

IMPACT OF MEDIA, INDIVIDUALS, AND INTEREST GROUPS

SS.7.CG.2.8 Examine the impact of media, individuals, and interest groups on monitoring and influencing government.

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2023 BENCHMARK UPDATES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated from SS.7.C.2.10 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No changes Depth of Knowledge Changes within Benchmark <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No changes Benchmark Clarification Changes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changed from “Students will identify the methods used by the media to monitor and/or influence the government.” to “Students will identify methods used by the media to monitor and <u>hold government accountable (e.g., acting as a watchdog, freedom of the press as contained in the 1st Amendment).</u>” Addition of “Students will identify methods used by individuals to monitor, hold accountable and influence the government (e.g., attending civic meetings, peacefully protesting, petitioning government, running for office, voting).” Deletion of “Students will evaluate the impact of media, individuals, and interest groups on the government.” Deletion of “Students will identify and evaluate methods of influencing and/or monitoring government.” Vocabulary Changes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addition of “watchdog”

Essential Teacher Content Background Information

[Teacher Content Notes Not Appropriate For Student Use]

This section addresses the following topics:

1. The Constitutional Basis for Monitoring and Influencing Government
2. Monitoring and Influencing Government

1. The Constitutional Basis for Monitoring and Influencing Government

The First Amendment guarantees freedom of the press. The Bill of Rights, which includes the First Amendment, was added to the U.S. Constitution in order to protect individuals from the national government infringing on their rights.

Several of the rights included in the First Amendment allow media, individuals and interest groups to monitor and influence government. The rights that facilitate monitoring and influencing the government include freedom of speech, the press, assembly and petitioning the government “for redress of grievances”. In protecting these freedoms, the Bill of Rights extends to the media, individuals and interest groups the right to interact with the government in ways that bring criticism about the government to the people (the watchdog role) and directly to the government (lobbying/lobbyists, special interests). Freedom of the press allows it to serve in a watchdog role as one means to protect individuals from the government infringing on their rights.

First Amendment freedoms also extend to political campaigns where individuals, candidates, special interests and political parties use the media to disseminate political messages.

2. Monitoring and Influencing Government

Individuals and organizations seek to influence government by interacting directly with government, and by using the media to bring attention to government actions. The media also acts alone to bring attention to government actions. In bringing attention to the public about government actions, also known as the watchdog role, the public may use its First Amendment rights to monitor and influence government. Individuals work together to form interest groups (special interests) which are guaranteed by the First Amendment’s freedom of association. Interest groups form to draw attention to government actions, encourage their members to interact with government and with the press, and raise money as a means to accomplishing their political and policy goals. Interest groups also employ persons or firms to interact with the government in order to educate and persuade the government to take action on their behalf. These persons and firms, called lobbyists, communicate with government officials in individual meetings and testify at hearings, such as before congressional committees¹. The combined impact of these individual, group and media actions are to bring attention to, and influence, government actions.

Freedom of the press extends to election campaigns where press coverage includes providing information about the candidates, issues and political parties. The media also serves as a vehicle for candidates, political parties, interest groups and even ordinary citizens to convey their messages during election campaigns. These campaign-related entities pay media outlets to advertise their message. Campaign advertising gives candidates, interest groups and political parties the opportunity to control their message about themselves and their opponents.

Political Action Committees (PACs) are organizations associated with interest groups, individuals, labor groups and corporations that raise and spend money in order to impact election outcomes. PACs give money

¹ The term “lobbyist” emerged from the old English practice of persons trying to persuade the government waiting in the Parliament lobby to interact with Members of Parliament as they entered or left the building.

directly to candidates, and also spend money on candidates' behalf such as sponsoring campaign commercials advocating how citizens should vote, or to shape opinions about candidates and political parties.

PACs are not wholly unregulated. Congress and the U.S. Supreme Court have regulated PACs. These regulations have impacted PAC influence.

Below is a recent timeline focusing on PAC regulations (adapted from Center for Responsive Politics, www.opensecrets.org).

Date	Law	Key Provision(s)
1971	Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA)	Repealed Federal Corrupt Practices Act (1910, 1925) Required full and timely disclosure Set ceilings on media advertising Set limits on contributions from candidates and their families
1971	Revenue Act	Created public campaign fund for eligible presidential candidates to begin 1976 Campaign fund created voluntary \$1 (now \$3) check-off on federal income tax returns
1974	Federal Election Campaign Act Amendments	Full public financing of presidential elections Revised spending limits for Congressional elections Set individual contribution limits Set PAC contribution limit (\$5000) Limit overall annual individual contributions Abolished limits on media advertising Created Federal Election Commission (FEC) to enforce campaign finance laws
1976	Buckley v. Valeo 424 U.S. 1	1974 FECA restrictions challenged on First Amendment grounds U.S. Supreme Court upheld disclosure requirements and limits on individual contributions The U.S. Supreme Court struck down limits on independent expenditures. Independent expenditures are those expenditures not coordinated with candidates or their campaign committees.
1979	FECA Amendments	Allowed state and local parties to promote federal candidates by spending unlimited amounts on campaign materials, voter registration, and get-out-the-vote (GOTV) drives
1986	FEC v. Massachusetts Citizens for Life, Inc.	The court issues a narrowly defined exception for nonprofits General funds may be used for express advocacy as long as the nonprofit does not accept business corporation funding
2000	Modified tax laws	Congress closes loophole in tax law to require public disclosure of donations to "issue groups" known as "527s"
2002	Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA; Also known as the McCain-Feingold Act)	Reinstituted limits on the sources and size of political party contributions Regulated how corporate and labor treasury funds could be used in federal elections.
2003	McConnell v. Federal Election Commission 540 U.S. 93	2002 BCRA challenged on First Amendment grounds U.S. The Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of most of the BCRA.
2010	Citizens United v. Federal Election	2002 BCRA challenged on First Amendment grounds

	Commission 558 U.S. 310	The U.S. Supreme Court held that corporate funding of independent political broadcasts in candidate elections cannot be limited.
2014	McCutcheon v. FEC	The Supreme Court struck down a law that placed total contribution caps an individual could contribute to all candidates, PACs, and parties combined. The Court ruled it limited participation in the democratic process and violated the First Amendment

Lesson Summary

ESSENTIAL QUESTION		
What methods do individuals, the media, and interest groups use to monitor the government? What methods do they use to influence the government?		
BENCHMARK		
SS.7.CG.2.8 Examine the impact of media, individuals, and interest groups on monitoring and influencing government.		
CIVICS EOC REPORTING CATEGORY		
N/A		
OVERVIEW		
In this lesson, students will learn about ways in which the media, individuals, and interest groups monitor and influence the government.		
BENCHMARK CLARIFICATIONS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will identify methods used by the media to monitor and hold government accountable (e.g., acting as a watchdog, freedom of the press as contained in the 1st Amendment). Students will identify methods used by individuals to monitor, hold accountable and influence the government (e.g., attending civic meetings, peacefully protesting, petitioning government, running for office, voting). Students will identify methods used by interest groups to monitor and influence government. 		
BENCHMARK CONTENT LIMITS		
N/A		
CIVICS CONTENT VOCABULARY		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> bias, civic meeting, freedom of the press, impact, influence, interest group/special interest group, lobbying, lobbyist, media, monitor, petitioning the government, political action committee (PAC), public opinion, public policy, watchdog 		
INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES		
Student inquiry	Reading complex text	Cooperative learning
MATERIALS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlighters Sticky notes U.S. Constitution image (external link) First Amendment slides The Role of Media reading 		

- The Role of Media activity sheet
- Top Interest Groups Giving to Members of Congress, 2022 Cycle fact sheet (external link)
- Interest Groups reading
- Interest Group Methods: Scenario Example slide
- Interest Groups Activity: The Cola Controversy reading
- Interest Groups Activity: Discussion Questions slide
- Social Media Impact slides

B.E.S.T. STANDARDS

- ELA.7.R.2.1- Explain how individual text sections and/or features convey a purpose in texts.
- ELA.7.R.3.2- Paraphrase content from grade-level texts.
- ELA.V.1.3- Apply knowledge of context clues, figurative language, word relationships, reference materials, and/or background knowledge to determine the connotative and denotative meaning of words and phrases, appropriate to grade level.
- ELA.K12.EE.1.1- Cite evidence to explain and justify reasoning.

Suggested Student Activity Sequence & Pace

DAY	ACTIVITY SEQUENCE
DAY 1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Project the “U.S. Constitution” image from the National Archives. Ask the students to brainstorm things that they notice about the picture 2. Pose the following question for discussion: Why do you think ‘We The People’ was written in a font so much larger than the rest? What does ‘We The People’ mean? 3. Lead students to the understanding that in our country, power resides with the people. As citizens, we have the power and responsibility to both monitor and influence the government. 4. Project the “First Amendment” slides. As a group, have students review the language of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution on slide 1. Pose the following questions for discussion: What does freedom of speech mean? What does freedom of press mean? What does it mean to petition the government? Teacher Note: If you have already taught 7.CG.2.3 this can serve as a review. If not, it can be a simple preview. 5. Discuss with students that as citizens, our rights to free speech, freedom of press, and the freedom to petition the government are all protected within the First Amendment. 6. Project slide 2 and discuss with the class some of the guarantees and limitations of this amendment. Teacher Note: If you have already taught 7.CG.2.4 this can serve as a review. If not, it can be a simple preview. 7. Review the information on slide 3 and discuss with the class ways all citizens can be involved with monitoring and/or influencing their government. Emphasize that being a citizen means that we have rights, but we also have obligations and responsibilities. We the People have the power and responsibility to monitor and influence the government every day, and this offers us a great opportunity to stay involved. Teacher Note: If you have already taught 7.CG.2.2 this can serve as a review. If not, it can be a simple preview. 8. Display slide 1 again and explain to students that just as individuals have rights and protections provided by the First Amendment, this amendment extends to the media as well. This allows readers to receive information and writers to print information, even if it criticizes the government. 9. Pass out “The Role of Media” reading from iCivics and “The Role of Media” activity sheet to each student. 10. Read aloud the first paragraph on page 1 as a whole class. Ask a student to explain the difference between media and ‘the media,’ according to the reading. 11. Next, have students complete the questions for the first paragraph on “The Role of Media” activity sheet. 12. Have students work in pairs or individually to continue reading and answering the questions. 13. As a whole group, review the correct answers. Students are encouraged to use highlighters to mark the text for understanding of important concepts. Teacher Note: Use provided answer key to help guide discussion.
DAY 2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To review from yesterday, have students answer the following questions in partners or whole group: What were some of the things individual citizens could do to influence and monitor the government? How does the media act as a watchdog on our government? What are the impacts if individuals and/or media do not engage in these practices?

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Lead students to the understanding that individuals and media have a civic responsibility to monitor and influence the government. If they weren't engaging in these practices, individuals in power may make decisions that go against the wishes of the voters or abuse their power. But also, there is a third group that helps monitor and influence government. These are known as interest groups. Project the following link "Top Interest Groups Giving to Members of Congress, 2022 Cycle". Give students time to read and understand the information in the table. Toggle back to a few previous election years. Click on an interest group such as "education", "lawyers", or "real estate" to show more detailed information. Teacher Note: Teacher may need to familiarize themselves with the table/information beforehand to lead discussion. Pose the following questions for discussion: What are some of the topics/issues/groups represented in this table? Why might interest groups want to contribute money to a campaign? Why do you think certain individuals may receive more contributions than others? How might interest groups' contributions impact congressional elections? Pass out the "Interest Groups" reading. Explain to students that interest groups play an important role in monitoring and influencing the government beyond just campaign contributions. Read the opening paragraph together. Ask students: What does the phrase 'there is power in numbers' mean? After discussing, instruct students to keep that phrase in mind as they continue to read about the work and purpose of interest groups. Have students break out into pairs or small groups to continue working through the "Interest Groups" reading. Students are encouraged to use highlighters to mark the text for understanding of important concepts. As they go, there are questions embedded in the reading for them to pause and answer. When completed, return together as a whole group to review the correct answers. Teacher Note: Use provided answer key to help guide discussion. As an exit activity, divide your board into three categories: Informing/Lobbying, Donating Money, Endorsing Candidate. Provide each student a sticky note and have them create an example scenario that demonstrates one of the three interest group methods above. On their way out the door, they should place the sticky note in the correct category. Teacher Note: Project this "Interest Group Methods: Scenario Example" slide if students need additional guidance.
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DAY 3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Inform students that today we'll be participating in an activity that gives us first-hand experience with joining an interest group. Pass out the "Interest Groups Activity: The Cola Controversy" reading and read as a whole class. Discuss as a class how all listed groups may feel and/or be affected by removing soda vending machines and stopping soda sales: the students, local pediatricians, the soda manufacturers, and the school. Have the students take notes on this in the chart at the bottom of the handout. Teacher Note: Use provided answer key to help guide discussion. Explain to students that next, they are going to divide into groups. Four of the groups will represent the four interests on this issue. A fifth group will represent the lawmakers who are ultimately making the decision of whether to pass this bill or not.
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5. Designate five different areas in your classroom to represent a meeting location for the groups (soda manufacturers, pediatricians, students, school, and lawmakers).
6. Randomly assign an equal number of students to each of the five groups.
7. Have students move to the designated area in the room where their group will be meeting.
8. While in groups, have students discuss the questions on the “Interest Groups Activity: Discussion Questions” slide and come to a consensus with their answers. One student in each group should be chosen to record notes on their answers.
Teacher Note: Teacher will monitor groups and offer support and considerations as needed.
9. After enough discussion time, bring the class back together.
10. Going one group at a time, have each special interest share their stance with the class, specifically speaking to the Florida lawmakers group.
Teacher Note: It is suggested that you provide students a few moments to choose a spokesperson for their interest group (a lobbyist) and set a timer for each group’s turn.
11. Once all interest groups have shared, have each member of the Florida lawmakers group share how they will be voting on the bill after hearing from the various interest groups.
12. Have the students come back together and display the “Social Media Impact” slides.
13. Read through the fake Tweets. For each one, work as a class to identify the source of the fake Tweet and summarize the viewpoint/message.
14. Pose the following questions for discussion: What role might social media play when individuals, media, and interest groups monitor and influence the government? How might this impact citizens as they engage with social media?
15. Remind students that while individuals and groups work to monitor and influence the government, we may be influenced as well. It is up to citizens to use our civic reasoning skills when encountering the information shared by other individuals, media, and interest groups.
16. Checking for Understanding (Formative Assessment):
Instruct students to write a well-crafted response using the following prompt:
Using what you have learned, select either individuals, media, or interest groups and write a paragraph exploring the impact they can have on monitoring and influencing the government. Cite specific examples to support your argument.

Civics Content Vocabulary

Word/Term	Definition
bias	favoring one view over another
civic meeting	a meeting that is held for the people to share their opinions with government officials
freedom of the press	the right that the media has to present information to the people without government control
impact	to have a strong effect on something or someone
influence	having an effect or impact on the actions, behavior, opinions, etc., of another or others
interest group/special interest group	a group of people who are concerned with a particular issue and who try to influence legislators to act in their favor, also known as a special interest group
lobbying	participating in activities in order to influence government officials
lobbyist	a person who participates in activities in order to influence government officials
media	the plural form of the word “medium,” refers to various means of communication. For example, television, radio, newspapers and the Internet (web) are different types of media. The term can also be used to describe news organizations as a whole group.
monitor	to watch, keep track of, or check usually for a special purpose
petitioning the government	the right to ask the government to solve a problem or to express an opinion about how the government is being run
political action committee (PAC)	an independent political organization that promotes the cause of a particular interest group, usually through raising money and campaigning to elect candidates who support the group's views
public opinion	the collection of attitudes of a group of people in a population
public policy	the stand the government takes about a problem or an idea
watchdog	a person or group who acts as a protector or guardian

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Civics 360 Resources](#)

Florida Department of Education's Civic Literacy Reading List

- N/A

ANSWER KEYS

Sample Answers: The Role of the Media activity sheet

Sample Answers: Interest Groups reading

Sample Answers: Interest Groups Activity: The Cola Controversy reading

Written Response: Sample Scoring Rubric

SOURCES

U.S. Constitution–National Archives:

https://www.archives.gov/files/founding-docs/constitution_1_of_4_630.jpg

First Amendment:

<https://www.uscourts.gov/about-federal-courts/educational-resources/about-educational-outreach/activity-resources/what-does#:~:text=Among%20other%20cherished%20values%2C%20the%20First%20Amendment%20protects%20freedom%20of%20speech.>

The Role of the Media Lesson Plan from iCivics:

https://www.icivics.org/sites/default/files/lesson_plan/Role%20of%20Media_StudentDocs.pdf

Interest Groups Lesson Plan from iCivics:

https://www.icivics.org/sites/default/files/lesson_plan/Interest%20Groups_StudentDocs_0.pdf

OpenSecrets.org – Top Interest Groups Giving to Members of Congress, 2022 Cycle -

<http://www.opensecrets.org/industries/mems.php>