

Why a president must persuade

[Politics](#), [President](#)



According to Richard E. Neustadt, ' The power of the American president is to persuade. ' I am going to analyse this statement in my essay, by answering why a president must persuade, looking at the relationship between the president and government, giving examples of when persuasion has worked and when it hasn't, focusing on other ways the president can influence and finally ending with a conclusion. Firstly, why is it important for the president to persuade? The power to persuade is seen as an informal power as it is not clearly expressed in the constitution.

It is important as presidents need to persuade other branches of government to influence policy; they even have to do this in their own branch (the executive) e. g. influencing cabinet secretaries. Due to all the branches of government, it means that power is dispersed and concentrated in different places; this can make it complex for the president to exert his own influence especially if there are opponents. Without the support of the Senate or the House of Representatives the president has only slight power, due to the checks and balances imposed on the president, power is reduced.

Persuasion needs to take place in order to influence all sectors of the government so they can facilitate their policies, this supports the conception that the power of the American president is to persuade. Where has persuasion worked? When Bush was justifying the Iraq war, Colin Powell spoke in his favour and he furthered bi-partisanship with Democrats, who was the opposing party at the time. By showing this alliance, it meant that policies would have no problem going through Congress (reducing deadlock), this supports Neustadt.

Where persuasion has not worked? An example was when President Eisenhower failed to persuade a governor. At the time when African-American students were not allowed in a school, which led to a Supreme Court case (Brown vs. The Board of Education) and it resulted in the students being allowed to attend. Sadly, the governor did not agree and so Eisenhower had a meeting with him and failed to persuade him to allow them to attend, this showed that Eisenhower was not even good at persuading those in his own government, showing he was a 'weak' president.

If persuasion is not acquired, it means that power is reduced, which reflects how the president is portrayed. For the president to be persuasive they must be charismatic and have the ability to influence the voters and those who can make their legislative goals happen. If a president has the ability to influence then it shows great leadership. Neustadt focuses on three traits a president must have to be successful: having the power to persuade, a good professional reputation and public prestige, with all these components put together they would be seen as a strong president.

Professional representation, the term Neustadt used was 'Washingtonians' who are people in government (governors, military leaders, congress etc). The better the reputation of the president, the easier they will find it to negotiate, pass legislation and implement policy. I mentioned earlier that power is dispersed everywhere due to the separation of powers, meaning that it could be possible that someone may have great power and influence other than the president, which can be a problem for the president this means he must always be aware of them.