

A Very Big Branch

Time Needed: One class period

Materials Needed:

Student worksheets
Projector / Transparencies

Copy Instructions:

Reading (2 pages; class set)
Worksheet (2 pages; class set)

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.

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.

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The Executive Branch



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.



There are 52 agencies and offices within the DOJ.



President Obama meets with his cabinet.

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.

Government Corporations

- Some parts of the executive branch are businesses that the government owns, such as AMTRAK, which operates passenger trains, and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), which insures bank deposits in case a bank fails.



The U.S. Marshals Service is the oldest federal law enforcement agency. Marshals provide court security, hunt fugitives, and offer witness protection.

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

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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.



The Department of Agriculture inspects more than eight million birds every year.



Agencies Enforce and Regulate

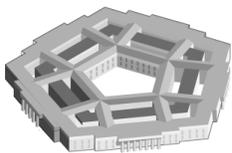
Most departments and agencies both enforce laws and make regulations. For example, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is an independent agency whose goal is to protect the environment and human health. It carries out laws passed by Congress, such as the Clean Air Act that is designed to limit 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.



The ever-present Secret Service has the president's back.



The headquarters of the DoD is located at the Pentagon.

The Department of Defense (DoD) is the biggest department. It includes all the military departments such as the Army, Navy, and Air Force, as well as many other agencies. Together, all the parts of the Department of Defense work together to make sure our armed forces are prepared to protect our nation's security.

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 U.S. Postal Service employee works hard to deliver your mail.

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Alphabet Soup

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

DoJ	FBI
DEA	AG
EPA	DHS
FEMA	DoD

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



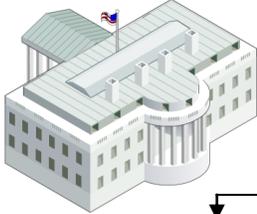
DoE	DoEd
HHS	HUD
VA	CIA

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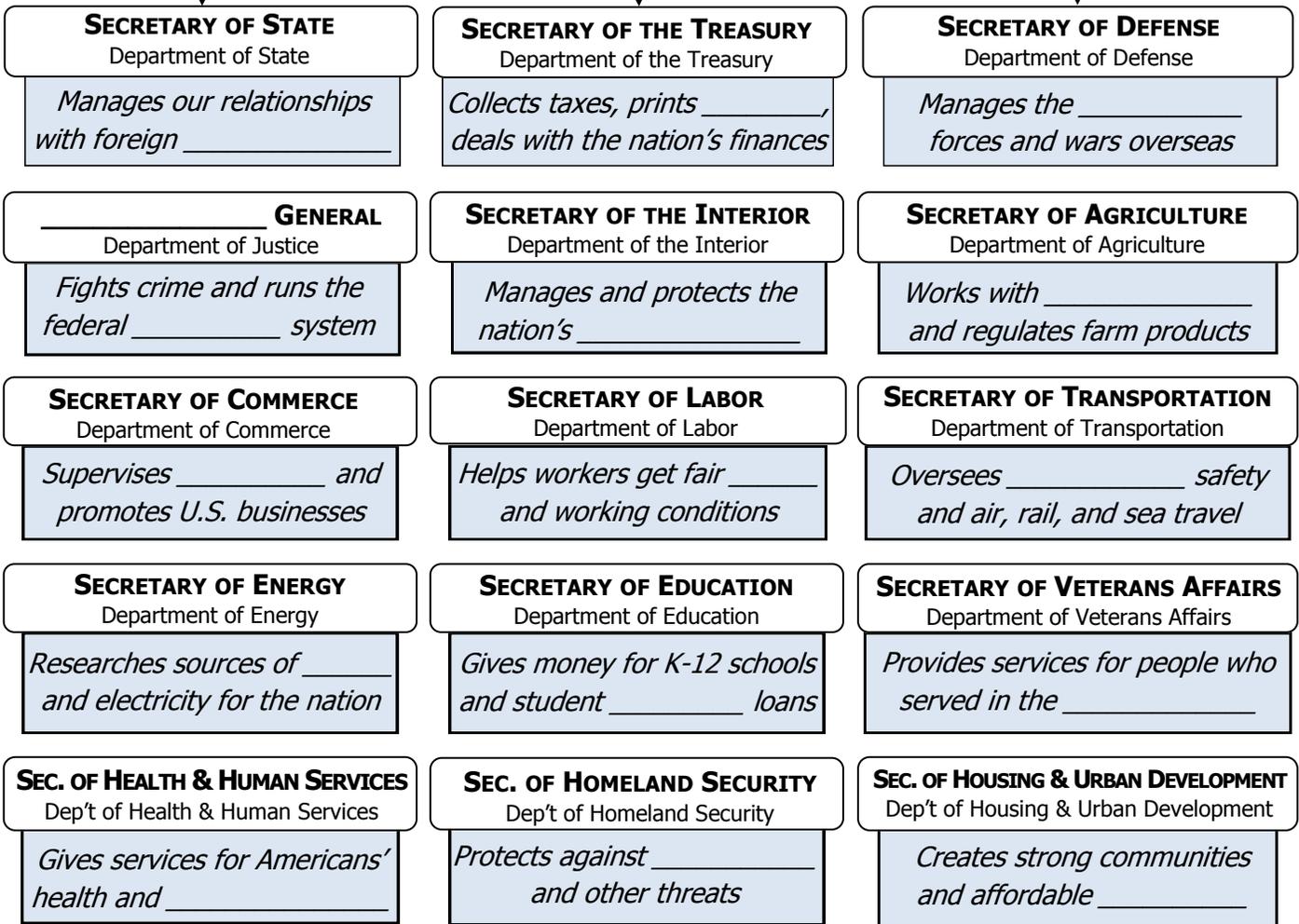
Name: _____

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

Attorney armed basic needs college highway countries farmers
 military homes money fuel public lands wages terrorists trade court



The President's Cabinet Executive Branch Departments



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

- "Mr. President, we need to invest in more solar electricity." Sec. of _____
- "Mr. President, we saw a decrease in highway deaths this year." Sec. of _____
- "Mr. President, agents intercepted a terrorist threat this morning." Sec. of _____
- "Mr. President, it's time to take the penny out of circulation." Sec. of _____
- "Mr. President, we need to combat bark beetles in the national forest." Sec. of _____

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Name: _____

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: _____

Protect America Act (2007) 

Provides the intelligence community tools to gather important information about terrorists.

Agency: _____

Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act (1994) 

Increased the number of police officers, funding for prisons, and crime prevention programs.

Agency: _____

No Child Left Behind Act (2001) 

Ensures that students in every public school achieves important learning goals by well-prepared teachers.

Agency: _____

Helping Families Save Their Homes Act (2009) 

Prevents families from losing their homes to foreclosure.

Agency: _____

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (2009) 

Gives funds to projects like ones that support improving roads, bridges, and other public structures.

Agency: _____

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (2010) 

Makes it easier for Americans to be covered by health insurance and get medical attention.

Agency: _____

Farm Security and Rural Investment Act (2002) 

Provides support to American farmers.

Agency: _____

The Clean Air Act (1963) 

Controls air pollution on a national level.

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.

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



Alphabet Soup

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

<i>Department of Justice</i>	<i>Federal Bureau of Investigation</i>
<i>Drug Enforcement Agency</i>	<i>Attorney General</i>
<i>Environmental Protection Agency</i>	<i>Department of Homeland Security</i>
<i>Federal Emergency Management Agency</i>	<i>Department of Defense</i>

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



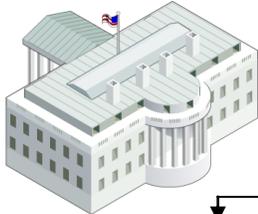
<i>Department of Energy</i>	<i>Department of Education</i>
<i>Department of Health and Human Services</i>	<i>Department of Housing and Urban Development</i>
<i>Department of Veterans Affairs</i>	<i>Central Intelligence Agency</i>

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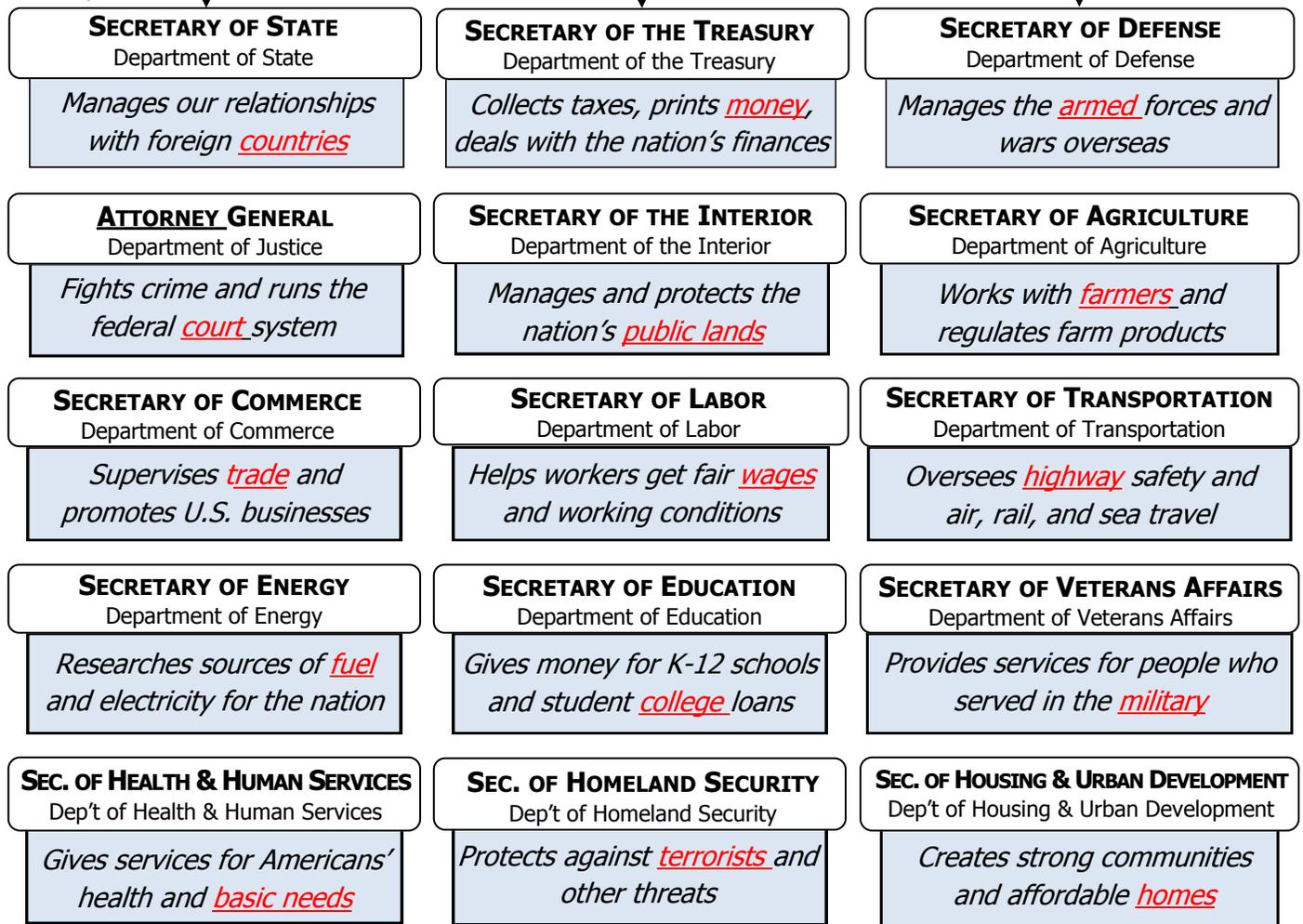
** TEACHER GUIDE **

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

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The President's Cabinet Executive Branch Departments



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

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|--|----------------------------------|
| 1) "Mr. President, we need to invest in more solar electricity." | Sec. of <u>Energy</u> |
| 2) "Mr. President, we saw a decrease in highway deaths this year." | Sec. of <u>Transportation</u> |
| 3) "Mr. President, agents intercepted a terrorist threat this morning." | Sec. of <u>Homeland Security</u> |
| 4) "Mr. President, it's time to take the penny out of circulation." | Sec. of <u>Treasury</u> |
| 5) "Mr. President, we need to combat bark beetles in the national forest." | Sec. of <u>Interior</u> |

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Name: ** *TEACHER GUIDE* **

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*

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 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*

Farm Security and Rural Investment Act (2002) 

Provides support to American farmers.

Agency: *Department of Agriculture*

The Clean Air Act (1963) 

Controls air pollution on a national level.

Agency: *Environmental Protection Agency*

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