

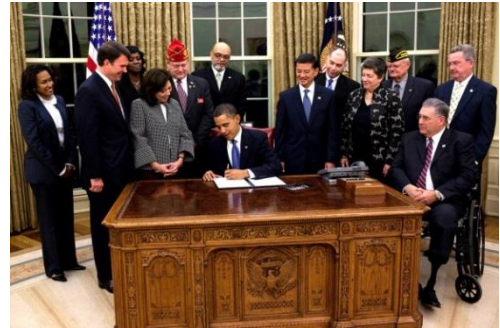
# Lesson Plan: The Power of Executive Action and What Trump Can Do After Taking Office

By Rachel Roberson

## Featured resources

[What Trump Can \(and Can't\) Do With the Stroke of a Pen After Taking Office](#)

[New York Times: 100-Day Plan interactive](#)



The U.S. Army/Flickr

## Opening quick write prompt:

What are 2-3 campaign promises that President-elect Trump made before the election? Do you think he will be able to make laws or policies to keep those promises? Why or why not?

*A quick write allows students to write down their thoughts before discussing the opening question in order to increase participation and make the discussion more accessible to English Language Learners.*

## Objective

- Students will analyze and evaluate the power of the president to take executive action.
- Students will analyze Trump's campaign promises and proposed policies and evaluate the methods and potential outcomes of reversing Obama's key executive actions.

## Essential Question and Lesson Context

### What is an executive order or action? How much power should the president have to take executive action?

Faced with a gridlocked Congress, President Obama used executive actions during his presidency to craft policies like the Clean Power Plan and make it possible for children of undocumented immigrants to remain in the country temporarily (DACA). Executive action is a powerful but fragile tool. What one president enacts, another can undo. This lesson explores the power of executive action and what policies and laws might change after President-elect Trump takes office in January.

## Key vocabulary

*Pre-teach key vocabulary before students do the activity, especially if you have English Language Learners. After going over the simple definition, consider providing a visual aid or having students draw one. More ideas for how to pre-teach vocabulary can be found [here](#).*

Word	Simple definition
Impose (v.)	To establish or force something to be accepted or put in place
Latitude (n.) / Leeway (n.)	The amount of freedom to move or act that is available, the scope of action or thought
Obstacle (v.)	Something that blocks the way or keeps something else from moving forward
Successor (n.)	Someone who comes after or follows
Tariff (n.)	A tax to be paid on certain imported or exported goods

## Activity

- Discuss the quick write prompt and make a list of laws or policies based on Trump campaign promises that students are already thinking about. Gauge student understanding of how some items on the list could be enacted, focusing on the pathway to approval, not the likelihood. *Ex: Building a wall on the U.S-Mexico border can't be done without approval from Congress because it costs money. Congress, not the president, determines the budget.*
- Students read the opening section of [The Lowdown post](#) that explains what an executive action is and describes some of Obama's significant executive actions.
  - Check for understanding before moving on: Ask students to explain what an executive action is in their own words.
  - If students need more background information, [this quick video from The Washington Post](#) (1:11) gives an overview of the executive action process.
- Ask: What other executive orders or legislation do you think President Trump or the Republican-controlled Congress could enact based on their opposition to Obama's policies? Add to the list started above. Ultimately, the list should include potential policies in the categories of immigration, the environment, gun control, healthcare and international trade, and can include the Supreme Court, education, and government hiring/lobbying.
- Using [this New York Times interactive](#) or [The Lowdown post](#), students choose 1-2 policies to investigate individually or in small groups. If students don't have online access to the interactive, vote on a category of policy to investigate as a class. As they research, students should prepare responses to the following questions:

- Can this policy be enacted without Congress (through executive action) or does it require action from Congress?
  - What are 1-2 potential outcomes or consequences of this policy? (Links in the interactive take students to NYT articles on each topic OR students can infer based on prior knowledge.)
  - Do you think this policy should be enacted? Why or why not?
- Students share their responses with the class orally or in writing to prepare for the discussion.

### Discussion questions

- Which potential policy do you hope is enacted by the Trump Administration? Which potential policy concerns you most? Explain.
- What were the most common consequences of the potential policies discussed during the presentations? What are ways to avoid the consequences (other than not enacting the policy)?
- Do you think presidents (not just President-elect Trump, but any future president) should have the power to use executive actions? Why or why not?

*Circle chats, small-group discussions and think-pair-share provide a safer space for students to practice speaking and listening, and also boost participation during whole-class discussions.*

### Extension activities

**Issue collage:** Using an online platform like [Fotor](#), students create a collage of images that represent the policy they investigated and possible outcomes or consequences of enacting it. Students can annotate the collage and explain why they selected each image using [ThingLink](#). Learn more about working programs like Fotor and Thinglink with [this online course from KQED Teach](#).

### Common Core and C3 Framework standards

<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1</a>	Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7</a>	Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
<a href="#">D2.Civ12</a>	Assess specific rules and laws (both actual and proposed) as a means of addressing public problems.