

Chapter 13: The Presidency

Section 2

Lecture Notes

AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

PEARSON

► Objectives

1. Explain how the Constitution provides for presidential succession.
2. Understand the constitutional provisions relating to presidential disability.
3. Describe the role of the Vice President.

▶ Key Terms

- **presidential succession:** the scheme by which a presidential vacancy is filled
- **Presidential Succession Act of 1947:** the current law fixing the order of succession to the presidency after the Vice President
- **balance the ticket:** the practice of choosing a vice presidential running mate who can strengthen the presidential candidate's chance of being elected

- What occurs when the President is unable to perform the duties of the office?
 - If a President dies, resigns, or is removed by impeachment, the Vice President succeeds to the presidency.
 - If the President is temporarily incapacitated, the Vice President becomes Acting President until the President can resume office.

► Presidential Succession

- The Vice President succeeded the President nine times in U.S. history, beginning with John Tyler replacing William Harrison in 1841.
- At first, the Vice President technically assumed only the powers and duties of the presidency.



► Presidential Succession, cont.

- However, the custom was that the Vice President took the presidential office as well.
- Under the 25th Amendment, adopted in 1967, the Vice President now formally assumes the office of President.



► Order of Succession

- The Presidential Succession Act of 1947 sets the order of succession after the Vice President.
- The presiding officers of Congress are followed by the heads of the cabinet departments in the order that they were created.

The List of Succession

1. Vice President
2. Speaker of the House
3. President pro tempore of the Senate
4. Secretary of State
5. Secretary of the Treasury
6. Secretary of Defense
7. Attorney General
8. Secretary of the Interior
9. Secretary of Agriculture
10. Secretary of Commerce
11. Secretary of Labor
12. Secretary of Health and Human Services
13. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development
14. Secretary of Transportation
15. Secretary of Energy
16. Secretary of Education
17. Secretary of Veterans Affairs
18. Secretary of Homeland Security



▶ Presidential Disability

- For many years, there were no provisions for deciding if a President was too disabled to continue in office.
 - Woodrow Wilson suffered a stroke in 1919 and was too ill to meet with his cabinet for seven months.
 - President Eisenhower had three serious but temporary illnesses while in office.
 - In 1981, President Reagan was badly wounded in an assassination attempt.

► Presidential Disability, cont.

- The 25th Amendment addressed the disability issue. The Vice President becomes Acting President if:
 - The President informs Congress, in writing, that he or she cannot carry out the powers and duties of the office, OR
 - The Vice President and a majority of the members of the Cabinet inform Congress, in writing, that the President is incapacitated.

▶ The Vice Presidency

- Checkpoint: What are the formal duties of the Vice President?
 - The Constitution gives the Vice President two formal duties: to preside over the Senate, and to help decide if the President is disabled (under the 25th Amendment).
 - Otherwise, the Vice President must be ready to assume the duties of the presidency if necessary.

▶ The Vice Presidency, cont.

- Historically, the office of Vice President has had low status.
- Often the vice presidential candidate is chosen because he or she can balance the ticket, helping the president get elected due to personal characteristics such as ideology, geographic background, race, ethnicity, or gender.
- This puts little emphasis on the presidential qualities possessed by a vice presidential candidate.

▶ The Vice Presidency Today

- Recent Vice Presidents have had more political experience and influence.
- Dick Cheney is widely viewed as the most influential vice president in history.
- Joe Biden, right, brought years of foreign policy experience to his office.



► The Vice Presidency Today, cont.

- No Vice President has been given as much power as the President, in part because the President cannot remove the Vice President.
 - What does this cartoon imply about the growth of the power of the Vice President?



"Dad, who runs the country if anything happens to the Vice-President?"

▶ Vice Presidential Vacancy

- The vice presidency has been left vacant nine times by succession, seven times by death, and twice by resignation.
- Under the 25th Amendment, the President can fill a vice presidential vacancy by nominating a Vice President, who must be confirmed by both houses of Congress.
 - In 1973, Gerald Ford became the first Vice President appointed in this fashion.

► Review

- Now that you have learned about what occurs when the President is unable to perform the duties of the office, go back and answer the Chapter Essential Question.
 - Does the current electoral process result in the best candidates for President?