

Part of FDR's power lay in his style as president. Whereas previous presidents had used formal speeches to get their ideas across, FDR addressed the American people directly, in their own homes, through a series of radio broadcasts known as "fireside chats." In these chats, Roosevelt spoke to listeners in a warm, engaging manner, explaining his ideas and asking for their support. In this way, many Americans came to see the president not as a distant leader, but as a friend who understood their concerns.

During World War II, FDR expanded his powers still further. But rather than objecting to this growth of presidential power, most Americans applauded Roosevelt as a "savior." As one political scientist observed, "The argument was simple: The more power the executive had, the more good he could do."

Since the end of World War II, the presidency has been powerful, no matter who is in the White House. By the 1970s, some critics of presidential power voiced concerns about the rise of an "imperial presidency," meaning presidents acted more like emperors than constitutional leaders. Nonetheless, the president today is still limited in his powers to those set down in the Constitution more than two centuries ago.

■ 13.4 The Modern President's Job

President John F. Kennedy once said, "No easy problem ever comes to the President of the United States. If they are easy to solve, somebody else has solved them." Lyndon Johnson, who assumed the presidency after Kennedy's assassination, called the job an "awesome burden." After looking at the modern president's many duties, one scholar noted, "All that is missing is Mover of Mountains and Raiser of the Dead."

The Many Roles of the President

Given the complexities of the modern world, the job of president has grown more challenging. To carry out their duties as chief executive, presidents must assume many different roles. The diagram on the facing page shows the various roles the president plays on any given day.

Chief executive. As the country's chief executive, the president acts much like the head of a large

corporation. In this role, the president presides over the federal **bureaucracy**, or the various agencies and organizations that carry on the daily business of government. To keep that bureaucracy running, the president is responsible for appointing close to 2,000 federal officials. These officials, in turn, oversee the work of nearly 2 million civilian employees of the federal government.

As chief executive, the president has the power to issue executive orders. A president is most likely to use this power during an emergency or when Congress fails to take action on an important issue. For example, in 1948, Congress was divided over a bill to desegregate the armed forces. Rather than waiting for Congress to act, President Harry Truman issued an executive order abolishing segregation in the military.

Chief of state. The president also acts as chief of state, the ceremonial leader of the government. In many countries, different individuals hold the positions of chief executive and chief of state. In Great Britain, for example, the prime minister is the chief executive, while the monarch is the chief of state. In the United States, however, the president wears both hats.

As chief of state, the president represents the United States at official functions, both at home and abroad. For example, the president greets foreign leaders and hosts state dinners at the White House. Chief of state duties also include acts to promote national spirit, as when the president lights the national Christmas tree or throws out the first pitch of the major league baseball season.

Commander in chief. The job of commander in chief is one of the president's most challenging roles. As head of the armed forces, the president is responsible for the operations of the U.S. military and the overall security of the nation.

The framers believed it was important for the nation's top civilian leader to have control over the armed forces. But they also set limits on the president's control by giving Congress the power to declare war. Since World War II, however, the president has often committed troops to action without a formal declaration of war. In 1973, Congress passed the War Powers Act, which requires the president to get congressional approval to wage war.

But presidents still find ways to stretch this law. As one scholar noted, the military role of the president is "whatever Congress lets him get away with."

Chief diplomat. Another key role for the president is that of the nation's chief diplomat. In this role, the president oversees U.S. foreign policy, holds talks with foreign leaders, and negotiates treaties.

The Constitution directs the president to seek the advice and consent of the Senate in making treaties. Taking this wording literally, President Washington went to the Senate in 1789 to seek its advice on a proposed treaty with the Creek Indians. After some debate, the senators referred the matter to a committee. Washington left in disgust, preferring after that

The President's Many Roles

The president performs many roles as head of the executive branch. Here are the most important roles the president plays.



to communicate with the Senate in writing. All other presidents have followed his example. Presidents do consult with individual senators, however, and they must still obtain the consent of the Senate to get any treaty approved.

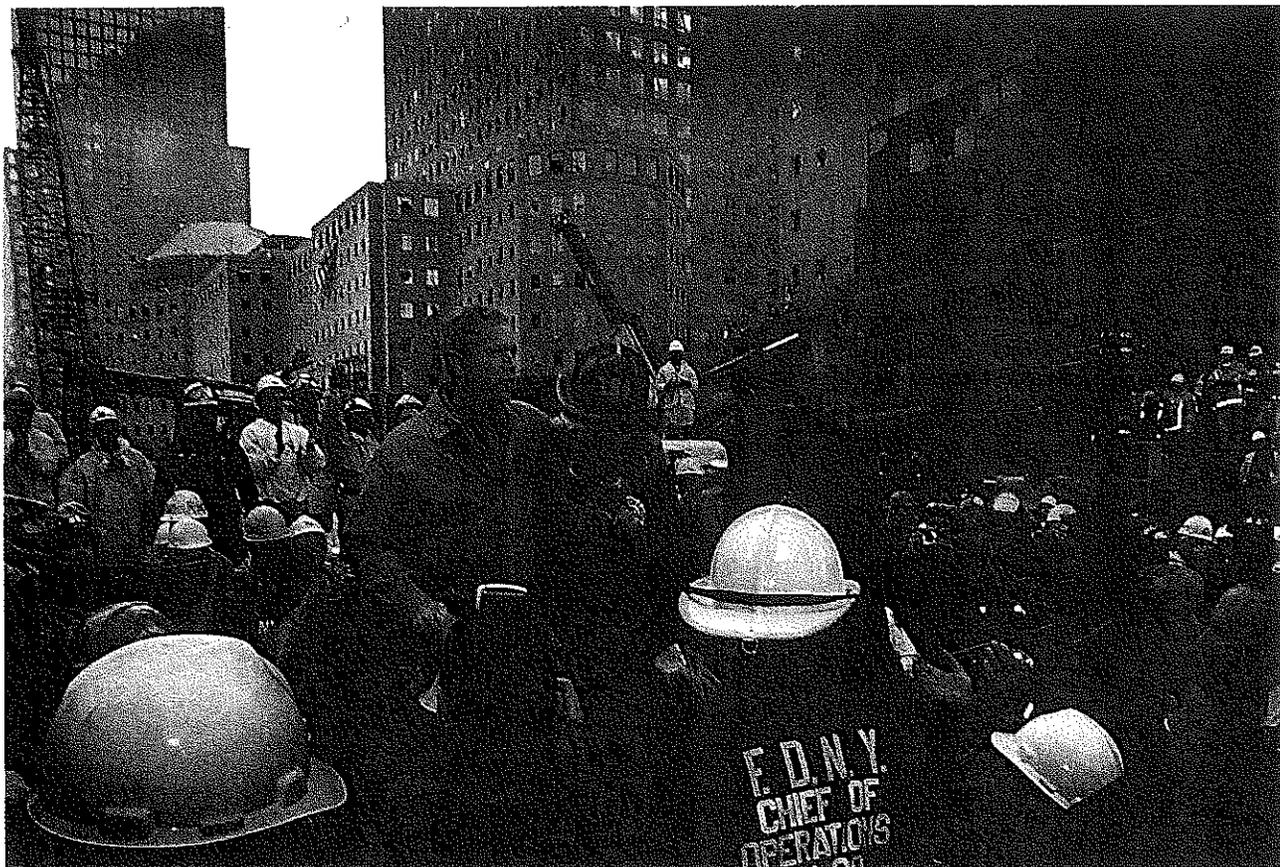
Chief policymaker. Since Franklin Roosevelt's administration, the president has served as chief policymaker for the nation. Although Congress makes the laws, the president has significant influence over the legislative process. The president normally sets a policy agenda for Congress in the annual State of the Union address. The president may also propose legislation or pressure members of Congress to support or oppose certain bills. Other executive powers, such as the power to call Congress into special session and to veto bills, are more key tools the president can use to shape policy.

Chief manager of the economy. The president has no formal power over the economy. However, the president does work with Congress to write a federal

budget and set tax policy. The president also appoints members of the Federal Reserve Board, which works to control the money supply and keep the economy growing at a sustainable pace.

Chief of party. The president is the leader of his or her political party. Presidents tend to have deep loyalty to their party and exert great influence over party members in Congress. They typically work to ensure that their party does well in congressional elections, in hopes of gaining or strengthening a congressional majority. They may take part in campaign fundraising or other campaign events. They also typically reward loyal party members with political favors or appointments to federal office.

Chief citizen. The president is also the nation's chief citizen. In that role, the president strives to embody American ideals and to serve the nation by acting in its best interests. In times of crisis or tragedy, the president as chief citizen works to inform, inspire, and comfort the American people.



One of the president's roles is to reassure and comfort the nation at times of crisis. George W. Bush fulfilled this duty at Ground Zero in New York City, the site of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center.