

THE EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS

TEXT SUMMARY

Much of the Federal Government's work is carried out by the 14 **executive departments**, the traditional units of federal administration that are often called the Cabinet departments. The Cabinet is an informal advisory board convened by the President to serve his needs; it is made up of the heads of each executive department and other top officials.

Each department head is called a **secretary**, except for the head of the Department of Justice, who is the **attorney general**. These heads act as the primary links between the President and the subunits within

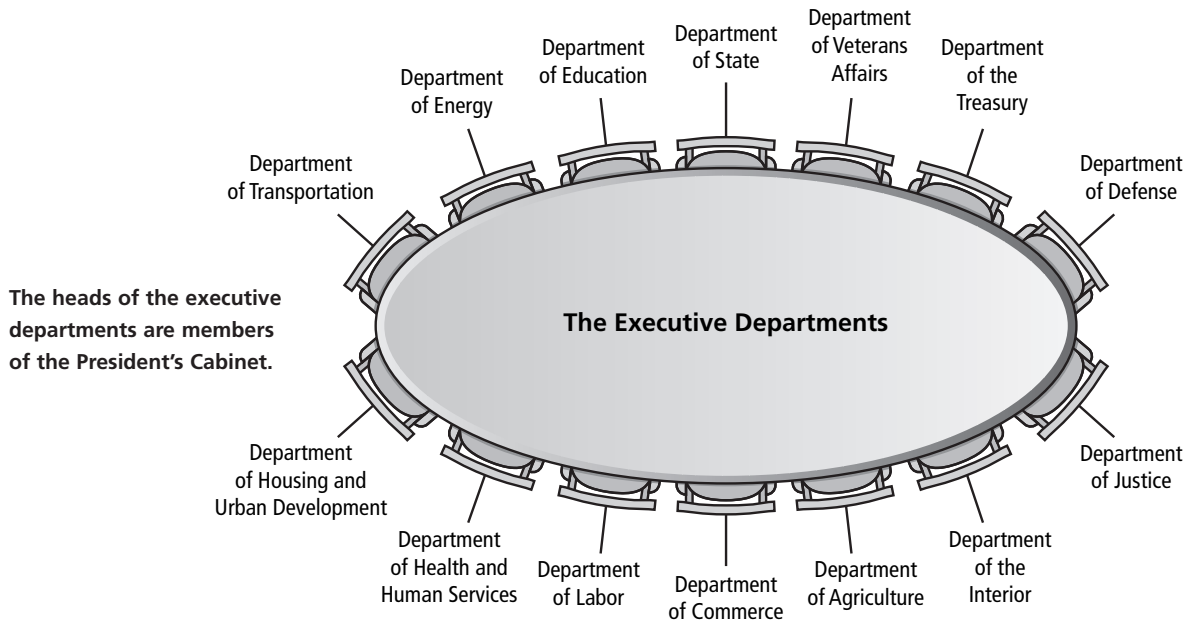
their departments. The President chooses each department head, but these appointments must be confirmed by the Senate.

Today, the executive departments vary in terms of visibility, importance, and size. The Department of State is the oldest and most prestigious department. The Department of Defense is the largest. The Department of Health and Human Services has the largest budget, and the Department of Veterans Affairs is the newest. The other departments are those of the Treasury, Justice, the Interior, Agriculture, Commerce, Labor, Housing and Urban Development, Transportation, Energy, and Education.

THE BIG IDEA

Fourteen executive departments, each headed by a Cabinet member, carry out most of the Federal Government's work.

GRAPHIC SUMMARY: *The Executive Departments*



REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is the role of the head of an executive department?
2. **Diagram Skills** How many executive departments are there in the Federal Government?