

# The Presidency in Action

SECTION 1

## THE GROWTH OF PRESIDENTIAL POWER

### TEXT SUMMARY

The Constitution's **Executive Article**, Article II, gives the President some specific powers (see chart below), but it gives few details about them. Debate about the extent of these powers began with the Framers and has continued since.

Over time, the presidency has become very powerful for several reasons. First, the President stands as the executive branch's single strong leader, while Congress has two houses and over 500 members. Second, as American life has grown more complex, the people have looked to the President for leadership on such issues as the economy and health care. Third, in national emergencies, the President, as commander in chief, has needed to take decisive action. Fourth, Congress has passed many laws that

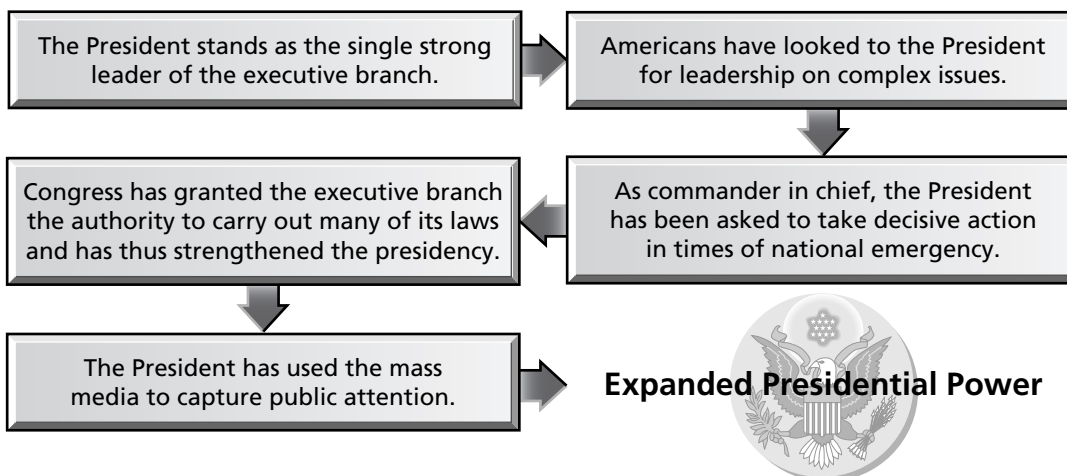
expand the Federal Government's activities. Not having time itself, Congress has had to ask the executive branch to decide how to carry out these laws. Also, the President can use the **mass media**—television, radio, printed publications, and the Internet—to capture public attention.

Some past Presidents have taken a broad view of their powers, while others have said the President should have limited power. Critics of strong presidential power have used the term the **imperial presidency** to compare the President to an emperor who takes strong actions without Congress's—or the people's—approval.

### THE BIG IDEA

**The Constitution established the office of President, but debate about the extent of the office's powers has continued throughout the nation's history.**

### GRAPHIC SUMMARY: *The Growth of Presidential Power*



Though debated, the extent of presidential power has greatly expanded due to certain factors.

### REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What, if anything, do you think is wrong with the concept of the imperial presidency?
2. **Diagram Skills** How have the American people encouraged the growth of presidential power?