



THE POLICY
CIRCLE®

The Executive Branch

Discussion Guide

Let's review

At the start of each discussion, review the conversation ground rules for returning and new members alike to set the stage for active participation by all. You may want to use a timer as you go around the room.

And don't forget to decide who will take notes and post a discussion recap.

- **Be open and curious:** Everyone has a unique perspective, so be prepared to hear a different point of view. Listen first, and focus on the facts.
- **Be respectful and engaged:** Be sure that everyone has a chance to speak before adding a second comment or perspective. Encourage each other's participation.
- **Be focused and concise:** Keep the conversation centered on the issue and the brief.

The "Table-it" Rule: If the group has gone off-topic but the area is of interest, the group can table the conversation and save it for another time to be addressed in a different manner.

Let's begin

- **Take five minutes** to review the [Executive Summary](#) for this brief. Highlight the main point of each section and key statistics.
- Each member is invited to answer the following questions in a **two-three minute reaction** to the brief:
 - Introduce yourself, and share what "lens of care" did you wear when reviewing this brief (e.g. personal, professional, community, state, nation, global)?
 - What did you find most interesting or surprising from reading the brief? What matters?

Spread the Word: Some Facts to Share with the Group During Your Discussion

- The [Executive Branch](#) carries out and enforces the laws passed by Congress. It includes the president, vice president, the Cabinet, executive departments, independent agencies, and some boards, commissions, and committees.
- The U.S. Constitution does not address executive orders or define them as part of presidential authority, but the authority has been established "[as a matter of law and practice](#)." Since George Washington, Presidents have issued over 13,000 executive orders.
- There is no definitive [number of federal agencies](#). The Freedom of Information Act (the requirements of which apply to every federal agency) lists 78 independent executive agencies, the U.S. Government Manual lists 96, and USA.gov lists 137.

Let's discuss

Below are 3 questions for the group to consider and discuss, or choose your own.

- **Community:** Have you seen the executive branch in your state or municipality balanced by the judicial or legislative branches? Have you seen an overreach of executive power?
- **Government:** What are some advantages and disadvantages to the structure of the executive branch?
- **Business:** How have executive orders from presidents and agencies affected businesses?

Let's act

- **Take it local. Talk to your neighbors** to identify how what happens in the executive branch at both the federal and state level affects your community. Identify opportunities to work with other community members in your area.
- **Explore the impact of the executive branch in your community.** Explore [executive orders in your state](#), from the Council of State Governments.
- **Research your elected officials' positions.** You can find contact information for federal, state, and local government officials [here](#). State or municipality's websites will also have information to contact leaders. Try looking at the drop-down menu for a *Government* tab.
- **Establish a relationship with your legislators.** It's easy to establish a relationship with your legislators. Start by introducing yourself. You can also learn to write to your representatives or set up a meeting with a legislator on [The Policy Circle website](#).
- **Consider writing a letter to the editor or an op-ed on your stance on executive power in your local paper.** Learn how on [The Policy Circle website](#).

Next Steps for Your Circle

- **Post a Recap:** Summarize your discussion to share thoughts with members not present, and share planned actions from group members. Designate who will post a meeting recap on your circle page.
- **Decide your next meeting topic.** Want to discuss a related brief at your next meeting? Suggestions include:
 - [U.S. House of Representatives](#)
 - [U.S. Senate](#)
 - [The U.S. Constitution](#)
- **Dive Deeper into the issues.** If this is an area you would like to pursue further, consider taking possible steps to influence policy. The Policy Circle offers resources for [developing a message about your issue](#) and [organizing a petition](#) to amplify your voice and raise awareness. Don't miss our [latest events](#) that help you dive deeper on this issue and more.