***Establishing the Presidential Cabinet***

As first the president, George Washington set several precedents; among these was the establishment of a presidential cabinet. The Presidential Cabinet includes the heads of the executive departments that meet and advise the president. The president selects Cabinet members, and the Senate approves/confirms them.

George Washington had a four-member cabinet made up of a Secretary of State - Thomas Jefferson, a Secretary of the Treasury - Alexander Hamilton, a Secretary of War - Henry Knox, and an Attorney General - Edmund Randolph. Over our country’s history, the cabinet has expanded to include the Vice President and 15 cabinet departments.

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| **Primary Source:**  ***Excerpt from the Constitution – Article II, Section II***  *The President shall be commander in chief of the Army and Navy of the United States, and of the militia of the several states, when called into the actual service of the United States; 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, and he shall have power to grant reprieves and pardons for offenses against the United States, except in cases of impeachment.* |

***Upholding Federal Laws***

Under the Articles of Confederation, the national government had little ability to tax and with the outbreak of Shays’s Rebellion, there was concern of the government’s ability to uphold the law. With the ratification of the Constitution, the executive branch had the power to uphold the law.

During his second term, Washington faced a challenge to the Constitution when farmers in western Pennsylvania protested against the collection of excise taxes on whiskey. In answering this challenge, Washington issued a proclamation against the rebellion. He called the army to western Pennsylvania and the rebellion ended with about a dozen men being arrested. Washington eventually pardoned these men of all crimes. This event showed that the new government would use the militia (army) if necessary to keep order in the states and enforce federal laws.

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| **Primary Source:**  ***Excerpts from Washington’s Proclamation against***  ***the Whiskey Rebellion (1794)***  ***Proclamation against Opposition to Execution of Laws and Excise Duties in Western Pennsylvania***  *Whereas combinations to defeat the execution of the laws laying duties upon spirits distilled within the United States and upon stills have from the time of the commencement of those laws existed in some of the western parts of Pennsylvania; and…*  *Whereas by a law of the United States entitled "An act to provide calling forth the militia to execute the laws of the Union, suppress insurrections, and repel invasions," it is enacted "that whenever the laws of the United States shall be opposed or the execution thereof obstructed in any State by combinations too powerful to be suppressed by the ordinary course of judicial proceedings or by the powers vested in the marshals by that act, the same being notified by an associate justice or the district judge, it shall be lawful for the President of the United States to call forth the militia of such State to suppress such combinations and to cause the laws to be duly executed. And if the militia of a State where such combinations may happen shall refuse or be insufficient to suppress the same, it shall be lawful for the President, if the Legislature of the United States shall not be in session, to call forth and employ such numbers of the militia of any other State or States most convenient thereto as may be necessary; and the use of the militia so to be called forth may be continued, if necessary, until the expiration of thirty days after the commencement of the ensuing session: Provided always, That whenever it may be necessary in the judgment of the President to use the military force hereby directed to be called forth, the President shall forthwith, and previous thereto, by proclamation, command such insurgents to disperse and retire peaceably to their respective abodes within a limited time ;" and...*  *Wherefore, and in pursuance of the proviso above recited, I, George Washington, President of the United States, do hereby command all persons being insurgents as aforesaid, and all others whom it may concern, on or before the 1st day of September next to disperse and retire peaceably to their respective abodes. And I do moreover warn all persons whomsoever against aiding, abetting, or comforting the perpetrators of the aforesaid treasonable acts, and do require all officers and other citizens, according to their respective duties and the laws of the land, to exert their utmost endeavors to prevent and suppress such dangerous proceedings.*  *GEORGE WASHINGTON* |

***2 Term Limit***

In 1796, Washington declined a third term in office, setting a two term precedent for future presidents that was not broken until 1940 when Franklin D. Roosevelt successfully ran for a third and later a fourth term in 1944. In 1951, the 22nd Amendment was ratified that set a two term limit for presidents.

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| **Primary Source 1:**  ***Excerpt from Washington’s Farewell Address (1796)***  *“The period for a new election of a citizen to administer the Executive Government of the United State being not far distant, and the time actually arrived when your thoughts must be employed in designating the person who is to be clothed with that important trust, it appears to me proper, especially as it may conduce to a more distinct expression of the public voice, that I should now apprise you of the resolution I have formed to decline being considered among the number of those out of whom a choice is to be made.”* |

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| **Primary Source 2:**  ***Excerpt from 22nd Amendment to the Constitution (1951)***  *No person shall be elected to the office of the President more than twice, and no person who has held the office of President, or acted as President, for more than two years of a term to which some other person was elected President shall be elected to the office of the President more than once.* |

***Neutrality in Foreign Affairs***

Another precedent that George Washington set was that of neutrality in foreign affairs. During the American Revolution, the French and Americans entered into a permanent alliance with each other. This meant that the French would help the Americans in their war against Great Britain and the Americans would help the French in any of their future wars. In 1793, much of Europe was at war with France due to the French Revolution. Realizing that the new country was in no position to fight another major war, Washington set a policy of neutrality that would largely remain in effect until the start of the 20th century. Washington would also stress this point again in his Farewell Address to the nation in 1796.

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| **Primary Source:**  ***Excerpt from Washington’s Farewell Address (1796)***  *… The great rule of conduct for us in regard to foreign nations is, in extending our commercial relations to have with them as little political connection as possible. So far as we have already formed engagements let them be fulfilled with perfect good faith. Here let us stop.*  *Europe has a set of primary interests which to us have none or a very remote relation. Hence she must be engaged in frequent controversies, the causes of which are essentially foreign to our concerns.*  *It is our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world, so far, I mean, as we are now at liberty to do it; for let me not be understood as capable of patronizing infidelity to existing engagements. I hold the maxim no less applicable to public than to private affairs that honesty is always the best policy. I repeat, therefore, let those engagements be unwise to extend them.*  *Take care always to keep ourselves by suitable establishments on a respectable defensive posture, we may safely trust to temporary alliances for extraordinary emergencies.* |