

Washington's Cabinet



One of Washington's first precedents was the creation of a presidential **cabinet**. He wanted a group of advisors to help him make important decisions in governing the United States. Using the Constitution as his guide, Washington expanded the president's authority where he could "require the Opinion, in writing, of the principal Officer in each of the executive Departments, upon an subject relating to the Duties of their respective Offices." Rather than require their advice in writing, he choose to receive their advice in person by forming the first cabinet.

In order to appear balanced, Washington choose members from different areas of the country. While he personally respected every member of his cabinet, Washington's main concern was that they supported the Constitution and that they were of good character.

Alexander Hamilton - Secretary of Treasury

Alexander Hamilton had proven his worth time and time again to Washington. During the American Revolution, Hamilton was Washington's secretary and personal advisor. Hamilton was a delegate to the Constitutional Convention and his essays in the Federalist Papers were essential to the ratification of the Constitution. Hamilton was also a financial genius and had a strong vision for the economic future of the United States.

When it came to politics, Hamilton felt that government should be run by wealthy, educated men. Hamilton was in favor of business and industry, and wanted the economic growth of the United States to be a main focus of the government. He created economic policies for George Washington and the new government. He favored friendly trade relations with Great Britain.

Once appointed to the position of Secretary of Treasury, Hamilton immediately began implementing his plan for restoring the economy of the United States. His believed that the Constitution allowed the central government power to run the country, even if they were not specifically identified. The Constitution states the government can "Make all Laws which shall be **necessary and proper** for" the execution of other powers. He used these **implied powers** to create a national bank and pay off debt. The funds to pay off debt would be raised by tariffs and taxes, which included a controversial tax on whiskey.

Stop and Discuss:

1. What is a presidential cabinet? Why do you think Washington needed one?
2. How did Washington decide who was going to be on his cabinet? What qualifications did Hamilton have to serve on Washington's cabinet?
3. Describe Hamilton's thoughts on government.
4. Summarize Hamilton's actions as secretary of Treasury.



Watch a video clip on Alexander Hamilton.

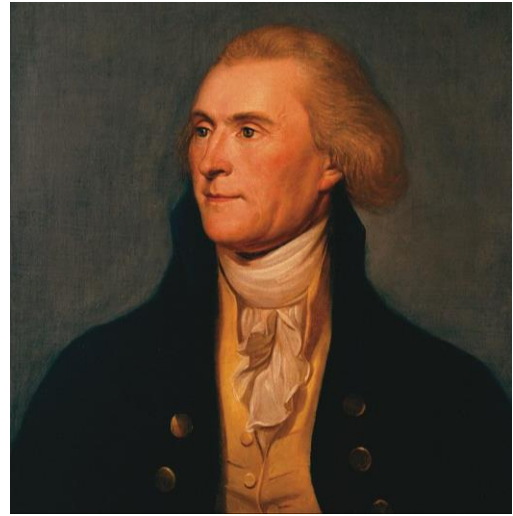


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Thomas Jefferson - Secretary of State

Thomas Jefferson had a long history of leadership, before during and after the American Revolution. He had served as a representative in the House of Burgesses prior to the American Revolution. At the Second Continental Congress, he wrote the Declaration of Independence. During the war, he served as a state representative and governor of Virginia. Prior to serving in Washington's cabinet, he was Ambassador to France.

Thomas Jefferson owned a plantation in Virginia. He valued an agricultural economy and lifestyle. He felt that those who worked with the land had more knowledge and common sense than those who worked in business. He said, "State a (problem) to a (farmer) and a professor," and the "former will decide it often better than the latter."



Listen to a song from the musical *Hamilton*



Jefferson was afraid of a strong central government. He believed the best government was one that interfered the least. The Constitution was the guide for government and should be followed exactly. The state government represented people the best and should be used to check the powers of the federal government.

Washington wanted Jefferson to advise him on foreign policy and choose him to serve as Secretary of State. Thomas Jefferson supported the revolution in France.

Henry Knox - Secretary of War

Henry Knox had served with Washington during the American Revolution. He was tasked with forming and organizing the War Department and the army.

Edmund Randolph - Attorney General

Edmund Randolph had served as governor of Virginia and in the Continental Congress. He helped ratify the Constitution in Virginia. He will serve as the chief lawyer of the United States government.

George Washington's cabinet would serve him well, advising him on domestic and foreign issues. However, there was conflict within the cabinet between two key members. Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson opposed each other on almost every topic, including the formation of a National Bank and the United States' relationship with France. They fought often in the cabinet and even in the press, writing letters and publishing them about each other. Jefferson once stated, "Hamilton and (I) were daily pitted in the cabinet (against each other.)" This conflict would lead to the creation of the first political parties. Alexander Hamilton wanted a powerful central government - his Federalist Party reflected these ideals. Jefferson helped create the Democratic-Republican Party, which favored states' rights.

Stop and Discuss:

1. What qualifications did Jefferson have to serve on Washington's cabinet?
2. Describe Jefferson's thoughts on government.
3. What conflict occurred in Washington's cabinet?