Learning Objectives. Students will be able to:

• Explain the roles and responsibilities of executive
departments and the president’s cabinet.
• Describe how executive departments and agencies enforce
governmental policies.
• Examine regulatory agencies and their social, economic,
and political impact on the country.

Time Needed: One class period

Materials Needed:
Student worksheets
Projector / Transparencies

Copy Instructions:
Reading (2 pages; class set)
Worksheet (2 pages; class set)

STEP BY STEP

☐ ANTICIPATE by asking students if they know the different ways the government is involved in
their day to day lives.

☐ DISTRIBUTE one reading page to each student.

☐ READ together with the class, pausing to discuss and explain as appropriate.

☐ PROJECT the alphabet soup activity. Use pieces of paper to cover up the acronyms.

☐ REVEAL each acronym on it’s own. Call on the entire class to guess the acronym. Give clues
to the students if they get stuck (e.g. Do you see any patterns? What word does the “D” usually stand for? Is the “D” word always included in the acronym?” Use
each question as an opportunity for discussion and review.

☐ DISTRIBUTE one worksheet to each student.

☐ REVIEW the answers to the worksheet if you wish.

☐ CLOSE by asking students to recall which laws are supreme: United States laws or state
laws.
We’ve Got a Job to Do

The job of the executive branch is to carry out the laws that the legislative branch passes. When you think of the executive branch, you probably think of the president. But the president is only the head of the executive branch. He is like the tip of the iceberg: underneath, there is a giant organization with lots of people doing many different jobs. In fact, the executive branch is the largest branch of our government!

Help From Many

Most of the executive branch is made up of departments and independent agencies. **Departments** are the main organizations in the executive branch. There are 15 departments, and each one focuses on a specific type of activity such as education, transportation, defense, or energy. Each department has smaller agencies that do specific jobs. For example, the Department of Justice (DOJ) operates our justice system and works to prevent crime. Two agencies inside the DOJ are the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). The FBI investigates certain kinds of crimes, while the DEA deals with crime related to drugs and controlled substances.

The president appoints a **secretary** to lead each department. (But the head of the Department of Justice is called the Attorney General (AG)). These department heads make up the president’s **cabinet**, which acts as a group of advisors to the president. They help the president make important decisions about how laws should be carried out.

Independent agencies are government organizations that also focus on specific issues, but they are different from departments because they are independent of the president’s control. Instead, these agencies are controlled by a board or commission. The president can appoint someone to the board or commission but cannot remove them.

Carrying Out Laws: Enforcement

What does it mean to “carry out” a law? That depends on the kind of law that needs to be carried out. Some laws make things illegal and describe consequences for those who do those things. Executive agencies **enforce** the law when someone isn’t following it. There are several things an agency can do to enforce a law:

- Educate the public about new laws
- Monitor the public to make sure laws are being followed
- Catch individuals or organizations not following the law
- Take the offenders to court
- Follow any other enforcement procedures the agency may have
A Very Big Branch

Carrying Out Laws: Regulations

Other laws are just instructions about something that must be done, such as installing new security procedures at the nation’s airports. A law like this will not include every last detail about how it should be carried out. Instead, the law will authorize the executive branch to decide these details. The rules the executive branch makes about how the law will be carried out are called regulations. Regulations have power similar to laws. Some regulations make activity illegal, and others give instructions for how something must be done.

Agencies Enforce and Regulate

Most departments and agencies both enforce laws and make regulations. For example, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is an independent agency whose goal is to protect the environment and human health. It carries out laws passed by Congress, such as the Clean Air Act that is designed to limit air pollution. The Clean Air Act authorizes the EPA to set limits on how much pollution can be put into the air. To do this, the EPA issues regulations that say exactly how much pollution vehicles, factories, and other sources can put into the air. The EPA then works to enforce these regulations. Violating them can result in penalties.

Maintaining Order and Safety

We depend on many parts of the executive branch to keep us safe and to keep order. For example, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is responsible for protecting the United States against all kinds of threats. It includes agencies that deal with terrorism, natural disasters, and border protection. It even includes the Secret Service, whose agents protect the president! Inside the DHS, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) responds to natural disasters to help people get the help they need in an orderly way. The Coast Guard, also part of DHS, patrols our nation’s coastlines to watch for threats and help boats in distress.

Busy, Busy

Remember that most of the day-to-day activity in the executive branch involves ordinary people doing the work that needs to be done: an FBI agent conducts an investigation, a soldier participates in training exercises, or a worker monitors a nuclear reactor at an energy plant. The executive branch needs people to answer phones, program computers, file papers, do scientific research, process mail, fly airplanes, and clean bathrooms. In fact, the federal government is the nation’s largest employer, and most of those jobs are in the executive branch.
**A Very Big Branch**

**Alphabet Soup**

You’ve ran across some acronyms in the reading. See if you can remember these:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DoJ</th>
<th>FBI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DEA</td>
<td>AG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPA</td>
<td>DHS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMA</td>
<td>DoD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Did you notice any patterns? See if you can figure out the acronyms for these agencies:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DoE</th>
<th>DoEd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HHS</td>
<td>HUD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VA</td>
<td>CIA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A Very Big Branch

A. Cabinet Departments. Use the word bank to fill in the missing words from the graphic organizer:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attorney</th>
<th>armed</th>
<th>basic needs</th>
<th>college</th>
<th>highway</th>
<th>countries</th>
<th>farmers</th>
<th>military</th>
<th>homes</th>
<th>money</th>
<th>fuel</th>
<th>public lands</th>
<th>wages</th>
<th>terrorists</th>
<th>trade</th>
<th>court</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**The President’s Cabinet**

Executive Branch Departments

**SECRETARY OF STATE**
Department of State

Manages our relationships with foreign ____________

**SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY**
Department of the Treasury

Collects taxes, prints ________, deals with the nation’s finances

**SECRETARY OF DEFENSE**
Department of Defense

Manages the ____________ forces and wars overseas

**SECRETARY OF COMMERCE**
Department of Commerce

Supervises ____________ and promotes U.S. businesses

**SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR**
Department of the Interior

Manages and protects the nation’s ____________

**SECRETARY OF ENERGY**
Department of Energy

Researches sources of ________ and electricity for the nation

**SECRETARY OF LABOR**
Department of Labor

Helps workers get fair ________ and working conditions

**SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION**
Department of Transportation

Oversees ____________ safety and air, rail, and sea travel

**SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE**
Department of Agriculture

Works with ____________ and regulates farm products

**SECRETARY OF EDUCATION**
Department of Education

Gives money for K-12 schools and student ________ loans

**SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**
Department of Veterans Affairs

Provides services for people who served in the ____________

**SEC. OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES**
Dept of Health & Human Services

Gives services for Americans’ health and ____________

**SEC. OF HOMELAND SECURITY**
Dept of Homeland Security

Protects against ________ and other threats

**SEC. OF HOUSING & URBAN DEVELOPMENT**
Dept of Housing & Urban Development

Creates strong communities and affordable ____________

B. Who Said That? Identify which secretary might give the following advice or information:

1) “Mr. President, we need to invest in more solar electricity.” Sec. of ____________________

2) “Mr. President, we saw a decrease in highway deaths this year.” Sec. of ____________________

3) “Mr. President, agents intercepted a terrorist threat this morning.” Sec. of ____________________

4) “Mr. President, it’s time to take the penny out of circulation.” Sec. of ____________________

5) “Mr. President, we need to combat bark beetles in the national forest.” Sec. of ____________________
C. Whose Job Is It, Anyway? Identify the executive agency that would most likely execute each act:

**The Veterans Educational Assistance Act (2008)**
Increases educational benefits for military veterans who have served since September 11, 2001.

**Protect America Act (2007)**
Provides the intelligence community tools to gather important information about terrorists.

**Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act (1994)**
Increased the number of police officers, funding for prisons, and crime prevention programs.

**No Child Left Behind Act (2001)**
Ensures that students in every public school achieves important learning goals by well-prepared teachers.

**Helping Families Save Their Homes Act (2009)**
Prevents families from losning their homes to foreclosure.

**American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (2009)**
Gives funds to projects like ones that support improving roads, bridges, and other public structures.

**The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (2010)**
Makes it easier for Americans to be covered by health insurance and get medical attention.

**Farm Security and Rural Investment Act (2002)**
Provides support to American farmers.

**The Clean Air Act (1963)**
Controls air pollution on a national level.

D. Enforce and Regulate. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) works to protect public health and safety. Decide if each item on the list is a CDC regulation or enforcement activity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enforcement Activity</th>
<th>Regulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Educate people and organizations about health regulations.
- Entities cannot dispose of waste within five miles of water systems.
- Doctors must wear latex gloves when interacting with patients.
- Evaluate effectiveness of health care services.
- Monitor workplaces to see if they are following safety procedures.
- Factories cannot dispose of anything containing mercury near a water system.
- Make sure food producers and suppliers are following food safety regulations.
- Children must be vaccinated before entering school.
Alphabet Soup
You’ve ran across some acronyms in the reading. See if you can remember these:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department of Justice</th>
<th>Federal Bureau of Investigation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drug Enforcement Agency</td>
<td>Attorney General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Protection Agency</td>
<td>Department of Homeland Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Emergency Management Agency</td>
<td>Department of Defense</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Did you notice any patterns? See if you can figure out the acronyms for these agencies:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department of Energy</th>
<th>Department of Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department of Health and Human Services</td>
<td>Department of Housing and Urban Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Veterans Affairs</td>
<td>Central Intelligence Agency</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A. Cabinet Departments. Use the word bank to fill in the missing words from the graphic organizer:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attorney</th>
<th>armed</th>
<th>basic needs</th>
<th>college</th>
<th>highway</th>
<th>countries</th>
<th>farmers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>military</td>
<td>homes</td>
<td>money</td>
<td>fuel</td>
<td>public lands</td>
<td>wages</td>
<td>terrorists</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The President’s Cabinet
Executive Branch Departments

**SECRETARY OF STATE**
Department of State
Manages our relationships with foreign **countries**

**ATTORNEY GENERAL**
Department of Justice
Fights crime and runs the federal **court** system

**SECRETARY OF COMMERCE**
Department of Commerce
Supervises **trade** and promotes U.S. businesses

**SECRETARY OF ENERGY**
Department of Energy
Researches sources of **fuel** and electricity for the nation

**SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY**
Department of the Treasury
Collects taxes, prints **money**, deals with the nation’s finances

**SECRETARY OF DEFENSE**
Department of Defense
Manages the **armed** forces and wars overseas

**SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR**
Department of the Interior
Manages and protects the nation’s **public lands**

**SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE**
Department of Agriculture
Works with **farmers** and regulates farm products

**SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION**
Department of Transportation
Oversees **highway** safety and air, rail, and sea travel

**SECRETARY OF EDUCATION**
Department of Education
Gives money for K-12 schools and student **college** loans

**SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**
Department of Veterans Affairs
Provides services for people who served in the **military**

**SEC. OF HOMELAND SECURITY**
Dept of Homeland Security
Protects against **terrorists** and other threats

**SEC. OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES**
Dept of Health & Human Services
Gives services for Americans’ health and **basic needs**

**SEC. OF HOUSING & URBAN DEVELOPMENT**
Dept of Housing & Urban Development
Creates strong communities and affordable **homes**

B. Who Said That? Identify which secretary might give the following advice or information:

1) “Mr. President, we need to invest in more solar electricity.”

2) “Mr. President, we saw a decrease in highway deaths this year.”

3) “Mr. President, agents intercepted a terrorist threat this morning.”

4) “Mr. President, it’s time to take the penny out of circulation.”

5) “Mr. President, we need to combat bark beetles in the national forest.”

Sec. of _____ Energy
Sec. of _____ Transportation
Sec. of _____ Homeland Security
Sec. of _____ Treasury
Sec. of _____ Interior
C. Whose Job Is It, Anyway? Identify the executive agency that would most likely execute each act:

- **The Veterans Educational Assistance Act (2008)**
  - Increases educational benefits for military veterans who have served since September 11, 2001.
  - **Agency:** Department of Veterans Affairs

- **Protect America Act (2007)**
  - Provides the intelligence community tools to gather important information about terrorists.
  - **Agency:** Department of Homeland Security

- **Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act (1994)**
  - Increased the number of police officers, funding for prisons, and crime prevention programs.
  - **Agency:** Department of Justice

- **No Child Left Behind Act (2001)**
  - Ensures that students in every public school achieves important learning goals by well-prepared teachers.
  - **Agency:** Department of Education

- **Helping Families Save Their Homes Act (2009)**
  - Prevents families from losing their homes to foreclosure.
  - **Agency:** Department of Housing And Urban Development

- **The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (2010)**
  - Makes it easier for Americans to be covered by health insurance and get medical attention.
  - **Agency:** Department of Health And Human Services

- **American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (2009)**
  - Gives funds to projects like ones that support improving roads, bridges, and other public structures.
  - **Agency:** Department of Transportation

- **The Clean Air Act (1963)**
  - Controls air pollution on a national level.
  - **Agency:** Environmental Protection Agency

D. Enforce and Regulate. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) works to protect public health and safety. Decide if each item on the list is a CDC regulation or enforcement activity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enforcement Activity</th>
<th>Regulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☑</td>
<td>Educate people and organizations about health regulations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☑</td>
<td>Entities cannot dispose of waste within five miles of water systems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☑</td>
<td>Doctors must wear latex gloves when interacting with patients.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☑</td>
<td>Evaluate effectiveness of health care services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☑</td>
<td>Monitor workplaces to see if they are following safety procedures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☑</td>
<td>Factories cannot dispose of anything containing mercury near a water system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☑</td>
<td>Make sure food producers and suppliers are following food safety regulations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☑</td>
<td>Children must be vaccinated before entering school.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>