

# The departments that make up the federal government

By Whitehouse.gov and usembassy.gov, adapted by Newsela staff on 12.01.16

Word Count **956**

Level **860L**



An FBI agent in New York City photographed on October 22, 2009. The FBI is part of the Department of Justice, one of the 15 departments that make up the executive branch of the federal government of the United States. Photo: FBI.gov

The U.S. president makes important decisions every day. Advisers help the president. Some are part of the president's Cabinet. Cabinet members are in charge of 15 different departments. For example, the Department of Education leader is the adviser that helps the president make decisions about education and schools.

Here are the 15 departments in the government and what they do:

## **Department Of Agriculture**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) works to help farmers produce more food. This department makes sure farmland is protected, farm animals are healthy and food is safe to eat. The USDA also works to end hunger.

## **Department Of Commerce**

The Department of Commerce helps U.S. businesses in the U.S. It also helps them do business with other countries. It gathers information about business and jobs. This department also approves patents for inventions and trademarks for new products.

### **Department Of Defense**

The Department of Defense (DOD) works to prevent or fight wars.

The department includes the Army, Navy, Marines, and Air Force. It is the largest government agency. More than 3 million men and women are in it. Together they fight wars, protect the U.S., and help in case of disasters.

### **Department Of Education**

The Department of Education works to prepare students to be successful. The department tries to make sure each student has an equal chance to get an education.

This department collects information about America's schools to make them better. It gives money to states, cities and towns to improve education.

### **Department Of Energy**

The Department of Energy (DOE) works to make energy clean, safe and cheaper to buy. It does studies to find new kinds of energy.

The DOE must also make sure America's nuclear weapons are safely stored so that the environment is protected.

### **Department Of Health And Human Services**

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) works to protect the health of all Americans. The HHS does research to cure diseases. This department makes sure drugs are safe and food is healthy. It also runs Medicare and Medicaid, which pay doctors for health care for older people and poorer people.

### **Department Of Homeland Security**

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS), began after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. It works to prevent future attacks and protect the American people. This department guards U.S. borders and checks people who come into the U.S. It protects travelers and our transportation systems. It also helps when there are disasters and emergencies.

### **Department Of Housing And Urban Development**

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) works to improve places where people live. The department helps some families get loans to buy homes. It also pays some of the cost of rent for poorer people.

HUD sometimes rebuilds older houses and apartments. HUD also finds homes for the homeless.

### **Department Of The Interior**

The main job of the Department of the Interior (DOI) is conservation. It works to protect about one-fifth of the land in the United States. This includes America's natural resources, national parks, dams and reservoirs, fish and wildlife. It also works to help American Indians, Alaskan Natives, and island communities.

This department also makes money for the government. It rents land to companies to drill for gas and oil on government lands. Other companies pay to dig for minerals, graze cattle, and cut timber. Millions of people pay to visit the national parks.

### **Department Of Justice**

The Department of Justice (DOJ) enforces the law. It works to keep the public safe from threats by foreign and American lawbreakers. It works to punish the guilty and see that all Americans get fair and equal justice.

The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the U.S. Marshals and the Federal Bureau of Prisons are part of the DOJ.

It represents the United States in courtrooms all over the country and in the Supreme Court, too. The U.S. attorney general is its leader. This department is the world's largest law office.

### **Department Of Labor**

The Department of Labor (DOL) works to help U.S. workers. This department improves safe working conditions, offers job training, protects health care and retirement benefits of workers. It sets rules for how much workers are paid, pay for when people lose jobs and to treat workers fairly.

### **Department Of State**

The Department of State helps the president work with countries around the world. The State Department sends Americans to other countries to represent the United States. It also sets up military training programs in other countries and fights international crime. The State Department helps U.S. citizens who travel in other countries. It also helps people that want to come and live in the U.S.

### **Department Of Transportation**

The Department of Transportation (DOT) works to make transportation safe, fast and easy to use.

This department studies and improves highways and bridges. It also works with carmakers, airlines, railroads, trucking companies and ship companies to make sure products and people move safely around the country.

### **Department Of The Treasury**

The Department of the Treasury is responsible for the money needed to support the government. It prints dollars and mints coins, collects taxes, pays the country's bills and borrows money needed to run the government.

This department works to protect American banks. The Treasury Department can keep money from other countries that threaten the U.S.

## **Department Of Veterans Affairs**

The Department of Veterans Affairs works to help veterans from the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, Coast Guard and Public Health Service. Their families can get help, too. Veterans can get help paying for food and housing. This department can pay for education and job training, home loans, medical care, and funerals.

## Quiz

- 1 Which sentence from the section "Department Of The Interior" gives an example of how this department benefits the government?
- (A) It works to protect about one-fifth of the land in the United States.
  - (B) This includes America's natural resources, national parks, dams and reservoirs, fish and wildlife.
  - (C) It also works to help American Indians, Alaskan Natives, and island communities.
  - (D) Millions of people pay to visit the national parks.
- 2 Based on the information in the article, which of the following statements is TRUE?
- (A) All police officers and lawyers in the U.S. work for the Department of Justice.
  - (B) Only the Department of Housing and Urban Development works to help people who are poor.
  - (C) Both the Department of Commerce and the Department of Labor are interested in jobs in the U.S.
  - (D) The Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs work together to help soldiers during wars.
- 3 Based on the article, which two departments would MOST likely help during a national emergency?
- (A) Department of Commerce and Department of Energy
  - (B) Department of Defense and Department of Homeland Security
  - (C) Department of Health and Human Services and Department of Justice
  - (D) Department of the Interior and Department of Transportation
- 4 Which of the following is MOST affected by the work the Department of the Treasury does?
- (A) U.S. citizens
  - (B) the U.S. government
  - (C) citizens of other countries
  - (D) governments of other countries