

Wilson - Ch. 10 - The Presidency

Question 1) Which one of the following statements, A through D, is false?

A) The popularly elected president is an American invention.

Explanation: And, one that has not been copied by many other nations outside of the Western Hemisphere. The French and Russian systems combine a directly elected president with a prime minister and parliament.

B) The U.S. president's party is guaranteed a majority of votes in the legislature.

No, that would be guaranteed only if the legislature elected the chief executive in a two-party system. With our popularly elected president, it is possible (and often in U.S. history has been the case) that the same party controlled both elected branches.

Explanation:

However, since the 1960's breakup (de-alignment) of Franklin Roosevelt's 'New Deal' coalition of the urban north and the white south, many presidents (Republican and Democratic) have faced an opposition party that controlled one or both houses of Congress and blocked passage of important elements of the president's legislative proposals.

C) Prime ministers in two-party parliamentary systems have very great power because they can count on the support of the cabinet and their party's majority in the legislature.

Explanation: The U.K. is a clear example.

D) Prime ministers in multi-party parliamentary systems are much weaker because the multi-party majority coalition in the legislature is often unstable, as is the multi-party cabinet.

Explanation: Italy and Japan are two examples of what is the most common form of political system worldwide. Executive leadership in these countries is typically (but not necessarily) weak. It is possible, even in a multi-party system, that one party will win a majority of seats in the legislature. When that happens, the prime minister is considerably stronger.

E) None of the above statements, A through D, is false.

Question 2) Which one of the following statements, A through D, is false?

A) Compared to Congress, the enumerated powers of the president are greater in number and less vaguely defined.

Explanation: No, it is just the opposite. Furthermore, until 1932, most presidents did not attempt to expand presidential authority by claiming the right to exercise 'inherent' powers drawn from these vague – but broad – grants of power. The few that did are generally considered to be the 'strong' presidents of the pre-modern era: Jefferson, Jackson, Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, and Wilson. Since 1932, the expansion of federal domestic powers and the role of the U.S. as a military and economic superpower on the world stage, have greatly contributed to the expansion of presidential authority.

B) Although Article II of the Constitution grants some powers to the president alone (e.g., serve as commander in chief of the armed forces), Article I grants other powers to Congress that can be used to check and balance these presidential powers.

Explanation: For example, Congress used its 'power of the purse' to stop the bombing of North Vietnamese and Viet Cong sanctuaries in Cambodia that had been secretly ordered by President Nixon during the Vietnam War.

C) Some important powers granted to the president by Article II are shared with the Senate.

Explanation: For example, the executive branch negotiates treaties, but the Senate must give its advice and consent before such treaties can be ratified and enforced as the law of the land. Similarly, presidents nominate ambassadors, federal judges, and high officials in the executive branch, but the Senate must confirm (or can reject) these nominees.

D) The greatest source of presidential power is found not in the Constitution at all but in a president's ability to influence public opinion.

Explanation: All 43 U.S. presidents have exercised the same formal powers granted to them in Article II of the Constitution; some presidents were weak, others were strong in the exercise of those formal powers. The major factor determining which category any one president falls into is the desire and ability of that president to rally and shape public opinion.

E) None of the above statements, A through D, is false.

Question 3) Which one of the following statements, A through D, is false?

- A) The Constitution allots each state as many electoral votes as it has senators and representatives in Congress.

Explanation: Since ratification of the 23rd Amendment in 1961, the District of Columbia also gets 3 electoral votes (no more than the least populous state).

- B) There are a total of 538 electoral votes; to win, a candidate must receive a majority, or 270.

Explanation: Notice, it is mathematically possible to have an electoral-college vote tie at 269 to 269. This could happen with a number of different combinations of states, but such a tie vote has not happened so far.

- C) If no candidate wins a majority of electoral-college votes, then the House of Representatives chooses the president from among the three leading candidates, with each state casting one vote.

Explanation: By House rule, each state's vote is allotted to the candidate preferred by a majority of the state's House delegation. If there is a tie within a delegation, then that state's vote is not counted.

- D) All 50 states use a statewide winner-take-all method of awarding all of the state's electoral votes to the plurality-vote winner of the popular vote statewide.

Explanation: No, Maine and Nebraska are exceptions. The Constitution leaves it up to each state to decide how to translate the popular vote into the electoral vote in that state. Maine and Nebraska award their state's electoral votes by presidential popular-vote outcomes in each congressional district. In those two states, presidential candidates who lose statewide can still win some electoral votes, if they are the plurality-vote winner in one or more congressional districts.

NC is one of the 48 states that use the winner-take-all system to translate its popular votes into electoral votes.

- E) None of the above statements, A through D, is false.

Question 4) Which one of the following statements, A through D, is false?

- A) The U.S. House has decided two presidential contests when no candidate won an electoral-college-vote majority.

Explanation: In 1800, Jefferson and Burr (Democratic-Republican presidential and vice-presidential running mates) tied in the electoral-college balloting because the original Constitution did not provide for separate balloting for the two offices. After much maneuvering in the House, Jefferson was elected president. The 12th Amendment (1804) required separate balloting.

In 1824, there was a 4-candidate split in the popular vote. The House, choosing between the top three, elected John Quincy Adams president, even though Andrew Jackson had won more electoral votes (and probably more popular votes -- records were not well kept from back then).

- B) The winner-take-all system (used by 48 of the 50 states) makes it harder for third parties to challenge the two major parties in presidential contests.

Explanation: But, the winner-take-all system has not made it impossible for a third party to replace one of the major two parties. The Republican party replaced the Whig Party as a result of the 1860 critical election partisan realignment.

- C) The winner-take-all feature strongly encourages presidential candidates to focus on the largest electoral-vote states that are competitive.

Explanation: As of the 2000 census, the twelve largest electoral-vote states offered more than a majority (285/538 or 53%) of the electoral votes. NC is tied for the 11th largest electoral-vote state (with 15 electoral votes).

- D) Proposals to alter or abolish the electoral college have been made, and several have come close to adoption.

Explanation: No, none of the proposals have come close to adoption. Those who want to preserve the electoral college generally believe that it is important for the states to have a role in choosing the president. Those who favor direct popular election argue that each person's vote should count the same as every other person's vote, regardless of where he or she lives.

- E) None of the above statements, A through D, is false.

Question 5) Which one of the following statements, A through D, is false?

- A) Parties are as natural to democracy as churches to religion.

Explanation: Both parties and churches (or congregations) consist of collections of individuals organized for the purpose of

pursuing a shared set of interests (politics or religion).

- B) Prior to the Civil War, the president who most epitomized the strong and independent chief executive was Alexander Hamilton.

Explanation: No, although Hamilton adamantly and persuasively argued in favor of a strong chief executive during and after the Constitutional Convention, he was never elected president (too many feared that he wanted to be a monarch). It was Andrew Jackson, who saw himself as the 'tribune of the people,' who best exemplified the strong and independent president in the years prior to the Civil War.

- C) In response to the crisis of the Civil War, Lincoln made unprecedented use of the vague powers granted in Article II.

Explanation: For example, Lincoln was the first president to suspend civil law and declare martial law. He also used his power as commander in chief to hire and fire numerous military leaders until he finally found the one (Ulysses S. Grant) who could defeat Robert E. Lee.

- D) After Lincoln and until Franklin Roosevelt, Congress reasserted its power. With the exceptions of Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, most presidents between Lincoln and FDR were, at best, a source of weak opposition to -- not leadership for -- Congress.

Explanation: Two exceptions were Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson.

- E) None of the above statements, A through D, is false.

Question 6) Which one of the following statements, A through D, is false?

- A) Only since the 1930s has the presidency been generally powerful no matter who occupied the office and whether or not there was a crisis.

Explanation: This is due principally to the expanded role of the federal government in domestic affairs and the economic and military superpower status of the U.S. Even the least-powerful presidents of this era, Ford and Carter, were more powerful than most presidents who served prior to 1932.

- B) The 'White House Office' is composed of individual, personal advisers to the president.

Explanation: He can hire and fire them at will without consulting the Senate. Their offices are located in the west wing of the White House. Positions include: National Security Adviser, Domestic Policy Adviser, Counsel to the President, Congressional Liaison, Press Secretary, and Chief of Staff.

- C) The 'Executive Office of the President' is composed of advisory groups.

Explanation: The appointment (but not firing) of the heads and principal members of these groups by the president requires Senate confirmation. These groups are housed in the Executive Office Building across the street from the White House. The major advisory groups include the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the Council of Economic Advisers (CEA), and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

- D) The president's 'Cabinet' is composed of the heads of the 15 executive branch departments (the Department of Homeland Security was added as the 15th department after the 6th edition of Wilson's textbook was published).

[In June of 2002, President Bush asked the 107th Congress to create the Department of Homeland Security from portions of eight existing departments. The Congress did so, but only after overcoming partisan divisions concerning personnel issues.]

Explanation: The appointment (but not firing) of the Cabinet-department heads by the president requires Senate confirmation. Without the power to fire executive-branch appointees at will, no president could function effectively. This presidential discretionary power to fire Cabinet officers was at the heart of the impeachment charges against President Andrew Johnson. The Radical Republicans in Congress who opposed Johnson's intent to carry out a true economic 'reconstruction' of the South had passed a Tenure of Office Act that required Johnson to first obtain the consent of the Senate before dismissing Cabinet officials. It was for violating this unconstitutional statute, that Johnson was impeached by the House and tried in the Senate.

The Cabinet rarely meets as a deliberative body. Cabinet secretaries more often function like military LINE officers (who carry out the orders of their commanding officer) than military STAFF officers (who primarily advise their commanding officer about what orders to issue).

- E) None of the above statements, A through D, is false.

Question 7) Which one of the following statements, A through D, is false?

- A) The president's popularity has less influence on congressional elections in recent years than it did previously.

Explanation: The weakening of party loyalties in the electorate, combined with the enhanced ability of members of Congress to build secure relations with their constituents accounts for this decline in presidential coattails in congressional elections.

- B) Although presidential popularity is an asset, its value usually tends to decline the longer the president is in office.

Every post-WWII president except Eisenhower, Reagan, and Clinton lost popular support between his inauguration and the time he left office (except when his reelection gave him a brief burst of renewed popularity).

Explanation: While Eisenhower and Reagan's popularity remained relatively constant across their two terms, Clinton's popularity actually increased from his 1st to 2nd term [in spite of widespread public disapproval of his immoral behavior with Monica Lewinsky]. Most commentators attribute the public's increasingly positive evaluation of Clinton's job performance to the exceptional combination of peace and prosperity that spanned Clinton's two terms.

- C) The president's popularity has little influence on how Congress votes on legislation.

Explanation: Though members of Congress typically do not fear that a president might campaign against their reelection, they have a greater sense of the risk of opposing the policies of a popular president. There is a statistically significant correlation between presidential popularity and the proportion of a president's legislative proposals that are approved by Congress.

- D) The party of the president almost always loses seats in the U.S. House in midterm (off-year) elections.

Explanation: Between 1860 and the present, there were only three exceptions – 1934 (Roosevelt's 1st-term midterm election), 1998 (Clinton's 2nd-term midterm election), and 2002 (George W. Bush's 1st-term midterm election).

- E) None of the above statements, A through D, is false.

Question 8) Which one of the following statements, A through D, is false?

- A) The president can 'pocket veto' an act of Congress only if there is no more than 10 days left before Congress recesses.

A pocket veto cannot be used if Congress merely recesses to take a summer vacation or to permit its members to campaign during an off-year election.

Explanation: The pocket veto can only be used if there is no more than 10 days left before Congress adjourns at the end of its second session.

If the adjourning Congress wants to press the matter, it will have to wait to reintroduce and pass the bill in the first session of the next Congress.

- B) If a president does not sign or veto an act of Congress within ten days of receiving it (and Congress is still in session), then the act becomes a law without the president's signature.

A bill that has been returned to Congress with a veto can be passed over the president's objections if at least 2/3rds of each house vote to override the veto.

Explanation: Wilson overstates the importance of the fact that less than 4% of all presidential vetoes have been overridden by Congress. A major reason that the percentage is so low is because most presidents will use the veto sparingly and only when they are pretty certain that Congress does not have the votes to override.

However, it is true that the veto power forces the Congress to have an extraordinary (2/3rds) majority -- rather than a simple majority -- to get objectionable legislation past the president.

- C) A president must accept or reject the entire act of Congress; he cannot reject some provisions and accept others.

Explanation: Unlike most state governors, the president does not have a 'line-item' veto. In 1996, Clinton and the Republican Congress agreed on a statute authorizing a presidential line-item veto; but the U.S. Supreme Court struck that down as a violation of the separation of powers doctrine.

- D) The Constitution says nothing about whether the president is obliged to divulge to Congress private communications between the president and principal advisers.

Explanation: However, President Washington was the first to claim (successfully) this 'inherent' power of 'executive privilege' of confidentiality, arguing that he should be free to obtain confidential and candid advice and information from subordinates, free of congressional and public scrutiny.

The U.S. Supreme Court has twice ruled that this claim to executive privilege is not absolute and that Presidents Jefferson and Nixon had to comply with subpoenas for information relative to criminal investigations. In 1807, former Vice-President Aaron Burr was on trial for treason and asked the court to subpoena documents from President Jefferson that helped him win an acquittal. In the 1974 case, Nixon was resisting a subpoena for the White House oval-office tape recordings from a grand jury investigating allegations of a presidential cover-up of the Watergate burglary.

In 1998, after an adverse decision from a U.S. district court judge, President Bill Clinton dropped claims of executive privilege he had invoked to try to keep two of his aides from testifying in the Monica Lewinsky investigation.

In 2002, the General Accounting Office sued the Bush White House for access to documents detailing contacts between corporate executives and the administration's energy task force (headed by Vice President Cheney). This dispute is expected to go to the U.S. Supreme Court for resolution.

E) None of the above statements, A through D, is false.

Question 9) Which one of the following statements, A through D, is false?

A) The 22nd Amendment term limits presidents to two elected 4-year terms of office (or to one elected term if they have acted as president for more than two years of a term to which some other person was elected president).

Explanation: Hence, Gerald Ford was only eligible for one elected term, since he had served more than 2 years of Nixon's second term after Nixon resigned the presidency.

B) Less than half of all presidents have been elected to a second term.

Explanation: Fourteen out of 43 presidents have been elected to a second term – roughly 1 out of 3. When the country was deeply divided, as during the years before and after the Civil War, it was a rare president who was reelected. Since WWII, all presidents (except Clinton & Obama) who were elected to two terms were Republican.

C) The vice presidency is historically a very good spot from which to run for the presidency.

No, vice presidents more frequently acquire the presidency because of the death of the president (8) than because of election as a sitting vice president (only 3 sitting VPs have been elected president: John Adams, Washington's VP in 1796; Martin Van Buren, Jackson's VP in 1836; and George Bush, Reagan's VP in 1988).

Explanation: Recent sitting VP general-election losers were Nixon in 1960, Humphrey in 1968, and Gore in 2000 (although Gore did win a bare majority of the popular vote).

Former VPs who later failed in attempts to win the presidency include Ford in 1976 and Mondale in 1984.

D) The 25th Amendment, ratified in 1967, allows the vice president to serve as 'acting' president in cases of presidential disability.

Explanation: This amendment also provided a mechanism for filling vice-presidential vacancies. The president nominates a new vice president subject to a majority vote of both houses of Congress. This procedure has been used twice – Nixon nominated Gerald Ford when Spiro Agnew resigned, and Ford nominated Nelson Rockefeller when Ford succeeded to the presidency after Nixon's resignation. For the first time in our history, the nation had as its two principal executive officers men elected neither to the presidency nor to the vice presidency.

E) None of the above statements, A through D, is false.

Question 10) Which one of the following statements, A through D, is false?

A) Under the terms of the 25th Amendment, the vice president becomes 'acting' president when the president declares in writing to Congress that a disability has or will make him or her unable to discharge the powers and duties of office.

Explanation: At this point, the vice president becomes 'acting' president, with all of the duties and powers of that office. This has, so far, happened three times: 1) when Reagan had colon-cancer surgery and George H.W. Bush became the 1st 'acting' president, 2) when Clinton had knee surgery and Al Gore became the 2nd 'acting' president, and 3) when George W. Bush had a colonoscopy and Vice President Dick Cheney was designated the 3rd 'acting' president.

B) If the president is disabled but unable or unwilling to write Congress, the vice president and a majority of either the Cabinet or another body stipulated by Congress can declare to Congress in writing that the president is unable to

discharge the powers and duties of office. Once the letter is sent to Congress, the vice president can immediately assume the powers and duties of the office as 'acting' president.

This procedure has not yet been followed. However, some argue that Vice President George H.W. Bush should have initiated the provision when President Reagan was temporarily disabled by the gunshot wound he received in a 1981 assassination attempt.

Explanation:

Vice president Bush was returning to the U.S. from Japan aboard Air Force Two when Reagan was shot. It has since been reported that, when Bush got back to Washington, Nancy Reagan talked him out of declaring her husband disabled. There is continuing controversy about how seriously disabled President Reagan actually was and how long it took him to recover to the point that he could fulfill his presidential responsibilities.

- C) Once the vice president is serving as 'acting' president, the president can at any time transmit to Congress a written declaration that no inability exists, at which point the president resumes the powers and duties of office.

Explanation:

Reagan and Clinton followed this procedure within a short time after their elective surgeries.

- D) If, within four days of a disabled president electing to resume office, the vice president and a majority of either the Cabinet or another body stipulated by Congress transmit in writing their assertion that the president should not resume the powers and duties of office because of continuing disability, then Congress must vote to decide the issue with a two-thirds majority of each house necessary to confirm the president's disability thus allowing the vice president to take over as 'acting' president.

If in session, Congress has 48 hours to vote; if not in session, Congress has 21 days to assemble and vote. Obviously, there would be great pressure on Congress to resolve this dispute as quickly as possible.

Do not assume that this contingency is unlikely to happen in your lifetime. More than once, the U.S. has had a seriously disabled president who was unwilling to admit that reality and resisted any discussion of how to allow their vice president to assume some or all of the powers and duties of the presidency.

Explanation:

Examples prior to the adoption of the 25th Amendment include Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt's disabilities due to strokes.

Examples of presidential disability since the adoption of the 25th Amendment include Nixon and Clinton's disabilities due to the threat or reality of impeachment. Both had the option of declaring themselves temporarily (politically) disabled and allowing their vice president to temporarily become acting president while they dealt with their impeachment crises. Instead, Nixon resigned and Clinton was impeached by the U.S. House and acquitted by the U.S. Senate.

- E) None of the above statements, A through D, is false.

Question 11) Which one of the following statements, A through D, is false?

- A) Impeachment is the bringing of charges against a "civil officer of the United States" by a majority vote of the U.S. House of Representatives.

Explanation:

The House has instituted impeachment proceedings against more than 50 individuals, but only 15 have been impeached (most were during the Civil War). The most recent impeachments were of federal judges (1986 and 1989) and President Clinton in 1998. The only other president to be impeached was Andrew Johnson in 1868; however, Richard Nixon would undoubtedly have been impeached in 1974 had he not resigned first.

- B) Members of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches can be impeached by the House and removed from office if convicted by the Senate.

Only Congress can expel one of its own members. Each chamber can expel its own member by a two-thirds vote. Most of the 19 cases of expulsion occurred during the Civil War.

Explanation:

However, in 1967 the House voted to expel Representative Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. (D-NY), for abuse of his official authority and congressional privileges. Powell's Harlem constituents promptly reelected him and the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the House could not refuse to seat him and had to accept him back.

- C) To be removed from office, an impeached federal official must be convicted of the impeachment charges after a trial before the U.S. Senate by a two-thirds vote of the senators present.

Explanation:

President Andrew Johnson was acquitted by one vote. A majority of the Senate voted to convict President Clinton, but that vote -- mostly along party lines -- fell well short of the necessary two-thirds.

Of the 15 impeached federal officials, 2 resigned and the remaining 13 came to trial before the Senate; 5 (all judges) were convicted.

The only punishments that can be imposed upon conviction are removal from office and disqualification from holding any federal office in the future. Once removed, however, the individual may be tried in a regular court of law. The president's pardoning power does not apply to impeachment convictions but it does apply to such other charges in other courts.

D) The impeachment case against President Andrew Johnson was entirely political.

Explanation: The Radical Republicans, who wished to politically isolate and punish the South after the Civil War, were angry because Johnson was attempting to put into practice Lincoln's clearly expressed plans to "reconstruct" the war-devastated South and to quickly readmit those states to the Union.

E) None of the above statements, A through D, is false.

Question 12) Which one of the following statements, A through D, is false?

A) The post-WWII presidents tend to be much more involved in foreign affairs than earlier presidents.

Explanation: As our country has become a world superpower since WWII, presidents have become more personally involved in managing our foreign relations. The Departments of State and Defense, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the National Security Council are the major administrative bodies that advise and administer the president's foreign policies.

B) The American people tend to think that the president has more power and influence over foreign affairs than is actually the case.

Besides the maneuvers of both allies and adversaries, the president is also often confounded by disagreements within his principal advisers, by both civilian and military bureaucratic intransigence, by congressional opposition, and (perhaps most importantly) by public opinion.

Explanation: In general, the U.S. public will initially "rally 'round the flag" when the president takes a bold foreign-policy step, even one that backfires. But, such public support will not last indefinitely. Any military involvement that is protracted and costly will trigger a steady decline in public support – this was true even in the last 'good' war, WWII. As combat casualties mount, public support declines. That support will plummet if the conflict stalemates, as in Korea and Vietnam.

C) The American people tend to think that the president has more power and influence over economic affairs than is actually the case.

Explanation: The public fails to realize that the president has even less control over domestic unemployment, consumer-price inflation, and foreign competition than over foreign affairs. Hence, elections are OCCASIONALLY won or lost over foreign-policy issues, but they are FREQUENTLY won or lost because of the state of the economy.

D) Authority over economic policy is less widely dispersed in the federal government than is authority over foreign policy.

Explanation: No, that is clearly not the case. The president, Congress, and the Federal Reserve Board all exercise important powers over the fiscal and monetary policies of the federal government. And, to a large degree in practice, the 'Fed' is independent of both the president and Congress.

E) None of the above statements, A through D, is false.

Question 13) Which one of the following statements, A through D, is false?

A) The Federal Reserve Board influences the supply but not the 'cost' of money.

Explanation: No, the 'Fed' influences both. This influence is imposed in three ways: the 'Fed's' open-market note and bond transactions, changes in the reserve requirement the 'Fed' imposes on member banks, and changes in its short-term interest rate to member banks.

B) When the 'Fed' wants to slow down inflation, it will take money out of circulation by selling Treasury securities (notes and bonds) in open-market transactions.

Explanation: Purchasers are giving money to the 'Fed' in exchange for these securities, hence the money is withdrawn from circulation. If the 'Fed' wanted to 'prime the pump' of a stagnant economy, it would buy Treasury securities in open-

market transactions.

- C) When the 'Fed' wants to slow down inflation, it will take money out of circulation by raising the 'reserve requirement' (the amount of money that Federal Reserve system member banks have to keep on hand to back up their customer deposits).

Explanation: The higher the reserve requirement, the less money the member banks can loan out and therefore put into circulation.

- D) When the 'Fed' wants to slow down inflation, it will take money out of circulation by raising the interest rate on money that it lends to member banks.

Explanation: The higher the 'Fed's' interest rate to banks, the more costly it is for banks to get additional funds to lend to their customers – hence, the higher the interest rate the member banks must charge.

- E) None of the above statements, A through D, is false.