The President of the United States

Pre-reading

Questions:
- What does the President do?
- When is the President elected?

Definitions:
- Executive – part of the government that puts laws into effect
- Legislative – part of the government that has the power to create and pass laws
- Judicial – having to do with judges or courts of law
- Bill – a proposed law that has not yet been voted on
- Propose – to present or suggest as an idea to be considered

Reading

The President of the United States lives and works at the White House in the nation’s capitol, Washington, D.C. Our nation’s leader is elected on the Tuesday after the first Monday in November every fourth year. In order to be elected, the candidate for president must be at least 35 years old. He or she must be a natural born U.S. citizen and have lived in the U.S. for at least 14 years.

The president is the most powerful figure in the U.S. government. The Constitution of the United States gives the president this enormous power. However, it also limits the president’s power. The authors of the Constitution wanted a strong leader as president, but they did not want an all-powerful king. As a result, they divided the powers of the United States government among three branches – executive, legislative, and judicial.

The President is the head of the executive branch of the United States government. He has many roles in the position. He is the Head of Government, the Head of State, and the Commander in Chief. As the Head of Government he has a great impact in making America’s laws. His job is to approve the laws that Congress (the legislative branch) creates. When the Senate and the House approve a bill, they send it to the President. If he agrees with the proposed law, he signs it. Then, the law goes into effect.

If the President does not like a bill, he can refuse to sign it. When he does this, it is called a veto. If the President vetoes a bill, it will most likely never become a law. Congress can override a veto. To override a veto, two-thirds of the members of Congress must vote against the President. Even though the President has a great deal of power, he cannot write bills. He can propose a bill, but a member of Congress must write and submit it.

The President serves as the American Head of State. As Head of State he meets with the leaders of other countries and can make treaties with them. However, the Senate must approve any treaty before it becomes official. He also performs ceremonial duties such as holding state dinners and traveling throughout the world representing the United States.

The President is the Commander in Chief. This means he is the head of the U.S. military. He is responsible for the nation’s security. He can authorize the use of troops overseas without declaring war. To officially declare war, he must get the approval of Congress.

The President serves a term of four years. The most one President can serve is two terms.
Understanding

1. What are the three requirements for being a presidential candidate? ________________________________

2. What does the President do as Commander in Chief? ________________________________

3. The President is the head of what branch of the government? ________________________________

4. What does it mean when a President vetoes a bill? ________________________________

5. What branch of the government writes laws? ________________________________

6. How many years can the President of the United States be in office? ________________________________

7. Can a President officially declare war? Why or Why not? ________________________________

Writing

Summarize what you learned about the office of President of the United States.

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