laura Bush, a former librarian, seemed to be following the path of her mother-in-law, former First Lady Barbara Bush. She adopted a behind-the-scenes role and made literacy the focus of her activities. In the aftermath of the tragedy of 9/11, the first lady immediately took on a more public role. She gave the president’s weekly radio address, highlighting the status of women in Afghanistan under the oppressive Taliban regime, and then continued to speak out, calling for improvements in the legal status of women. She even went to the United Nations to call for international support for women under the Taliban. She also took to the campaign trail in 2002 and 2004, very effectively fund-raising on behalf of Republican candidates, including her husband.

The Executive Office of the President (EOP)

The **Executive Office of the President (EOP)** was established by FDR in 1939 to oversee his New Deal programs. It was created to provide the president with a general staff to help him direct the diverse activities of the executive branch. In fact, it is a mini-bureaucracy of several advisers and offices located in the ornate Executive Office Building next to the White House on Pennsylvania Avenue, as well as in the White House itself, where the president’s closest advisers often are located.

The EOP has expanded over time to include several advisory and policy-making agencies and task forces. Over time, the units of the EOP have become the prime policy makers in their fields of expertise as they play key roles in advancing the president’s policy preferences. Among the EOP’s most important members are the National Security Council, the Council of Economic Advisers, the Office of Management and Budget, the Office of the Vice President, and the U.S. Trade Representative.

The National Security Council (NSC) was established in 1947 to advise the president on American military affairs and foreign policy. The NSC is composed of the president, the vice president, and the secretaries of state and defense. The chair of the

Executive Office of the President (EOP)

Establishment created in 1939 to help the president oversee the executive branch bureaucracy.

Joint Chiefs of Staff and the director of the Central Intelligence Agency also participate. Others such as the White House chief of staff and the general counsel may attend. The national security adviser runs the staff of the NSC, coordinates information and options, and advises the president.

Although the president appoints the members of each of these bodies, they must perform their tasks in accordance with congressional legislation. As with the Cabinet, depending on who serves in key positions, these mini-agencies may not be truly responsible to the president.

Presidents can give clear indications of their policy preferences by the kinds of offices they include in the EOP. President George W. Bush, for example, not only moved or consolidated several offices when he became president in 2001, but he quickly sought to create a new Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives to help him achieve his goal of greater religious involvement in matters of domestic policy.

The White House Staff

Often more directly responsible to the president are the members of the White House staff: the personal assistants to the president, including senior aides, their deputies, assistants with professional duties, and clerical and administrative aides. As personal assistants, these advisers are not subject to Senate confirmation, nor do they have divided loyalties. Their power is derived from their personal relationship to the president, and they have no independent legal authority.

Although presidents organize the White House staff in different ways, they typically have a chief of staff whose job is to facilitate the smooth running of the staff and the executive branch of government. Successful chiefs of staff also have protected the president from mistakes and helped implement policies to obtain the maximum political advantage for the president. Other key White House aides include those who help plan domestic policy, maintain relations with Congress and interest groups, deal with the media, provide economic expertise, and execute political strategies.

As presidents have tried to consolidate power in the White House, and as public demands on the president have grown, the size of the White House staff has increased—from fifty-one in 1943, to 247 in 1953, to a high of 583 in 1972. Since that time, staffs have been trimmed, generally running around 500. During his 1992 presidential campaign, Bill Clinton promised to cut the size of the White House staff and that of the Executive Office of the President, and eventually he reduced the size of his staff by approximately 15 percent. The current White House has fewer than 400 staffers.

Although White House staffers prefer to be located in the White House in spite of its small offices, many staffers are relegated to the old Executive Office Building next door because White House office space is limited. In Washington, the size of the office is not the measure of power that it often is in corporations. Instead, power in the White House goes to those who have the president's ear and the offices closest to the Oval Office.