

**Module 4: The Presidency**  
**Topic 1 Content: The Vice President and the Cabinet**

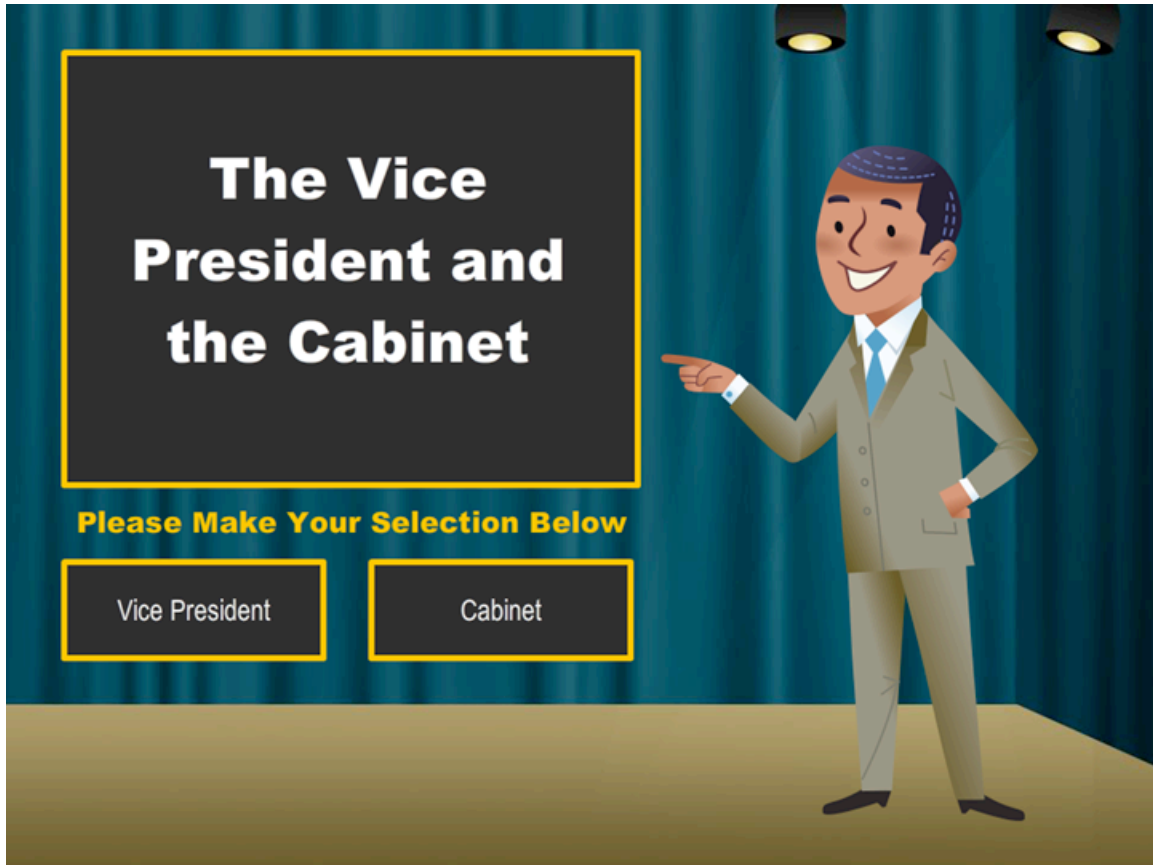
**Introduction**



**Glover Mint:** Welcome to the show! In this episode of WUSG News, Preston Dent will share information about the other components of the executive branch, specifically the Vice President and the presidential Cabinet.

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**Presidential Presence**



**Preston Dent:** When we talk about the executive branch of American government, we typically think of the President. This is understandable; however, the executive branch officially consists of the President, the Vice President, and the federal bureaucracy. The federal bureaucracy is made up of all the agencies, departments, and bureaus of the federal government, including the President's Cabinet. In this episode of *Presidential Presence*, we will examine the Vice President and the Cabinet.

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**The Vice President**



The infographic features the Presidential Seal of the United States, which includes an eagle with wings spread, holding an olive branch and arrows, with a shield on its chest and a banner that reads "E PLURIBUS UNUM". The seal is set against a blue background with a yellow border. Below the seal, there are two yellow boxes with black text. The left box is titled "Article II, Section 1" and contains a quote from the Constitution. The right box is titled "Formal Requirements" and contains a bulleted list of three requirements.

Article II, Section 1	Formal Requirements
"The executive Power shall be vested in a President of the United States of America. He shall hold his Office during the Term of four Years, and, together with the Vice President, chosen for the same Term..."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Natural born U.S. Citizen</li><li>• At least 35 years old</li><li>• Reside within the U.S. for at least 14 years</li></ul>

**Preston Dent:** The same clause that establishes the office of the President of the United States also creates the position of Vice President.

"The executive Power shall be vested in a President of the United States of America. He shall hold his Office during the Term of four Years, and, together with the Vice President, chosen for the same Term..."

The Vice President not only serves the same four year term as the President, but must also meet the same qualifications as the President. These formal requirements include:

- you must be a natural born U.S. citizen;
- you must be at least 35 years old; and
- you must reside within the U.S. for at least 14 years.

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**Electing the Vice President**



**Preston Dent:** The framers of the Constitution believed that in a presidential election, the person with the most votes should be President and the runner up would serve as the Vice President. The reasoning behind this decision was logical, but it did not take the idea of political parties into account. This issue became obvious in some of the earliest presidential elections. John Adams and Thomas Jefferson ran for the executive office in 1796. John Adams won the election and became the President, and Thomas Jefferson became Vice President. Jefferson was from a different political party than Adams, which led to many conflicts between the two on issues of policy.

At this point in time, each electoral vote was cast for two names, with no distinction between President and Vice President. In the following election, in 1800, Jefferson and his fellow party member Aaron Burr received an equal number of votes. The plan was for one elector to cast their vote for Jefferson and abstain from naming another candidate, ensuring Jefferson's victory. The plan was mishandled, causing a tie. This meant the vote went to the House of Representatives, which chose Jefferson. These shortcomings were rectified by the Twelfth Amendment, which mandated that each elector cast a separate vote for President and Vice President. Over time, the two began to run collectively, on the same ticket.

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#### The Role of the Vice President

### Role of the Vice President

- Serves as the President of the Senate
- Is ready to assume the role of the President
- The official role is open to interpretation
- Influence changes based on the current administration
- Little government involvement in the 1800s
- Importance of role has grown in recent years



**Preston Dent:** You may be wondering about the specific role of the Vice President. For one, he or she serves as the President of the Senate. This is stated under Article I, Section 3:

“The Vice President of the United States shall be President of the Senate, but shall have no Vote, unless they be equally divided.”

Beyond this and being ready to assume the role of the President, the role of Vice President is fairly open to interpretation. It seems that even the Founding Fathers were unsure how to define the Vice President's role. This has led to the position's influence fluctuating, based on the current administration. The position may be an ineffective one, but may also actively impact public policy. In the 1800s, most Vice Presidents did not even attend Cabinet meetings. In modern times, this has begun to change. President Bill Clinton was credited with creating a new breed of Vice President, when he gave Vice President Al Gore more responsibility and included him in the decision making process. George W. Bush continued this trend with his Vice President, Dick Cheney.

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**The First Cabinet**



**Preston Dent:** George Washington set the precedent of the President having a Cabinet, or a group of advisors. Washington's original Cabinet consisted of three positions: the Secretary of State, held by Thomas Jefferson; the Secretary of the Treasury, held by Alexander Hamilton; and the Secretary of War, held by Henry Knox. While the Constitution does not specifically establish a cabinet, Article II, Section 2 does state:

"...he may require the Opinion, in writing, of the principal Officer in each of the executive Departments, upon any Subject relating to the Duties of their respective Offices..."

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#### The Current Cabinet




**Preston Dent:** The Cabinet currently consists of fifteen Cabinet positions or executive departments. This includes the Secretaries of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Education, Energy, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Housing and Urban Development, the Interior, Labor, State, Transportation, the Treasury, and Veterans Affairs, and the Attorney General. The head of each department is called the Secretary with the exception of the Department of Justice, which is headed by the Attorney General. These departments serve the executive branch, but are created by Congress. Congress not only decides the responsibilities of a new department, but also approves the budget for each executive department. The head of each department is appointed by the President with the approval of the Senate.

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#### Assuming the Role of President



**John Tyler**

**Presidential Succession**

Organized method of resolving the issue of who is the head of the executive branch of government

**Article II, Section 1**

“In Case of the Removal of the President from Office, or of his Death, Resignation, or Inability to discharge the Powers and Duties of the said Office, the Same shall devolve on the Vice President...”

**Preston Dent:** Although it does not happen frequently, there have been times when it was necessary for the Vice President to fulfill the Constitutional responsibility of replacing the President. Two of the most well-known occurrences were when Presidents Lincoln and Kennedy were assassinated, and were duly replaced by their Vice Presidents. President Nixon resigned from office and was also replaced. Nixon's Vice President Spiro Agnew had resigned while he was under criminal investigation. Under the Twenty-fifth Amendment, Nixon nominated the House Minority Leader, Gerald Ford, to the vacant position. Ten months later, Nixon resigned amidst the Watergate scandal. Ford was the first person to assume the presidency without being elected as President or Vice President. Our government provides organized and reasonable means of resolving the issue of who is in charge of the executive branch. The Constitution states:

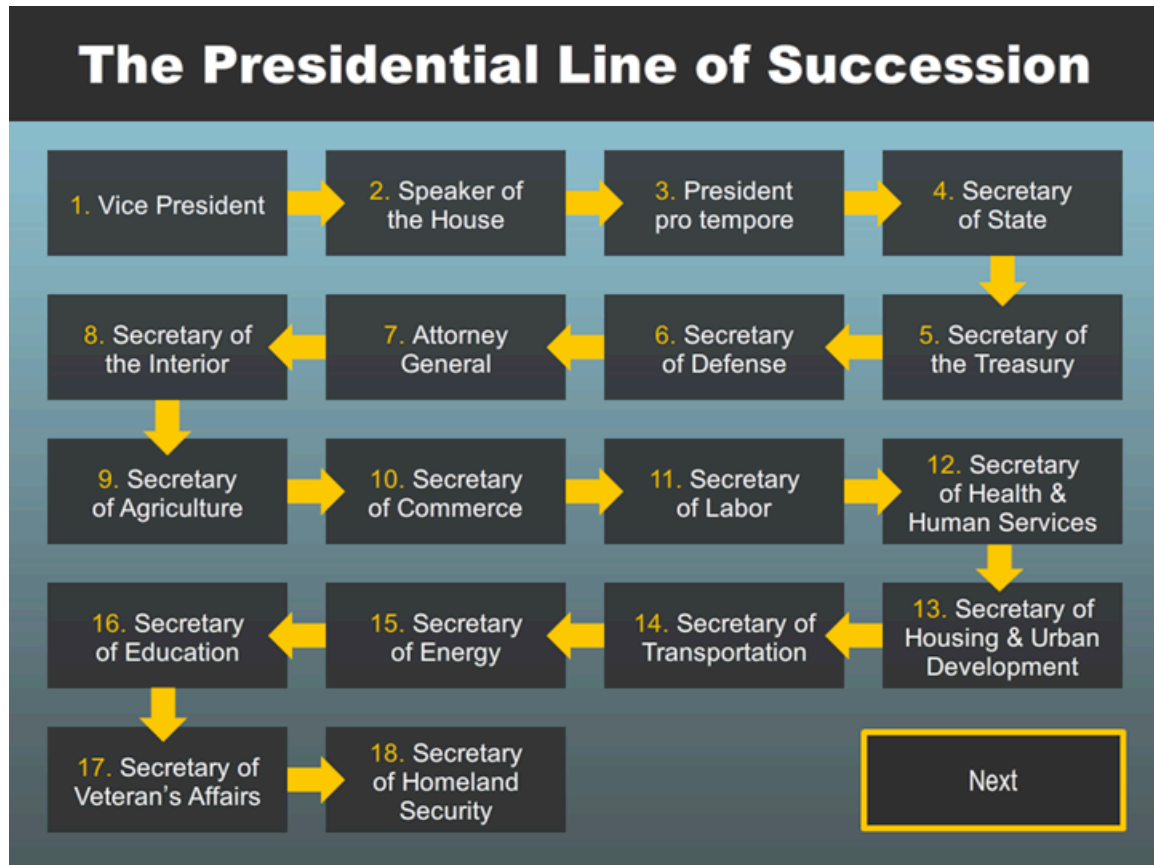
“In Case of the Removal of the President from Office, or of his Death, Resignation, or Inability to discharge the Powers and Duties of the said Office, the Same shall devolve on the Vice President...”

The idea that the Vice President serves as the successor to the President was put into practice when William Henry Harrison died shortly after taking office, and was replaced by Vice President John Tyler. This set the precedent for any future question about the vacancy of the office, but what would happen if the President and the Vice President were somehow removed from office at the same time?



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**The Presidential Line of Succession**

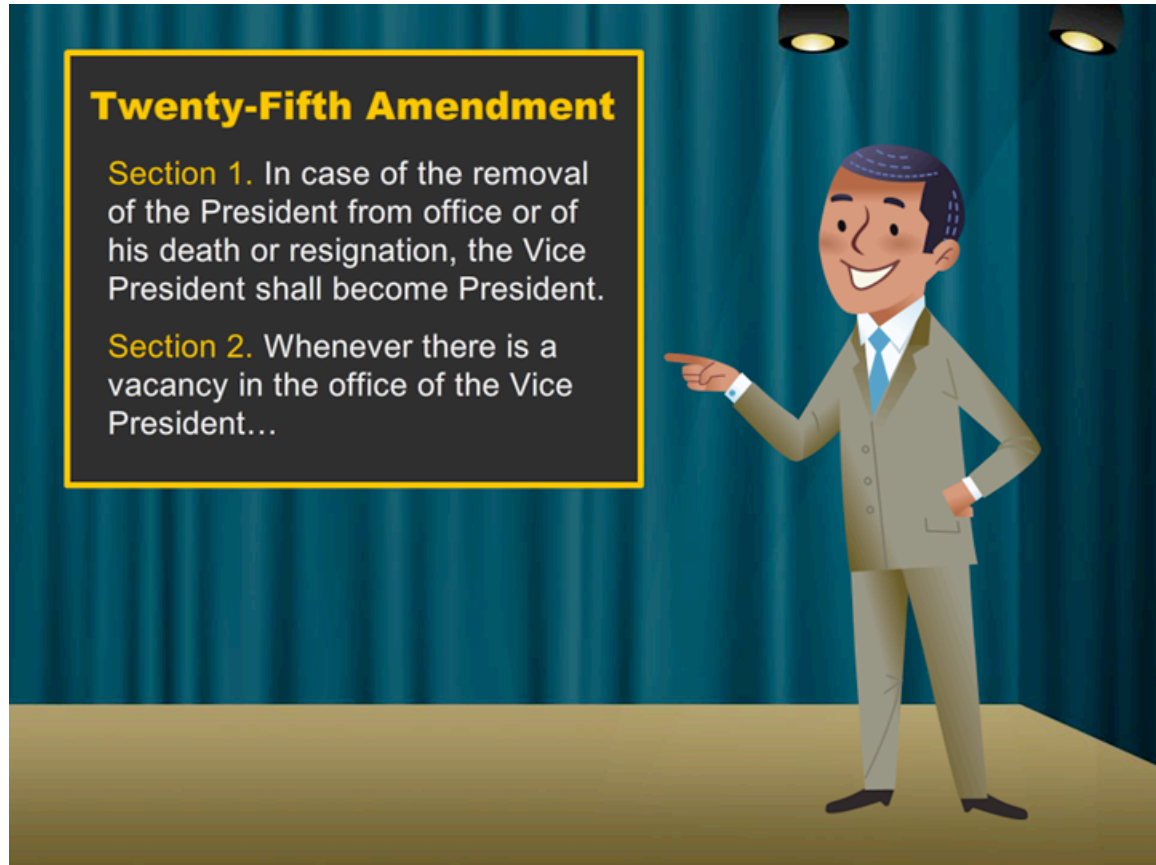


**Preston Dent:** To address this issue, Congress passed several Presidential Succession Acts. The most recent one was passed in 1947 and set the Presidential Line of Succession as follows.

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#### Presidential Presence Conclusion



**Preston Dent:** Take note that the Speaker of the House and the President pro tempore of the Senate are the first two people to fulfill the line of succession. This is because as popularly elected officials they are the most significant national officials representing the views of the nation. After these two, the line of succession follows by Cabinet head in order of creation of the Cabinet departments. To ensure this line of succession, there is never a time when all people who are part of the line of succession are in the same building.

Since the wording of how the vacancy of the Presidency and the Vice Presidency would be handled was not clear, Congress adopted the Twenty-fifth Amendment in February of 1967. This amendment covered what to do if the office of the President becomes vacant or if the President is temporarily unable to perform the duties of the office.

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**Ending of Episode**



**Glover Mint:** The Cabinet serves as advisors to the President and assists with running the executive branch. The Vice President is said to be only a heartbeat away from the presidency, but technically has very limited powers to exercise. See you next time!