

## The Vice Presidency

The office of the Vice President of the United States is established in Article 2, Section 1, Clause 1 of the Constitution:

*The executive Power shall be vested in a President of the United States of America. He shall hold his Office during the Term of four Years, and, together with the Vice President, chosen for the same Term.*

Under the Constitution, the qualifications for the office of the Vice President are the same as those for the President: 35 years of age, a natural-born citizen, and a resident of the United States for at least 14 years.

The primary responsibility of the Vice President is to be ready at a moment's notice to assume the Presidency if the President is unable to perform his duties. As described in Article 2, Section 1, Clause 6 of the Constitution:

*In Case of the Removal of the President from Office, or of his Death, Resignation, or Inability to discharge the Powers and Duties of the said Office, the [responsibilities of the President] shall devolve on the Vice President.*

The Vice President is elected along with the President by the Electoral College — each elector casts one vote for President and another for Vice President. Before the ratification of the 12th Amendment in 1804, electors only voted for President, and the person who received the second greatest number of votes became Vice President.

The duties of the Vice President are explained in Article 1, Section 3, Clause 4 of the Constitution:

*The Vice President of the United States shall be President of the Senate, but shall have no Vote, unless they be equally divided.*

Except in the case of tie-breaking votes, the Vice President rarely presides over the Senate. Instead, the Senate selects one of its own members, usually junior members of the majority party, to preside over the Senate each day.

The duties of the Vice President, outside of those enumerated in the Constitution, are at the discretion of the current President. Each Vice President approaches the role differently — some take on a specific policy portfolio, others serve simply as a top adviser to the President. Today, the Vice President works with both the Executive and Legislative Branches as necessary.

The Vice President maintains an office in the West Wing of the White House, a practice established by Vice President Walter Mondale during his tenure (1977-1981), as well as in the nearby Eisenhower Executive Office Building.

Like the President, the Vice President also maintains an official residence, at the United States Naval Observatory in Northwest Washington, D.C., which has been the official home of the Vice President since 1974. Previously, Vice Presidents maintained their own private residences. The Vice President also has his/her own limousine, which is operated by the United States Secret Service, and flies on the same aircraft the President uses.