

American Government & Politics: A Christian Worldview– Short Film:
“What Does Article II Say About the Powers of the President” (10–12 Minutes)
(TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS/KEY)

Goal

In this short film (4:32), National Constitution Center speaker Illan Wurman discusses the limits that Article II places upon U.S. Presidents.

Instructions

1. Play this film for students; tell them to take notes on main ideas/interesting facts:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w1UPkog5CrY>
2. Put students in pairs/groups and have them discuss for 3–5 minutes, then as a class (ask for main ideas).

Notes

- There was a debate at the Constitutional Convention whether to have one or more Presidents (some founders thought it was dangerous to have just one, because he would be like a king, but others thought having more than one would result in presidents evading responsibility).
- Article I (theoretically) limits presidential powers by giving powers traditionally given to monarchs in history to Congress, not the president.
- What powers does the President have? (a) EXECUTE laws (not make them); and (b) Commander in Chief of the military only AFTER Congress declares war and provides an army.
- All “sending the military to [whatever nation] by a U.S. President are totally illegal.

Wrap-Up

Ask students:

- Other than divided responsibility, what would be the pros and cons of having two presidents? *AWV.*
- Why is it preferable to have an entire body of officials responsible for declaring war, instead of a single person? *AWV, but surely students will say something like, “So one person won’t be able to (theoretically rashly drag a nation to war without a great deal of discussion/debate/argument.”*
- Does anyone want to guess the last time that the U.S. Congress *legally* declared war? *Answer: December 11, 1941 (when the U.S. government declared war on Germany, three days after declaring war on Japan, entering the U.S. into World War II.)*