

Subject: Lame Ducks and the Peaceful Transfer of Power

Grade Level:

Standards:

Materials Needed:

Students will need access to:
Computer, laptop, or tablet
Paper and pen/pencil

Learning Objectives:

- BULLET POINT FORMAT

Introduction/Anticipatory Set:

Once the Presidential election is over, there are many things the President Elect needs to do before being sworn in. There are between 72 and 78 days between election day and the day the new President takes office.

The outgoing President may also have tasks to complete. The outgoing President is called a Lame Duck President because it can be more difficult to get work accomplished during this time of transition.

Body of Lesson:

Watch the Simple Civics video on “Lame Ducks and the Peaceful Transfer of Power” at www.wfyi.org/simplecivics

The outgoing or lame duck president may have unfinished business to wrap up. The President may make last minute judicial appointments, give pardons to people who have been convicted of some type of crime, or sign controversial executive orders. A lame duck President does not have to worry about losing an election as they will be leaving office anyway so there are no negative political consequences.

The President Elect has time to prepare for assuming the office. Cabinet members need to be selected. The Cabinet is a group of people who are the closest advisors to the President. The Cabinet current is composed of the vice President and the heads of the 15 executive departments. These departments are:

Secretary of Agriculture
Secretary of Commerce

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Secretary of Defense
Secretary of Education
Secretary of Energy
Secretary of Health and Human Services
Secretary of Homeland Security
Secretary of Housing and Urban Development
Secretary of the Interior
Secretary of Labor
Secretary of State
Secretary of Transportation
Secretary of the Treasury
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
Attorney General

The Cabinet also includes:

White House Chief of Staff
US Ambassador to the United Nations
Director of National Intelligence
US Trade Representative
Head of the Environmental Protection Agency
Head of the Office of Management and Budget
Head of the Council of Economic Advisors
Head of the Office of Science and Technology Policy
Head of the Small Business Administration

There are 4,000 positions in the Executive Branch of the government that are appointed by the President. More than 1,000 of these positions have to be approved by the Senate

Class Activity:

Divide the class into two groups. One group will present arguments for the length of time between the election and the transfer of power. The other group will present arguments for the transfer of power to be less than 72 days.

Next, have the class list some things that the outgoing President has to complete, and the newly elected President has to plan for.

Class Activity:

<https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/what-happens-lame-duck-session-congress>

Read this article and have class discussions.

Class Activity:

<https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2000/winter/inaugurations#:~:text=The%20swearing%20in%20ceremony%20allows,an%20ordinary%20citizen%20a%20President.>

Review the National Archives article on the Peaceful Transition of Power for American Presidential Inaugurations. Hold a class discussion on how the process has changed over the years.

Summary/Closure

The peaceful transfer of power from an outgoing president to the newly elected president is essential to the stability of our government and country. The time between the election and the inauguration allows for both people to complete unfinished work and to develop a plan for the new government. The process has had some modifications over the years, but has essentially remained the same.

Extension Activities

<https://www.senate.gov/legislative/LameDuckSessions.htm>

Review some of the major topics that have occurred during lame duck sessions of Congress since 1940 and discuss the impact or how the outcomes may have been different if decisions had been delayed.

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