

American Government & Politics: A Christian Worldview.
Execute or Refuse? (15–20 Minutes)

TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS

Goal

Students determine whether a President should execute or refuse to enforce laws passed by Congress based on the Constitution's delegated powers. The activity reinforces enumerated powers, limited government, separation of powers, and the President as executor—not lawmaker.

Instructions

1. Tell students:
 - “Congress only possesses the powers specifically delegated to it in the Constitution.”
 - “The President’s duty is to execute constitutional laws, not simply obey Congress no matter what.”
 - “For each law, decide whether a constitutional President should **execute** it or **refuse** to enforce it.”
2. Give students 1–2 minutes to answer each question as a pair/small group, then after each one, quickly poll the room for a few volunteers (or how many you think are appropriate). Ask student volunteers:
(a) “Execute or refuse?” and (b) “Based on what?”

Key

1. **Congress passes a law punishing people who counterfeit U.S. money.**
Execute; Congress is empowered to punish counterfeiting.
2. **Congress requires all newspapers to obtain a federal license before publishing political opinions.**
Refuse; Congress is granted no such power (and we haven’t even reached the First Amendment yet!).
3. **Congress taxes citizens to financially support approved national churches.**
Refuse; Congress is granted no such power (ditto on the First Amendment!).
4. **Congress passes laws punishing piracy on the high seas.**
Execute; Congress is empowered to punish piracy.
5. **Congress creates a board that punishes citizens for “hate speech” toward certain groups.**
Refuse; Congress is granted no such power.
6. **Congress approves funding to raise additional troops during a foreign war.**
Execute; Congress is empowered to raise armies and navies.
7. **Congress requires every school in America to use one federally approved curriculum.**
Refuse; Congress is granted no such power.
8. **Congress authorizes confiscation of privately owned firearms from peaceful citizens who have committed no crime.**
Refuse; Congress is granted no such power (we’ll get to the Second Amendment soon!).

Debrief

- What does a list of powers clearly mean? *Those are the only ones! (Or why bother to list them?)*
- Why is it dangerous if presidents enforce every law automatically? *Some are clearly illegal.*
- What would happen if the President could both make and execute laws? *Danger of tyranny.*

Wrap-Up Point:

The Constitution does not give Congress unlimited authority. The President is supposed to execute **constitutional** laws—not simply carry out whatever Congress demands.

American Government & Politics: A Christian Worldview – Execute or Refuse?

You are the President. Congress passes each one of the laws below (some of these were passed by a 2/3 majority over your veto). For each one of the laws passed, answer these two questions:

- Will you execute the law as the executive branch, or not?
- What is your decision based on?

Powers That Article I, Section Grants to Congress					
Lay and collect taxes	Regulate trade	Grant patents	Punish pirates	Call up, train, and oversee state militias	Borrow and coin money
Write laws on citizenship	Punish counterfeiters	Write laws on bankruptcy	Establish post offices and roads	Raise an army and navy	Set up lower courts
Set up a district to serve as the nation's capital		Declare war		Make any other laws “necessary and proper” to carry out its listed powers	

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___ EXECUTE ___ REFUSE Based on what?

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___ EXECUTE ___ REFUSE Based on what?

Congress taxes citizens to financially support approved national churches.

___ EXECUTE ___ REFUSE Based on what?

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