



SURVEY OF AMERICANS ON INDEPENDENT AGENCIES AND EXECUTIVE POWER — QUESTIONNAIRE —

Field Dates: March 4-7, 2025

Sample Size: 1,249 adults nationally

Confidence Interval: +/- 3.0%

Samples Provided by: Multiple online opt-in panels, including Cint, Dynata and Prodege. Sample collection and quality control was managed by QuantifyAI under the direction of the University of Maryland’s Program for Public Consultation.

[Language—Respondents are allowed to change the language of the survey by clicking the “en español” button on the far upper left part of the screen]. To take the survey in English, please click Next. Para realizar la encuesta en español, haga clic en el botón de idioma de la esquina superior derecha.

[Note: Headings in [brackets] were not presented to respondents. They simply indicate topics and provide programming instructions. Single lines indicate respondents were presented questions/text on a new screen. Footnotes denote sources, but were not presented to the respondent]

This survey is going to cover questions about the federal government. You will be provided with background information, as well as arguments for and against each policy. This survey will take about 20 minutes to answer. Your answers will remain completely anonymous. As you may know, there is a debate these days about how much authority Presidents should have over federal agencies. Presidents have a lot of control over most federal agencies, but some agencies were created to have much more independence.

Here is some background:

Federal agencies are government organizations created by Congress and signed into law by Presidents, to fulfill a specific mission. For example, the Department of Defense to defend the nation, or the Food and Drug Administration to ensure medicines are safe.

Agencies enforce the laws passed by Congress, and create policies and regulations to fulfill the mission that Congress gave them.

Most federal agencies are led by a single person, who is appointed by the President and must be confirmed by Congress. The President can remove the leader of these agencies for any reason.

Some federal agencies were designed differently. They are called **independent agencies**. They are meant to operate, on a day-to-day basis, more independently from both the President and Congress. They are often run by a group of people – known as a commission – made up of members of both parties. The idea behind this is that it allows these agencies to make long-term plans that are more free from short-term politics and partisanship. Some well-known independent agencies are the Federal Reserve, the National Labor Relations Board, and the Federal Elections Commission.

Q1. How aware, if at all, are you of the fact that some federal agencies are independent?

	Very Aware	Somewhat Aware	Total Very/ Somewhat Aware	A Little Aware	Not at all Aware	Total A Little / Not at all Aware	Ref/DK
National	30%	36%	66%	16%	18%	34%	0%
GOP	32%	35%	67%	18%	16%	33%	0%
Dem.	33%	37%	70%	14%	16%	30%	0%
Indep.	17%	36%	53%	20%	26%	46%	1%

The most important feature that makes independent agencies different from other federal agencies is their **leadership**. Here are some key features:

- In most cases they are headed by a **multi-member commission**, rather than one person like other agencies.
- This commission must include members of both parties, and **one party can not dominate the board** (e.g. if there are five members on the board, no more than three can be from one party.) In many cases, the majority of commissioners are of the same party as the President.
- The terms of commissioners are staggered so that they are often **selected by different Presidents**. This is to ensure that leadership does not completely change every time there is a new President.
- **Presidents decide who should be the head of the commission**, who is in charge of setting the agency's agenda, and has significant power over final decisions
- Unlike other federal agencies, **Presidents can not fire commissioners** of independent agencies because of policy disagreements. They can fire commissioners if they fail to do their job or violate the law.

Perhaps most central Presidents can not directly change or veto their decisions of independent agencies. This is in contrast to Congress. Congress can pass laws to change their mission, override their regulations, vote to remove a commissioner, or even abolish the agency altogether. If the President thinks an agency is overstepping its authority it has more limited options: it can ask Congress to intervene or it can sue the agency in a federal court. But the President cannot intervene directly.

So, we will now consider a debate about whether currently independent agencies should:¹

1. Be put under the direct control of Presidents so they can: change or overturn the agencies' decisions and remove and replace their commissioners. – or –
2. Continue to be independent from direct Presidential control, though still accountable to Congress

Here is an argument in favor of putting currently independent agencies under the direct control of Presidents:²

Q2. The American public votes for Presidents to fulfill their policy agenda. That requires all federal agencies working together under the direct leadership of the President. Important agencies being able to operate without Presidential control can, and do, get in the way of the President's agenda which the people voted for.

How convincing or unconvincing do you find this argument?

	Very convincing	Somewhat convincing	Total convincing	Somewhat unconvincing	Very unconvincing	Total unconvincing	Ref/DK
National	24%	41%	65%	17%	14%	31%	4%
GOP	32%	48%	80%	12%	4%	16%	4%
Dem.	20%	36%	56%	18%	23%	41%	3%
Indep.	13%	33%	47%	29%	19%	47%	6%

Here is an argument in favor of these agencies continuing to be independent from direct Presidential control:³

Q3. Congress was elected by the people, and they decided to make these agencies independent. They did that because these agencies oversee parts of the economy that are too important for the long-term stability of the country to be influenced by short-term politics and partisanship, and to change with each new President. Think about your least favorite President – Democrat or Republican – having complete control over agencies that oversee the stock market, worker's rights, elections and so on.

How convincing or unconvincing do you find this argument?

	Very convincing	Somewhat convincing	Total convincing	Somewhat unconvincing	Very unconvincing	Total unconvincing	Ref/DK
National	40%	41%	81%	13%	6%	19%	0%

¹ White House. (2025) *Ensuring Accountability for All Agencies*. The debate over independent agencies is rooted in the debate over the theory of "unitary executive" power: Sullivan, B. (2023). *Expert Knowledge, Democratic Accountability, and the Unitary Executive*. *Fordham L. Rev.*, 92, 575; Sunstein, C. R., & Vermeule, A. (2021). *The Unitary Executive: Past, Present, Future*. *The Supreme Court Review*, 2020(1), 83-117; Calabresi, S. G., & Rhodes, K. H. (1992). The structural constitution: Unitary executive, plural judiciary. *Harvard Law Review*, 1153-1216.

² Heritage Foundation. *2025 Mandate for Leadership, Section 5*; America First Policy Institute. *Dismantle the Administrative State*; Federalist Society. (2021) *The End of Independent Agencies? Restoring Presidential Control of the Executive Branch*

³ Sunstein, C. and Vermeule, A. (2021) *Presidential Review: The President's Statutory*; Center for American Progress. (2024) *Project 2025 Would Destroy the U.S. System of Checks and Balances and Create an Imperial Presidency*

GOP	32%	46%	78%	14%	8%	22%	0%
Dem.	51%	35%	86%	10%	4%	14%	0%
Indep.	32%	44%	76%	16%	8%	24%	0%

Here is another argument in favor of putting currently independent agencies under the direct control of Presidents:

Q4. Independent agencies too often become unaccountable to the public. They are constantly lobbied by special interests to make rules in their favor. Agencies are also filled by unelected bureaucrats who often have their own political agenda. Giving Presidents control would make these agencies more accountable to the public.

	Very convincing	Somewhat convincing	Total convincing	Somewhat unconvincing	Very unconvincing	Total unconvincing	Ref/DK
National	27%	42%	69%	17%	12%	29%	2%
GOP	37%	45%	82%	12%	5%	17%	1%
Dem.	21%	37%	58%	23%	18%	41%	1%
Indep.	14%	47%	61%	20%	15%	35%	4%

Here is another argument in favor of these agencies continuing to be independent from direct Presidential control:

Q5. If Presidents have direct control, they will be pressured by campaign donors and extremist supporters to bend these agencies in their favor. If you are a lobbyist for a special interest, it is much easier to influence a president whose campaign you can legally contribute money to, than it is to influence a group of commissioners from different parties.

	Very convincing	Somewhat convincing	Total convincing	Somewhat unconvincing	Very unconvincing	Total unconvincing	Ref/DK
National	35%	41%	76%	17%	7%	24%	0%
GOP	26%	44%	70%	21%	9%	30%	0%
Dem.	46%	36%	82%	12%	6%	18%	0%
Indep.	30%	47%	77%	16%	7%	22%	1%

Now we will turn to specific independent agencies.

The **Federal Communications Commission (FCC)** regulates communications across radio, television, and the internet. Its mission is to ensure that communication services in the country are reliable and accessible to everyone.

Here are some of the key things the FCC does:

- Sets rules for radio and TV stations to make sure they follow **laws about content**. For example, making sure TV and radio programming watched by children does not show excessive violence or sexual activity. If the FCC determines that a company is failing to comply with laws, they can **revoke their license** (this is very rare).
- Establish and enforce regulations to prevent fraud and unfair billing practices.
- Promote fair competition among radio, TV and internet providers, by working to **prevent monopolies**.
- Help coordinate **emergency alert systems** that warn people about natural disasters, Amber Alerts, and national security threats.

We will now look at arguments for and against removing the independent status of the FCC, and giving the President the authority to change or overturn its decisions, and remove its commissioners.

Here is an argument in favor of putting the FCC under the direct control of Presidents:

Q6. Media is changing rapidly and independent agencies can act too slowly. If Presidents have more authority over the FCC, they can ensure that it responds quickly to new developments and emergencies, rather than being bogged down by unresponsive bureaucracies. And, Congress is too gridlocked to intervene effectively.

	Very convincing	Somewhat convincing	Total convincing	Somewhat unconvincing	Very unconvincing	Total unconvincing	Ref/DK
National	23%	38%	61%	19%	16%	35%	4%

GOP	30%	45%	75%	16%	5%	21%	4%
Dem.	18%	31%	49%	19%	28%	47%	4%
Indep.	12%	40%	52%	25%	18%	43%	5%

Here is a counter argument:

Q7. If Presidents control the FCC, they could use it as a political weapon against their political opponents – putting pressure on TV or internet providers to silence opposing views. This is the kind of thing that happens in undemocratic, authoritarian countries. The FCC must stay independent to protect free speech for everyone.

	Very convincing	Somewhat convincing	Total convincing	Somewhat unconvincing	Very unconvincing	Total unconvincing	Ref/DK
National	42%	39%	81%	12%	7%	19%	0%
GOP	34%	43%	77%	15%	8%	23%	0%
Dem.	55%	32%	87%	8%	5%	13%	0%
Indep.	34%	45%	79%	13%	8%	21%	0%

Q8. In conclusion, do you favor:

1. Putting the Federal Communications Commission under the direct control of Presidents so they can: change or overturn its decisions, and remove and replace its commissioners. – or –
2. Keeping the FCC independent from direct Presidential control, though still accountable to Congress

	Opt. 1	Opt. 2	Refused / DK
National	32%	66%	2%
GOP	47%	52%	2%
Dem.	20%	79%	1%
Indep.	23%	74%	3%

Demographics			
	Opt. 1	Opt. 2	DK/Ref
White	29%	69%	1%
Black	38%	59%	3%
Hispanic	30%	68%	2%
Men	35%	64%	2%
Women	30%	68%	1%
18-34	42%	58%	1%
35-44	41%	56%	3%
45-54	31%	67%	2%
55-64	26%	73%	1%
65 or older	19%	79%	2%
Less than \$30,000	33%	63%	4%
\$30-50,000	20%	79%	2%
\$50-75,000	29%	71%	0%
\$75-100,000	39%	61%	0%
\$100-150,000	39%	60%	1%
More than \$150,000	35%	64%	1%
High School or less	36%	62%	2%
Some college	29%	71%	1%
BA	33%	66%	2%
Post grad	31%	68%	1%

Another independent agency is the **Federal Trade Commission (FTC)**. Its mission is to make sure businesses follow fair market rules and do not harm consumers or other companies.

Here are the FTC's main functions:

- **Create regulations and enforce laws against fraud**, false advertising, identity theft, and unfair treatment by businesses, such as misleading contracts or hidden fees.
- Monitor corporate mergers and business practices to **prevent anti-competitive activity**, to ensure that no single company monopolizes a market.
- Work to protect consumers' personal data.

Here is an argument in favor of putting the FTC under the direct control of Presidents:

Q9. The FTC has too much unchecked power over major parts of the economy. Since they are independent, they can create policies that conflict with the President's economic agenda – which the people voted for. It is better for the federal government to follow a unified economic agenda.

	Very convincing	Somewhat convincing	Total convincing	Somewhat unconvincing	Very unconvincing	Total unconvincing	Ref/DK
National	24%	40%	63%	20%	16%	35%	1%
GOP	32%	47%	80%	13%	6%	19%	1%
Dem.	19%	28%	47%	26%	26%	52%	1%
Indep.	10%	48%	59%	23%	16%	39%	2%

Here is a counter argument:

Q10. Removing the FTC's independence could easily result in corruption. Presidents will be pressured by large corporate donors to change FTC rules in their favor and not protect consumers and small businesses.

	Very convincing	Somewhat convincing	Total convincing	Somewhat unconvincing	Very unconvincing	Total unconvincing	Ref/DK
National	39%	37%	76%	16%	8%	24%	0%
GOP	28%	42%	70%	20%	10%	30%	0%
Dem.	52%	31%	83%	12%	6%	17%	0%
Indep.	36%	43%	78%	16%	6%	22%	0%

Q11. In conclusion, do you favor:

1. Putting the Federal Trade Commission under the direct control of Presidents so they can: change or overturn its decisions, and remove and replace its commissioners. – or –
2. Keeping the Federal Trade Commission independent from direct Presidential control, though still accountable to Congress

	Opt. 1	Opt. 2	Refused / DK
National	33%	66%	1%
GOP	49%	50%	1%
Dem.	21%	79%	1%
Indep.	21%	78%	1%

Demographics			
	Opt. 1	Opt. 2	DK/Ref
White	33%	67%	0%
Black	39%	59%	2%
Hispanic	30%	69%	1%
Men	36%	64%	1%
Women	32%	67%	1%
18-34	44%	56%	0%
35-44	34%	63%	3%
45-54	31%	68%	1%
55-64	29%	69%	2%
65 or older	24%	75%	1%
Less than \$30,000	33%	65%	2%
\$30-50,000	26%	74%	1%
\$50-75,000	37%	62%	1%
\$75-100,000	34%	65%	2%
\$100-150,000	39%	61%	0%

More than \$150,000	32%	67%	1%
High School or less	38%	61%	1%
Some college	27%	72%	1%
BA	32%	67%	1%
Post grad	37%	62%	1%

The **Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC)** oversees and regulates financial markets, including the stock market. It was created after the stock market crash of 1929 that led to the Great Depression.

Here are the SEC's most important functions:

- Work to **prevent stock market crashes**, by monitoring financial companies and creating regulations to limit risky practices.
- Enforce rules to **prevent fraud, insider trading**, and misleading financial statements that could harm investors.
- **Promote transparency** by requiring financial companies to publicly disclose information about their investments

Here is an argument in favor of putting the SEC under the direct control of Presidents:

Q12. The stock market is too important for millions of Americans to be regulated by unelected bureaucrats. Financial crashes have happened under the SEC's watch. Presidents should be able to quickly respond to crises by directing the SEC to stabilize markets more effectively than a slow-moving independent agency.

	Very convincing	Somewhat convincing	Total convincing	Somewhat unconvincing	Very unconvincing	Total unconvincing	Ref/DK
National	25%	39%	64%	19%	17%	36%	1%
GOP	34%	45%	79%	15%	5%	21%	1%
Dem.	19%	30%	49%	21%	29%	50%	1%
Indep.	15%	42%	57%	24%	17%	41%	2%

Here is a counter argument:

Q13. The stock market is too important for it to be subject to the short-term goals of Presidents. They will surely be pressured by wealthy campaign donors who oppose the transparency and limits on risky investments required by the SEC. The financial system of the US needs a steady, neutral hand regulating it. That is why Congress – after the Great Depression – made the SEC independent.

	Very convincing	Somewhat convincing	Total convincing	Somewhat unconvincing	Very unconvincing	Total unconvincing	Ref/DK
National	39%	39%	78%	15%	7%	22%	0%
GOP	28%	45%	73%	17%	9%	27%	0%
Dem.	52%	32%	84%	11%	5%	16%	0%
Indep.	36%	39%	75%	16%	8%	24%	1%

Q14. In conclusion, do you favor:

1. Putting the Securities and Exchange Commission under the direct control of Presidents so they can: change or overturn its decisions, and remove and replace its commissioners – or –
2. Keeping the Securities and Exchange Commission independent from direct Presidential control, though still accountable to Congress

	Opt. 1	Opt. 2	Refused / DK
National	32%	67%	1%
GOP	45%	54%	1%
Dem.	20%	79%	1%
Indep.	26%	72%	1%

Demographics			
	Opt. 1	Opt. 2	DK/Ref
White	31%	68%	1%

Black	35%	63%	2%
Hispanic	36%	64%	0%
Men	34%	65%	1%
Women	31%	68%	1%
18-34	42%	57%	1%
35-44	39%	60%	1%
45-54	31%	68%	1%
55-64	24%	75%	1%
65 or older	20%	78%	2%
Less than \$30,000	32%	66%	2%
\$30-50,000	26%	73%	1%
\$50-75,000	32%	67%	1%
\$75-100,000	41%	57%	3%
\$100-150,000	31%	69%	1%
More than \$150,000	33%	67%	1%
High School or less	38%	61%	2%
Some college	27%	71%	2%
BA	30%	70%	0%
Post grad	32%	68%	0%

The **National Labor Relations Board (NLRB)** enforces laws related to workers.

Here are the NLRB's most important functions:

- Enforce laws that protect workers from being punished for collective bargaining, joining unions, or striking.
- **Supervise worker elections** where workers decide whether to form or join a union, to help ensure that workers can vote free of any intimidation by their bosses or union officials.
- Help **resolve disputes** between workers, unions, and employers, so they do not have to go to court.

Here is an argument in favor of putting the NLRB under the direct control of Presidents:

Q15. The NLRB's decisions impact the economy and how businesses operate. It should be up to Presidents to try to find the right balance between the interests of workers and the interests of business. The NLRB should not be able to get in the way of the President's economic agenda, which the people voted for.

	Very convincing	Somewhat convincing	Total convincing	Somewhat unconvincing	Very unconvincing	Total unconvincing	Ref/DK
National	24%	35%	59%	20%	21%	41%	1%
GOP	34%	41%	75%	17%	7%	24%	1%
Dem.	19%	26%	44%	20%	35%	55%	1%
Indep.	9%	39%	47%	28%	24%	52%	2%

Here is a counter argument:

Q16. All workers – nearly all Americans – depend on the NLRB to take unbiased actions that protect their right to organize, bargain collectively and be treated fairly. If Presidents control the NLRB, large corporate donors will push for decisions that undermine workers' rights in favor of making more profit. Workers need an agency to work on their behalf, which is not influenced by the very corporations they are being protected from.

	Very convincing	Somewhat convincing	Total convincing	Somewhat unconvincing	Very unconvincing	Total unconvincing	Ref/DK
National	40%	39%	79%	14%	7%	21%	0%
GOP	28%	43%	71%	19%	10%	29%	0%
Dem.	53%	33%	87%	10%	4%	13%	0%
Indep.	37%	44%	81%	12%	7%	19%	0%

Q17. In conclusion, do you favor:

1. Putting the National Labor Relations Board under the direct control of Presidents so they can: change or overturn its decisions, and remove and replace its commissioners. – or –
2. Keeping the National Labor Relations Board independent from direct Presidential control, though still accountable to Congress

	Opt. 1	Opt. 2	Refused / DK
National	34%	65%	1%
GOP	47%	52%	1%
Dem.	24%	75%	1%
Indep.	21%	79%	0%

Demographics			
	Opt. 1	Opt. 2	DK/Ref
White	31%	68%	1%
Black	38%	61%	2%
Hispanic	34%	65%	1%
Men	36%	63%	1%
Women	32%	67%	1%
18-34	48%	52%	1%
35-44	37%	60%	3%
45-54	32%	67%	1%
55-64	23%	77%	0%
65 or older	22%	77%	2%
Less than \$30,000	33%	64%	3%
\$30-50,000	25%	75%	1%
\$50-75,000	32%	68%	0%
\$75-100,000	41%	59%	1%
\$100-150,000	36%	64%	0%
More than \$150,000	36%	62%	1%
High School or less	36%	63%	1%
Some college	30%	70%	0%
BA	37%	63%	0%
Post grad	34%	63%	3%

The **Federal Reserve** is the central bank of the United States. Its mission is to promote a stable economy by managing the country's money supply and banking system.

The Federal Reserve has many important functions. We are only going to focus on a few of them here, known as its **regulatory functions**:

- Regulate and monitor banks to make sure they follow rules and **prevent risky banking practices** that could cause economic crises.
- **Respond to financial crises** by providing emergency support to banks and businesses to prevent economic collapse.

Here is an argument in favor of putting the Federal Reserve's regulatory functions under the direct control of Presidents:

Q18. The Federal Reserve holds tremendous power over the nation's economy. The Fed's regulations should align with the elected President's economic agenda. This would help ensure a more unified economic strategy that reflects the priorities of the voters who elected the President.

	Very convincing	Somewhat convincing	Total convincing	Somewhat unconvincing	Very unconvincing	Total unconvincing	Ref/DK
National	24%	36%	59%	19%	20%	40%	1%
GOP	36%	40%	76%	17%	7%	23%	1%
Dem.	16%	29%	44%	21%	35%	55%	1%

Indep.	10%	41%	51%	25%	23%	48%	1%
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Here is a counter argument:

Q19. The US banking system needs stability and long-term planning. If Presidents are given more control over banking and money policies, these regulations could change drastically with every new President. Long-term plans could be replaced by short-term economic goals and political wins. That could easily lead to an economic crash. Congress made the Fed independent for a good reason – long-term economic stability.

	Very convincing	Somewhat convincing	Total convincing	Somewhat unconvincing	Very unconvincing	Total unconvincing	Ref/DK
National	42%	36%	78%	14%	7%	22%	0%
GOP	33%	40%	73%	19%	8%	27%	0%
Dem.	54%	31%	85%	10%	5%	15%	0%
Indep.	36%	40%	76%	13%	10%	23%	1%

Q20. In conclusion, do you favor:

1. Putting the Federal Reserve's regulatory functions under the direct control of Presidents so they can: change or overturn its decisions, and remove and replace its commissioners. – or –
2. Keeping the Federal Reserve's regulatory functions independent from direct Presidential control, but still accountable to Congress

	Opt. 1	Opt. 2	Refused / DK
National	31%	67%	2%
GOP	45%	53%	2%
Dem.	18%	80%	1%
Indep.	24%	74%	3%

Demographics			
	Opt. 1	Opt. 2	DK/Ref
White	29%	69%	2%
Black	31%	66%	3%
Hispanic	31%	66%	3%
Men	35%	64%	2%
Women	27%	71%	2%
18-34	37%	61%	3%
35-44	40%	57%	3%
45-54	32%	68%	0%
55-64	27%	72%	2%
65 or older	18%	80%	2%
Less than \$30,000	28%	68%	4%
\$30-50,000	25%	73%	2%
\$50-75,000	26%	73%	1%
\$75-100,000	37%	61%	2%
\$100-150,000	34%	65%	1%
More than \$150,000	35%	64%	1%
High School or less	34%	63%	3%
Some college	26%	72%	2%
BA	31%	69%	1%
Post grad	34%	66%	1%

The **Federal Election Commission (FEC)** enforces laws about money in federal elections.

Here are the FEC's main functions:

- **Enforce rules about campaign finance**, such as how money can be raised and spent in elections for President and Congress, and how much individuals, businesses, and political groups can donate.
- **Promote transparency** in all campaign finance donations and spending

Here is an argument in favor of putting the FEC under the direct control of Presidents:

Q21. Bureaucrats have political biases just like everyone that cause them to make decisions that favor one party or candidate over another. But they are rarely held accountable. By putting the FEC under the President's control, there would be much more accountability when the FEC fails to enforce election laws fairly, because the President will be held responsible by voters.

	Very convincing	Somewhat convincing	Total convincing	Somewhat unconvincing	Very unconvincing	Total unconvincing	Ref/DK
National	25%	35%	60%	19%	20%	39%	2%
GOP	34%	41%	75%	16%	8%	24%	1%
Dem.	18%	27%	45%	20%	33%	53%	2%
Indep.	13%	41%	54%	21%	23%	44%	2%

Here is a counter argument:

Q22. Giving Presidents control over the FEC would allow them to manipulate election rules to benefit themselves and their party. Presidents could pressure the FEC to target the campaigns and committees of their opponents and look the other way when their party's campaigns break the rules. Presidents clearly have too many conflicts of interests when it comes to election financing.

	Very convincing	Somewhat convincing	Total convincing	Somewhat unconvincing	Very unconvincing	Total unconvincing	Ref/DK
National	42%	35%	77%	14%	9%	23%	1%
GOP	32%	38%	70%	19%	10%	29%	1%
Dem.	55%	30%	84%	9%	6%	15%	1%
Indep.	35%	41%	75%	14%	11%	25%	0%

Q23. In conclusion, do you favor:

1. Putting the Federal Election Commission under the direct control of Presidents so they can: change or overturn its decisions, and remove and replace its commissioners. – or –
2. Keeping the Federal Election Commission independent from direct Presidential control, though still accountable to Congress

	Opt. 1	Opt. 2	Refused / DK
National	30%	69%	2%
GOP	42%	57%	1%
Dem.	19%	79%	2%
Indep.	22%	78%	0%

Demographics			
	Opt. 1	Opt. 2	DK/Ref
White	27%	73%	1%
Black	38%	60%	3%
Hispanic	30%	68%	2%
Men	31%	67%	1%
Women	28%	70%	2%
18-34	43%	56%	1%
35-44	33%	64%	3%
45-54	27%	71%	2%
55-64	21%	78%	1%
65 or older	18%	81%	1%
Less than \$30,000	28%	69%	3%
\$30-50,000	26%	73%	1%
\$50-75,000	31%	69%	0%
\$75-100,000	36%	61%	2%
\$100-150,000	31%	68%	1%
More than \$150,000	29%	71%	1%
High School or less	34%	65%	2%

Some college	26%	73%	1%
BA	29%	70%	1%
Post grad	29%	70%	1%

Some independent agencies are led by a single director and not a multi-member commission. Like other independent agencies, these directors can not be fired for the President for any reason.

One such agency is the **Office of Special Counsel (OSC)**, which investigates and enforces rules about federal workers in the Executive Branch.

Here are the OSC's main functions:

- **Protect the merit-based system of the federal workforce**, by ensuring fair hiring practices through enforcing laws against discrimination—based on race, gender, or political beliefs—and nepotism (hiring close friends or family).
- **Protect whistleblowers** (federal employees who have reported government wrongdoing) from being fired or retaliated against.
- Enforce laws that **limit political activity by federal employees while on the job**, to help ensure the federal workforce is non-partisan.

Here is an argument in favor of putting the OSC under the direct control of Presidents:

Q24. The single director of the OSC in numerous cases will have been appointed by a past President of a different party than the President in power. That director could have political bias, and effectively harass the administration through bogus investigations and claims of worker mistreatment. The President should be able to select a director without such a bias.

	Very convincing	Somewhat convincing	Total convincing	Somewhat unconvincing	Very unconvincing	Total unconvincing	Ref/DK
National	22%	39%	61%	18%	19%	37%	2%
GOP	33%	45%	78%	15%	6%	21%	1%
Dem.	14%	31%	45%	21%	33%	53%	2%
Indep.	12%	40%	53%	22%	23%	45%	3%

Here is a counter argument:

Q25. The OSC exists to investigate misconduct within the President's own administration. If the President could fire the head of the OSC or block its investigations, it would defeat the agency's entire purpose as an independent watchdog. Those who want to speak out against illegal activity will be silenced and fired.

	Very convincing	Somewhat convincing	Total convincing	Somewhat unconvincing	Very unconvincing	Total unconvincing	Ref/DK
National	40%	37%	76%	15%	8%	23%	0%
GOP	29%	42%	70%	18%	12%	30%	0%
Dem.	54%	30%	84%	12%	4%	16%	1%
Indep.	35%	40%	74%	17%	8%	25%	1%

Q26. In conclusion, do you favor:

1. Putting the Office of Special Counsel under the direct control of Presidents so they can change or overturn its decisions, and remove and replace its director. – or –
2. Keeping the Office of Special Counsel independent from direct Presidential control

	Opt. 1	Opt. 2	Refused / DK
National	31%	67%	2%
GOP	44%	55%	2%
Dem.	21%	78%	1%
Indep.	23%	73%	4%

Demographics			
	Opt. 1	Opt. 2	DK/Ref
White	30%	68%	2%

Black	37%	60%	3%
Hispanic	28%	69%	2%
Men	33%	66%	1%
Women	30%	68%	3%
18-34	43%	56%	1%
35-44	37%	61%	2%
45-54	31%	66%	3%
55-64	20%	78%	1%
65 or older	20%	77%	3%
Less than \$30,000	33%	65%	3%
\$30-50,000	27%	70%	3%
\$50-75,000	28%	70%	2%
\$75-100,000	40%	58%	2%
\$100-150,000	31%	68%	1%
More than \$150,000	31%	68%	1%
High School or less	36%	61%	3%
Some college	26%	72%	2%
BA	32%	66%	2%
Post grad	30%	70%	0%

Right now, Congress is the only branch of government that has the authority to create agencies and decide whether they are independent from direct Presidential control. In order for an independent agency to be created, Congress needs to pass a law, and the President needs to sign it. Presidents can also veto that law, which then requires two thirds of Congress to overturn, but this virtually never happens. It is also only within Congress' authority to **remove** the independence of an agency. They would have to pass a new law to do so, and it would need to be signed by the President.

As stated previously, the idea behind making agencies independent is that it allows them to make long-term plans that are more free from short-term politics and partisanship.

There has been a debate about whether this should change so that Presidents have the power to remove the independence of an agency and put it under the direct control of the President, without Congressional approval.⁴

Here is an argument in favor of giving Presidents that authority:⁵

Q27. As the head of the Executive Branch, and the only person elected by the country as a whole, Presidents should have authority over all federal agencies and how they operate. If Presidents determine that putting an agency under their control is necessary for the smooth functioning of the federal government, and for achieving their policy agenda, they should have that power.

	Very convincing	Somewhat convincing	Total convincing	Somewhat unconvincing	Very unconvincing	Total unconvincing	Ref/DK
National	21%	34%	55%	18%	23%	41%	4%
GOP	32%	40%	72%	18%	7%	24%	4%
Dem.	14%	26%	40%	18%	39%	56%	4%
Indep.	9%	37%	46%	23%	28%	50%	4%

Here is an argument in favor of Congress continuing to be the only branch of government with that authority:⁶

Q28. Presidents should never have the power to take control over parts of government that were specifically designed to be independent – by Congress and past Presidents. Giving newly elected Presidents the power to single-handedly overturn a law that was already passed would undermine the separation of powers built into the US government by America's Founders.

⁴ White House. (2025) [Ensuring Accountability for All Agencies](#)

⁵ Heritage Foundation. [2025 Mandate for Leadership, Section 5](#); America First Policy Institute. [Dismantle the Administrative State](#); Federalist Society. (2021) [The End of Independent Agencies? Restoring Presidential Control of the Executive Branch](#)

⁶ Sunstein, C. and Vermeule, A. (2021) [Presidential Review: The President's Statutory](#); Center for American Progress. (2024) [Project 2025 Would Destroy the U.S. System of Checks and Balances and Create an Imperial Presidency](#)

	Very convincing	Somewhat convincing	Total convincing	Somewhat unconvincing	Very unconvincing	Total unconvincing	Ref/DK
National	42%	35%	77%	14%	9%	23%	0%
GOP	31%	40%	71%	17%	12%	29%	0%
Dem.	56%	29%	85%	10%	6%	15%	0%
Indep.	34%	40%	73%	17%	10%	27%	0%

Q29. In conclusion, do you think:

1. Presidents should have the power to remove the independence of agencies on their own. – or –
2. Congress should continue to have the sole power to remove the independence of agencies, by passing a new law that the President would then need to sign.

	Opt. 1	Opt. 2	Refused / DK
National	32%	67%	1%
GOP	47%	52%	1%
Dem.	18%	81%	1%
Indep.	26%	73%	2%

Demographics			
	Opt. 1	Opt. 2	DK/Ref
White	32%	67%	1%
Black	35%	65%	0%
Hispanic	32%	68%	0%
Men	35%	64%	1%
Women	29%	70%	1%
18-34	38%	61%	1%
35-44	43%	56%	1%
45-54	30%	69%	2%
55-64	24%	75%	1%
65 or older	22%	77%	1%
Less than \$30,000	33%	67%	1%
\$30-50,000	27%	72%	2%
\$50-75,000	26%	72%	2%
\$75-100,000	39%	61%	1%
\$100-150,000	32%	68%	0%
More than \$150,000	35%	63%	2%
High School or less	37%	62%	2%
Some college	26%	73%	1%
BA	33%	67%	1%
Post grad	31%	69%	0%

Now, let's turn to a debate about the rules for hiring and firing federal workers.

For around a hundred years, there have been rules that govern how federal agencies go about hiring and firing nearly all federal workers. Under these laws, federal agencies:

- Must hire workers using a competitive process, in which the candidates with the best skills and experience are hired. Candidates' political beliefs or connections can not be taken into account
- Can only fire workers for failing to do their job or violating the law

A proposal has been put forward to change a significant number of federal positions—ones related to policies—so that, the President can direct that:⁷

- applicants can be hired without going through the standard competitive process,
- workers in those positions can more easily be fired

Here is an argument in favor of the proposal:⁸

⁷ White House. (2025) [Restoring Accountability to Policy-Influencing Decisions Within the Federal Workforce](#)

⁸ Heritage Foundation. [2025 Mandate for Leadership, Section 1](#); America First Policy Institute. [Dismantle the Administrative State and Tales From the Swamp: How Federal Bureaucrats Resisted President Trump](#)

Q30. There are too many unelected bureaucrats who slow down or resist implementing Presidents' agendas – which the people voted for – who are nearly impossible to get rid of. As the head of the Executive Branch, Presidents should have much more control over who works in federal agencies, carrying out the President's agenda.

	Very convincing	Somewhat convincing	Total convincing	Somewhat unconvincing	Very unconvincing	Total unconvincing	Ref/DK
National	28%	34%	63%	20%	17%	37%	1%
GOP	42%	38%	81%	15%	4%	19%	0%
Dem.	19%	27%	46%	23%	30%	54%	1%
Indep.	13%	42%	55%	25%	18%	43%	2%

Here is an argument against:⁹

Q31. The federal workforce is best when it is filled with professionals, not loyalists to whichever President or party is in charge. Allowing Presidents to fill federal positions with people who could be partisan hacks or political donors—rather than experts—will increase partisanship and corruption, and worsen government performance.

	Very convincing	Somewhat convincing	Total convincing	Somewhat unconvincing	Very unconvincing	Total unconvincing	Ref/DK
National	39%	36%	75%	14%	10%	24%	0%
GOP	28%	40%	68%	18%	14%	32%	0%
Dem.	53%	30%	83%	11%	6%	17%	0%
Indep.	34%	44%	78%	13%	9%	22%	0%

Q32. So, in conclusion, do you favor or oppose:

Changing a significant number of federal positions—ones related to policies—so that the President can direct that:

- applicants can be hired without going through the standard competitive process – or –
- workers in those positions can more easily be fired

	Favor	Oppose	Refused / DK
National	45%	55%	1%
GOP	63%	37%	0%
Dem.	28%	71%	1%
Indep.	33%	66%	1%

⁹ Center for American Progress. (2024) [Project 2025 Would Destroy the U.S. System of Checks and Balances and Create an Imperial Presidency](#)

Demographics			
	Favor	Oppose	DK/Ref
White	43%	56%	0%
Black	54%	46%	0%
Hispanic	42%	56%	2%
Men	52%	47%	1%
Women	37%	63%	0%
18-34	52%	48%	0%
35-44	53%	46%	1%
45-54	43%	56%	1%
55-64	39%	60%	0%
65 or older	33%	67%	0%
Less than \$30,000	42%	56%	2%
\$30-50,000	36%	64%	1%
\$50-75,000	43%	57%	0%
\$75-100,000	51%	49%	0%
\$100-150,000	48%	51%	1%
More than \$150,000	48%	53%	0%
High School or less	47%	52%	1%
Some college	37%	62%	0%
BA	48%	51%	0%
Post grad	48%	53%	0%

There has recently been some controversy over how much authority Presidents should have over federal spending.

As you may know, the Supreme Court has consistently held that the Constitution gives Congress the ultimate power over federal spending.

Presidents play a role in developing the Federal budget, and sign any spending bills that Congress passes. If Presidents do not like what's in a spending bill they can veto it. Congress can override the veto, but that rarely happens. So usually Presidents have substantial influence over the ultimate design of spending bills. Once the bill has passed and become law, Presidents, including future Presidents, are obligated to direct Federal agencies to spend the funds as required by the law. If Presidents want to change any of the spending in a law, they must first get Congressional approval.

We are now going to consider a debate about whether Presidents should have the power to override a law and refuse to spend the funds called for in the law.¹⁰

Here is an argument in favor of this idea:¹¹

Q33. If a President determines that the spending called for in Congressional laws does not serve the national interest, the President should not have to direct the Federal agencies to spend it. Too often Members of Congress pass bloated budgets that satisfy special interests and help them get reelected in their state or district. Presidents represent the whole country, and can better make spending decisions that are good for the country overall.

	Very convincing	Somewhat convincing	Total convincing	Somewhat unconvincing	Very unconvincing	Total unconvincing	Ref/DK
National	24%	38%	62%	18%	17%	35%	4%
GOP	38%	41%	78%	13%	5%	18%	4%
Dem.	14%	30%	44%	23%	30%	53%	4%
Indep.	12%	48%	60%	17%	20%	37%	3%

¹⁰ The debate over impoundment is rooted in the debate over the theory of "unitary executive" power: Sullivan, B. (2023). *Expert Knowledge, Democratic Accountability, and the Unitary Executive*. *Fordham L. Rev.*, 92, 575; Sunstein, C. R., & Vermeule, A. (2021). *The Unitary Executive: Past, Present, Future*. *The Supreme Court Review*, 2020(1), 83-117; Calabresi, S. G., & Rhodes, K. H. (1992). The structural constitution: Unitary executive, plural judiciary. *Harvard Law Review*, 1153-1216.

¹¹Center for Renewing America. (2024). *The President's Constitutional Power of Impoundment*.

Here is an argument against:¹²

Q34. It should not be up to any single person in government to decide what is in the country's best interest. Think about your least favorite President – Democrat or Republican – having direct control over all federal spending. Presidents already play a major role in working with Congress to create spending bills. But once they are passed into law Presidents should not have the power to simply override the law.

	Very convincing	Somewhat convincing	Total convincing	Somewhat unconvincing	Very unconvincing	Total unconvincing	Ref/DK
National	39%	37%	76%	15%	9%	24%	0%
GOP	28%	40%	68%	20%	12%	32%	0%
Dem.	53%	33%	86%	10%	5%	14%	0%
Indep.	34%	40%	73%	17%	9%	27%	0%

Here is another argument in favor:

Q35. After a law has been passed by Congress, conditions in the country might change. Maybe there is high inflation and spending the money will make it worse. Presidents should have the power to be nimble and make changes to spending as needed. This would create a better balance between the power of the President and the power of Congress.

	Very convincing	Somewhat convincing	Total convincing	Somewhat unconvincing	Very unconvincing	Total unconvincing	Ref/DK
National	26%	40%	66%	18%	15%	32%	1%
GOP	37%	45%	82%	13%	4%	17%	1%
Dem.	18%	32%	50%	22%	26%	48%	2%
Indep.	15%	46%	60%	20%	17%	36%	3%

Here is another argument against:

Q36. Presidents always have the option to go back to Congress and propose changes to laws that the President thinks are needed. But the Founders said that the proper balance between the branches of government is that Presidents cannot make such changes all by themselves. The Constitution has served us well for more than two centuries and we should not toss aside these central principles even if we might not like some of the decisions Congress has made.

	Very convincing	Somewhat convincing	Total convincing	Somewhat unconvincing	Very unconvincing	Total unconvincing	Ref/DK
National	37%	40%	77%	15%	8%	23%	1%
GOP	28%	43%	71%	19%	10%	29%	0%
Dem.	49%	35%	84%	10%	5%	15%	1%
Indep.	32%	43%	75%	16%	9%	24%	1%

Q37. So, in conclusion, when it comes to spending bills that have been passed into law, do you think Presidents:

1. should have the power to override them and direct Federal agencies not to spend the funds required by the bills – or –
2. should continue to have to get Congressional approval to make changes to the spending required by the bills

	Opt. 1	Opt. 2	Refused / DK
National	36%	63%	0%
GOP	53%	47%	0%
Dem.	20%	80%	1%
Indep.	30%	69%	1%

¹² Center for American Progress. (2024) Project 2025 Would Destroy the U.S. System of Checks and Balances and Create an Imperial Presidency; House Committee on Appropriations. (2025) Trump's Impoundment: Uninformed and Unconstitutional

Demographics			
	Opt. 1	Opt. 2	DK/Ref
White	36%	64%	0%
Black	39%	61%	0%
Hispanic	34%	65%	1%
Men	39%	60%	1%
Women	33%	66%	0%
18-34	42%	58%	0%
35-44	43%	56%	1%
45-54	37%	63%	0%
55-64	31%	68%	1%
65 or older	27%	73%	1%
Less than \$30,000	34%	65%	1%
\$30-50,000	29%	71%	1%
\$50-75,000	36%	64%	0%
\$75-100,000	45%	54%	1%
\$100-150,000	37%	63%	0%
More than \$150,000	39%	61%	0%
High School or less	40%	59%	1%
Some college	32%	68%	0%
BA	36%	63%	1%
Post grad	34%	66%	0%

Thank you for taking this policymaking simulation. We greatly appreciate the time and thought you have put into this survey, and we hope you found it both enjoyable and informative.

###

Methodology

Fielding and Sample Size

The national survey was fielded to 1,249 adults online March 4-7, 2025 by the Program for Public Consultation (PPC) at the University of Maryland's School of Public Policy, with representative non-probability samples obtained from multiple online panels, including Cint, Dynata and Prodege.

The sample has a confidence interval of +/- 3.0%, calculated using the following formula: $CI = \frac{1}{\sqrt{r}}$ where r is the response rate. The response rate was 8.8%.

Pre-Stratification and Weighting

The sample was pre-stratified and weighted by age, race, ethnicity, gender, education, household income, Census region, using benchmarks came from the Census Bureau's 2022 American Community Survey and 2023 Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement.

The average weight was 1.0 (minimum: 0.16; maximum 2.87)

Sample Collection

Sample collection was managed by QuantifyAI with oversight from PPC. Samples were drawn from multiple large online panels, including Cint, Prodege, and Dynata, whose members are recruited using non-probability sampling methods. The selected sample was invited to participate via email invitation, push notification, or SMS for cell phone users. Respondents were offered cash or cash-equivalent incentives to participate in the survey.

Data Collection and Privacy

Survey responses were collected directly on the Qualtrics platform. Only respondents with a provided link could take the survey, using their computer or mobile phone.

Privacy and security measures were taken to ensure that data was collected in adherence to the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation policies for data privacy and security, as well as the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA).

Quality Control

Quality control measures in the sample collection process to disqualify duplicate respondents and survey bots included:

- checking respondents' IP addresses to determine if there are duplicate respondents
- employing an "operating system & Web browser check" to determine if there are any cross-panel duplicates
- using hCaptcha to detect and disqualify survey bots.

Quality control measures within the survey to disqualify dishonest or mischievous respondents, as well as survey bots, included:

- an attention-check question, e.g. Select the word that does not belong. [Tuesday]; [Friday]; [April]; [Wednesday]
- an honesty question, e.g. What have you done in the past week? Select all that apply. [Won a gold medal at the Olympics]; [Watched TV]; [Got a license to operate a Class SSGN submarine]; [Read a book]
- a speed limit, which disqualified respondents who moved through the first quarter of the survey at a pace roughly triple the average reading speed.

Lastly, respondents were removed from the sample who answered less than half the substantive questions, or who engaged in straight- lining.

LLM Assistance

The content in the briefing and argument sections of the questionnaire were written and edited using the assistance of LLMs (ChatGPT 4.0 and Gemini 2.0 Flash). LLMs were not used in the construction of the survey design or the questions.