

# THE PRESIDENT'S EXECUTIVE POWERS

## TEXT SUMMARY

The President is the head of the executive branch and must carry out the provisions of federal law. The power to do so comes partly from the Constitution and partly from the **oath of office**—the solemn promise that each President takes at his inauguration to “preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution.” The President’s executive power offers him many chances to decide how laws are carried out.

The President possesses the **ordinance power**, the power to issue executive orders. An **executive order** is a directive, rule, or regulation that has the effect of law. The Constitution does not expressly give the President this power, but the President must be able to issue orders to implement

his constitutional powers. Congress backs up this implied power by regularly authorizing the President to use it.

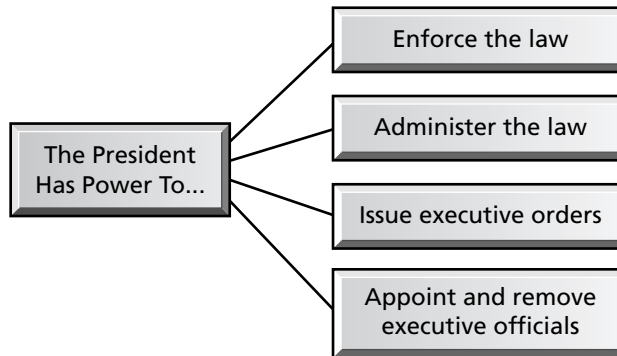
In order to have loyal subordinates, the President can choose the top officials of the executive branch, including heads of executive agencies, diplomats, Cabinet members, federal judges, and military officers. The Senate must approve these appointments with a majority vote. For State officials, the custom of senatorial courtesy holds that the Senate will approve only those appointments accepted by the State’s senator from the President’s party.

The President alone has the power to fire executive officials. However, the President may not remove federal judges and generally can only remove people whom he has appointed.

### THE BIG IDEA

**The President has great power to give orders, to decide how laws are carried out, and to appoint federal officials.**

## GRAPHIC SUMMARY: Major Executive Powers of the Presidency



One of the President’s key powers is the ability to appoint and remove top executive officials.

## REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is an executive order?
2. **Diagram Skills** How may the President affect the jobs of top executive officials?