

GROUP 1 The Executive Branch

DOCUMENT 1 *With this executive order, President Harry Truman integrated the United States armed forces on July 26, 1948*

Executive Order 9981

Establishing the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity In the Armed Forces.

WHEREAS it is essential that there be maintained in the armed services of the United States the highest standards of democracy, with equality of treatment and opportunity for all those who serve in our country's defense:

NOW THEREFORE, by virtue of the authority vested in me as President of the United States, by the Constitution and the statutes of the United States, and as Commander in Chief of the armed services, it is hereby ordered as follows:

1. It is hereby declared to be the policy of the President that there shall be equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed services without regard to race, color, religion or national origin. This policy shall be put into effect as rapidly as possible, having due regard to the time required to effectuate any necessary changes without impairing efficiency or morale.
2. There shall be created in the National Military Establishment an advisory committee to be known as the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services, which shall be composed of seven members to be designated by the President.
3. The Committee is authorized on behalf of the President to examine into [sic] the rules, procedures and practices of the Armed Services in order to determine in what respect such rules, procedures and practices may be altered or improved with a view to carrying out the policy of this order. The Committee shall confer and advise the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of the Army, the Secretary of the Navy, and the Secretary of the Air Force, and shall make such recommendations to the President and to said Secretaries as in the judgment of the Committee will effectuate the policy hereof.
4. All executive departments and agencies of the Federal Government are authorized and directed to cooperate with the Committee in its work, and to furnish the Committee such information or the services of such persons as the Committee may require in the performance of its duties.
5. When requested by the Committee to do so, persons in the armed services or in any of the executive departments and agencies of the Federal Government shall testify before the Committee and shall make available for use of the Committee such documents and other information as the Committee may require.
6. The Committee shall continue to exist until such time as the President shall terminate its existence by Executive order.

Harry Truman
The White House
July 26, 1948

Information and Questions to guide understanding of Executive Order 9981

BACKGROUND

Executive Orders are legally binding orders that the president gives to federal agencies. Executive orders do not require Congressional approval. The power to issue executive orders is generally attributed to Article II, Section 1 of the Constitution, which vaguely assigns the president “executive power.” Article II, Section 3 is also cited as the source of a president’s power to issue executive orders. It says that the president “shall take care that the laws be faithfully executed.”

QUESTIONS

1. Why did President Truman issue the executive order (EO)?

2. What change did Executive Order 9981 mandate? What federal agency was affected by the EO?

3. Who will enforce the EO? How?

4. Do some research to see how people responded to EO 9981 when Truman issued it, and how effective it has been in attaining the desired outcome.
