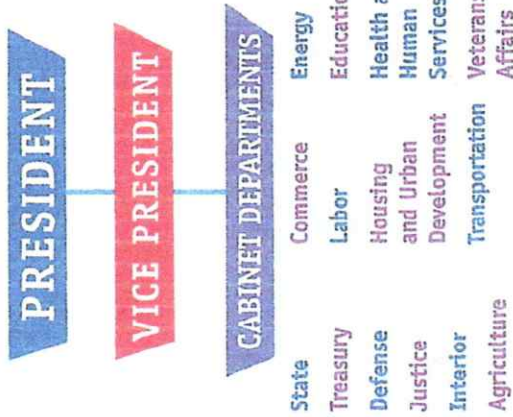


THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH: The PRESIDENT and the CABINET

The executive branch of the federal government is headed by the president. It also includes the vice president, people who work for the president or vice president, the major departments of the federal government, and special agencies. The cabinet is made up of the vice president, heads of the major departments, and other top officials. It meets when the president asks for its advice. As head of the executive branch, the president is responsible for enforcing the laws passed by Congress and is commander in chief of U.S. armed forces. The chart at right shows cabinet departments in the order in which they were created.



How Long Does the President Serve?

The president serves a four-year term, starting on January 20. No president can be elected more than twice.

What Happens if the President Dies?

If the president dies in office or cannot complete the term, the vice president becomes president. If the president is disabled, the vice president can become acting president until the president is able to work again. The next person to become president after the vice president would be the Speaker of the House of Representatives. A person who finishes more than two years of a president's term can be elected to only one more term.

The White House has an address on the World Wide Web especially for kids. It is:

WEB SITE <http://www.whitehouse.gov/WH/kids/html/home.html>

You can send e-mail to the president at:

EMAIL president@whitehouse.gov



▲ The White House, home of the U.S. president



DID YOU KNOW?

You can use the site at left to "tour" the White House and learn about the First Family.

THE JUDICIAL BRANCH: The SUPREME COURT

The highest court in the United States is the Supreme Court. It has nine justices who are appointed for life by the president with the approval of the Senate. Eight of the nine members are called associate justices. The ninth is the chief justice, who presides over the Court's meetings.

What Does the Supreme Court Do? The Supreme Court's major responsibilities are to judge cases that involve reviewing federal laws, actions of the president, treaties of the United States, and laws passed by state governments to be sure that they do not conflict with the U.S. Constitution. The Supreme Court carries out these responsibilities by deciding cases that come before it. This process is known as **judicial review**. If the Supreme Court finds that a law or action violates the Constitution, the justices declare it unconstitutional.

The Supreme Court's Decision Is Final. Most cases must go through other federal courts or state courts before they go to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court is the final court for a case, and the justices usually decide which cases they will review. After the Supreme Court hears a case, it may agree or disagree with the decision by a lower court. When the Supreme Court makes a ruling, its decision is final, and all people involved in the case must abide by it.

Who Is on the Supreme Court? Below are the nine justices who were on the Supreme Court at the beginning of its 1999-2000 session.



Back row (from left to right): Ruth Bader Ginsburg, David H. Souter, Clarence Thomas, Stephen Breyer. **Front row (from left to right):** Antonin Scalia, John Paul Stevens, Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist, Sandra Day O'Connor, Anthony M. Kennedy.



DID YOU KNOW?

Marbury v. Madison in 1803 was an especially important case. The justices decided the Supreme Court was allowed to declare laws unconstitutional (not fitting in with the U.S. Constitution). That decision has affected almost every case that has since come before the Supreme Court.