

Kember Sloat

Civic Participation

Since the beginning of civilization, there has always been a need for a hierarchy. Government was the result of this need: a necessity for order. One of the classifications of government is a constitutional democracy whose purpose is for its citizens to have participation in the management of their government. Civic participation is the foundation for where a constitutional democracy draws its motive and power from. Examples include voting, writing to a representative, and volunteering and without it, there is no democracy.

The officials, whom their constituents elect, represent the concerns and ideas of the public. Although it is not required by citizens, participation is an extremely important aspect. Now, imagine if voting wasn't an opportunity in the first place and the United States government was formed without a democracy. The thoughts and opinions of its citizens would be invalid. After all, if there is no democracy, then why listen to something irrelevant? Citizens would be subjected to policies and laws that they were not able to participate in. Unfortunately, this is not all hypothetical. Before the United States was officially declared a separate government, a lack of representation was normal for the colonies. Today, the U.S and civic participation run hand-in-hand. The government cannot exist without representation from its citizens. Participation cannot flourish without an opportunity, which the colonists gladly took to. However, in order for civic participation to run smoothly it is integral that the officials elected represent their citizens correctly.

“Wherever the people are well informed they can be trusted with their own government; that whenever things get so far wrong as to attract their notice, they may be relied on to set them to rights” (Jefferson, 1789). The government derives its legitimacy from the people. It is

important for the public to be informed and educated in case something is amiss within the country. If that situation were to arise, the previous engagement and experience of citizens would be paramount to restoring the system. Protesting has been a massive engagement throughout the history of the nation. Famous movements and protests include the 1967 strike against the Vietnam War, Boston Tea Party, the Suffragist Movement, Black Lives Matter, *Roe v. Wade* overturn, and recently the protests on either side of the Palestine and Israel conflict. What do all of these have in common? All situations have shown how passionate and willing the public is to advocate for their passions.

Fortunately, when officials are elected, they are not entirely out of reach. Impeachment is an option and has been used before, even in the highest executive office. An official can be impeached for reasons of bribery and other similar acts. Because of civic participation, officials can be held to any crime or misdoing. The political system is preserved. A commitment to the upholding of the law is crucial, especially when it comes to those who are representing citizens. The media is indispensable when it comes to keeping the government in check with its most important duty is to present information and alert the public. The media has even created a specific form of journalism called 'watchdog journalism.' "Watchdog journalists gather information about the actions of people in power and inform the public in order to hold elected officials to account" (Coronel, 2008). It has possibly become one of the most important components of society. After all, watchdog journalism allowed for the Watergate scandal to come to light.

The future is something that is always on everyone's minds. What should be on the menu for dinner tomorrow? Have I filed my taxes correctly? Government affects all aspects of people's lives. Services like education, healthcare, the military, and other economic sectors are something

that citizens work with every day. Providing opinions and building principles on how these services operate can make a lasting impact. A sense of community can be fostered through shared values and beliefs. Youth participation is able to thrive in communities with strong foundations. "It helps young people build skills and networks that are valued in the workplace, and can thus be a source of economic mobility." (Circle at Tufts). The youth of the nation are the face of the future. Promoting participation in the government and helping them onto the path of finding their principles is vital. It is a perfect example of how civic participation is important even at the beginning of an individual's life. The quality of life is promoted through diverse voices advocating for their cause. No matter how liberal or conservative someone's views are, it is essential that his/he voice is heard.

The opportunity for Americans to choose their representatives and participate in the democratic process is significant. New perspectives allow for the country to continue in a progressive way. The world is changing every day. Democracy allows for no official to gain too much power and pins the focus on serving the constituents correctly and thoroughly. Just like how there are checks and balances between the executive, legislative, and judicial branches, civil participation allows for the people to have their own system of rightfulness. The future is made steady by securing representatives that are reflections of their constituents. Engagement with youth allows for further generations to have an idea of a trustworthy government. The people's voice is the backbone of the United States of America. There truly is no negative aspect of civic participation.

References

Coronel, S. S. (2008): The Media as Watchdog Archived March 8, 2021, at the Wayback Machine, Harvard.

Jefferson, T. (1789). Thomas Jefferson to Richard Price. *Library of Congress*.

<https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/jefferson/60.html>.

Why is Youth Civic Engagement Important? *Circle at Tufts*.

<https://circle.tufts.edu/understanding-youth-civic-engagement/why-it-important#:~:text=Communities%20are%20stronger%20and%20more,lead%20to%20lower%20unemployment%20rates>