This article was prepared from a number of internet sites for all our friends at the Levine Jewish Community Center by **Bill & Abby Stepien**.

**If You Lived in the White House …**

Here are some rules every First Family is supposed to follow:

1. **Be sure to “pardon” a turkey on Thanksgiving**.

U.S. presidents hold the National Thanksgiving Turkey Presentation every year where they spare a turkey from the Thanksgiving table. The ceremony dates all the way back to the 1940s but the very first official pardon from a president was in 1999 when President Bill Clinton pardoned ‘Harry the Turkey.’

1. **While we’re on the topic of food.**

Being the president of the United States might seem like a cushy job but there are a couple of hitches. Presidents don’t just live off the tax payer’s money. They have to pay for their own food, toiletries, dry cleaning and other personal items and services. But don’t get too concerned, the President’s salary is $400,000 (plus a few perks!).

And that leads us to a couple of other money items. Did you know that you must pay the bill for moving into the White House. You and your family move in with a moving company of your choice, but the movers are not allowed into the White House itself. Once the moving truck gets to a certain point, it’s the staff’s responsibility to move all the stuff inside.

1. **Move in day - January 20th**

Every time a new president is elected, January 20th becomes a hectic day in the White House. Presidents aren’t allowed to move in until that exact day, as their predecessor still resides at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue until January 19. Then the new First Family is given a total of 12 hours to move into the White House, mainly for security reasons.

On a more sober note, a president must submit a funeral plan within the first week of arriving in Washington. A state funeral is a huge ordeal full of choreographed ceremonies and generally lasts for around five days. A total of eight US presidents have died while in office. Four of them were assassinated. Being the leader of the free world is no easy task and makes you a target for many.

1. **Decoration Rules**

What if you want to throw all the old decorations out and start with your own stuff? Not a chance! The White House is more like a museum than an actual house and there are some rooms you’re not allowed to change.

Those rooms include the Oval Office and the Lincoln Bedroom. Any changes to these rooms have to be approved by the historical committee that oversees the White House. But the second and third floors can be redecorated freely.

And what if you want to do a little remodeling? You are allotted a budget of $100,000 and anything over that comes out of their own pockets.

1. **What’s it like to be a member of the First Family?**

Do you like to drive your car – windows down and the music turned up? Well forget that pleasure! Neither the president nor any of the first family are allowed to drive on public roads, for their safety. The very last president that was allowed to drive on a public road was Lyndon B. Johnson.

But all is not lost. The president and first family can still drive on private roads. Remember how George W. Bush took pleasure in driving his truck around his private ranch in Crawford, Texas?

There are a couple of other things you will lose too. Once you become a member of the First Family, you lose other little liberties too, like - being able to go where you want when you want by yourself. Once you’re part of the first family, you are under constant surveillance by the secret service.

No matter what you’re doing or where you’re doing it, if you’re part of the first family, you are always being watched.

1. **How do like your wheels?**

Being chauffeured around in “Cadillac One” does not have too many negatives attached to it. You are not allowed to open the car’s windows in public but you don’t have to worry much about traffic either.

And what do you think about your car? “The Beast” is actually more like a tank. Not only is it equipped with the essential bulletproof glass but it’s also reinforced with enough armor to withstand a bomb. Thanks to its sealing capacity and internal oxygen system it can also withstand a chemical attack. Another reason for keeping the windows close!

Before we leave the president’s car, let’s look at what’s sitting on the back seat. Wherever the president is traveling, you can be sure that something called “The Football” isn’t too far behind. The Football is the nickname for the briefcase that follows the president around. Its contents are largely unknown to the public but whatever is in it must be important.

It’s assumed that the nuclear codes are held within the briefcase, so in case of an attack, the president would have ready access to such codes if need be. The briefcase reportedly weighs around 45 pounds, so who knows what else is in there?

1. **Do you get a really special number for your cell phone?**

Like just about everything else, presidential security has a drawback or two. As the president, you are not allowed to have your own cell phone.

President Obama was allowed to keep a Blackberry during his presidency but it was so heavily modified by the secret service that it was hard to still call it a smartphone. “Does your three-year-old have one of those play phones? That’s basically the phone I got,” Obama said.

Another rule that the president always must follow is to make calls only from secure lines for national security reasons. Calls by high level officials are obvious targets for foreign intelligence services. Government-issued smartphones are constantly updated to address security issues such as hacking.

1. **The first family always hosts the Easter Egg Roll and Annual Hanukkah Party**

The White House grounds opened to the public for the first Easter Egg Roll in 1878. Since then, presidents have hosted the event on the lawn every year except for a few years during World War II.

The egg roll is a time-honored tradition where children roll Easter eggs with a spoon in a race across the White House lawn.

While not a very old ceremony, it has become tradition for the president to host an annual Hanukkah party too. The tradition began in 1979 while President Jimmy Carter was in office. Carter lit the menorah on the Ellipse, a park just south of the White House.

President George W. Bush was the very first president to ever light the Hanukkah menorah in the White House itself in 2001. The tradition is continued through to this day.

**A little puzzle for you**

Now it’s time for you to solve a little puzzle. (What do you expect from a veteran teacher?):

***What letter from the alphabet is not used in the name of any of our 50 states? (We’ll provide the answer next week. No fair calling each other and comparing notes!)***

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