

# ***Presidential Roles***

The U.S. Constitution gives the President many powers and duties. These can be grouped into seven roles: chief of state, chief executive, chief legislator, commander-in-chief, chief diplomat, chief of party, and chief citizen.

**A. Chief of State:** Ceremonial head of government. This means he/she is the symbol of the United States. He attends funerals of foreign leaders, awards medals to worthy citizens, lights the nation's Christmas tree, and greets foreign leaders when they visit the U.S.

**B. Chief Executive:** Head of the Executive Branch of the national government. The President appoints or dismisses members of the Cabinet, oversees agencies and commissions under executive control, selects members of the White House staff, and prepares the budget with the aid of advisors.

**C. Chief Legislator:** Proposer of the legislative agenda. Although Congress makes the laws, the President can suggest laws and persuade members of Congress to vote for them. Each year the President gives the State of the Union Address in which he/she suggests ideas the President would like to see made into laws. The President can also call special sessions of Congress when necessary.

**D. Commander-in Chief:** Head of the nation's armed forces. The President is the highest authority in the U.S. military. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, the generals and admirals and all soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines must do what the President tells them to do.

**E. Chief Diplomat:** Architect of American foreign policy. With the help of advisors, the President makes foreign policy. The President decides what relationship the U.S. will have with other countries: whether the U.S. will send them food, technology, and military aid or treat them as enemies. The President appoints ambassadors and other diplomats to foreign countries and can negotiate treaties or other agreements with them.

**F. Chief of Party:** Leader of the political party that controls the executive branch. The President is the most important member of his/her own political party. During an election year, the President makes speeches and helps raise money for party members running for offices such as governor, senator, or representative.

**G. Chief Citizen:** Representative of all the people. It is the president's duty to work for the public interest amidst competing private interests, and to place the nation's best interests above the interests of any one group or citizen. U.S. citizens expect the President to work for their interests and provide moral leadership.

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Below are examples of presidential actions. Decide which role the President was fulfilling by each action, and put the letter of that role in the space provided. Some answers are used more than once.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. When young men and women graduate from West Point or the Air Force Academy, the President commissions them as officers in the United States military.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. President Dwight Eisenhower led the federal government to undertake the construction of a national system of interstate highways to both aid commerce and allow evacuation of cities in case of nuclear attack.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. During the Hundred Days of Franklin D. Roosevelt's first administration in 1933, the President and his advisors suggested dozens of laws to Congress to improve conditions during the Great Depression.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. President Truman fired General Douglas MacArthur during the Korean War. MacArthur wanted to invade China which was supplying troops and weapons to North Korea, but Truman didn't want to risk a third world war by attacking China.
- Judicial**
- Leader** 5. President Reagan appointed the first woman, Sandra Day O'Connor, to be a Supreme Court justice.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. President Clinton appointed the first woman Attorney General, Janet Reno, and the first woman Secretary of State, Madeline Albright, to his cabinet.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. President Clinton honored Rosa Parks, a civil rights activist, at a ceremony shown on national television.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. In 1978, President Carter brought the leaders of Egypt and Israel to the United States where they reached a peace agreement known as the Camp David Accords.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. President Ronald Reagan dismissed his Secretary of State, Alexander Haig, after Haig mistakenly told the press that he was in charge after Reagan had been wounded during an assassination attempt.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. President Clinton attended the funeral of King Hussein of Jordan in 1999.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Although the U.S. ambassadors to France were only bargaining to purchase the city of New Orleans, Thomas Jefferson gave them permission to buy all of the Louisiana Territory when Napoleon offered to sell it for \$15 million.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. President Clinton toured the nation speaking for members of the Democratic Party in the congressional elections of 1994.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. President Franklin D. Roosevelt called a special session of Congress to ask that body to declare war against Japan after the bombing of Pearl Harbor.