

# **Presidents in the Hot Seat Description of Roles**

## **The Secession**

### **President of the United States: James Buchanan**

The power of the Executive Branch is vested in the President of the United States, who also acts as head of state and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. The president is often required to make decisions, on behalf of the American people, that potentially can impact their lives dramatically. Due to the complexity of the position, and potential political consequences that can result from making an improper comment, the President of the United States must also exercise a fair amount of discretion when addressing the addressing the American public.

President Buchana finds himself in a difficult position. Multiple states have seceded from the Union, but his presidency is also about to end. This means that he has all of the authority of the President, but President-elect Lincoln will soon be President and will have to handle the crisis going forward.

### **President-Elect of the United States: Abraham Lincoln**

President-elect Lincoln has been elected to the office of President but has not yet been inaugurated. Therefore, he has no real authority to take action, but he bears a significant amount of responsibility because once he is inaugurated in March 1861 he will become responsible for addressing the collapse of the Union. Therefore, although he currently has no executive authority, President-elect Lincoln will participate in conversations with President Buchanan about how to respond to the developing crisis.

### **Secretary of State: Jeremiah S. Black**

The Secretary of State is the president's chief foreign affairs adviser. This advisor has been included in discussions regarding the secession of southern states because these states have both asked other countries to treat them as if they were a separate country (the Confederate States of America) from the U.S. and because of the potential for conflict with states representing themselves as an independent country.

### **Secretary of War: John B. Floyd**

The Secretary of War is the primary advisor to the president on defense-related issues and is responsible for formulating and carrying out the general defense policy for the United States. The Secretary of War is a member of the president's cabinet and will provide advice to President Buchanan on any matters regarding conflict.