



Engaged Citizens: SS.7.CG.2.8 Influencing the Government VIDEO SCRIPT



1. How can “we the people” influence the government? How can we monitor and make sure the government is working for us? How can we the people work to make change in government? These are all important questions for “we the people” to think about, and we’re going to explore them in this video.

2. After watching the video, you will be able to:

- 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).
- 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).
- identify methods used by interest groups to monitor and influence government.

So, let’s dive in.

3. Before we dive too deep, there is a definition we need to know, and that is what we mean by influencing the government. To influence the government is to try to persuade or convince the government to do something. And how do we do that? Well, we do that through something called the First Amendment, an important part of our Bill of Rights.
4. It’s important to think about the freedoms in the First Amendment. Freedoms of speech, press, peaceable assembly, and petitioning the government allow groups and individuals to influence the government. You got to remember that the First Amendment plays a vital role in influencing our government and making sure the government is working for us.
5. Let’s start with how we monitor the government because monitoring what the government is doing, helps us to influence how it should serve the people. But, how do we monitor the government? Well, an important group that monitors the government is the media. The media includes print publications, such as newspapers and magazines, broadcast media such as television and radio, the Internet, and social media such as Facebook and Twitter.
6. The media uses their right to freedom of the press, protected by that wonderful First Amendment, to monitor and influence the government. The media report stories about public officials, give information about the government, share current events and write opinion pieces or editorials.

7. Through their reporting of the news, the media plays an important role in both monitoring and influencing the government. Sometimes, the media is seen as a “watchdog”. This means that the media is “watching over” the actions of government officials by reporting and sharing information with the public.

8. All of these ways that media monitors the government are ways in which it influences the government. Just think about what happens when you know that YOUR being watched. Will you do the wrong thing? Same idea here for the government. The media monitors and the media influences.

9. **Let’s Check In – Try to answer the following question in your own words.**

10. What are three ways the media can monitor the government?

11. ANSWER TO QUESTION

12. Let’s recap what we’ve learned so far. The First Amendment is an important tool in influencing and monitoring the government. Media serving as a watchdog, monitors the actions of the government in order to hold it accountable and ensure it does not infringe on the rights and liberties of its citizens. Monitoring the government allows individuals to influence and shape future policies and the government.

13. That really is one of the most important questions we can ask. How can individuals influence the government that is supposed to serve us? Well, individual citizens can influence the government by doing one of the most important civic responsibilities: Voting. Whether it’s for a candidate or an issue, every time a citizen votes in an election, they’re influencing the government.

14. Citizens can also attend civic meetings, especially in their local community. These meetings, such as city council meetings, provide individuals with a face-to-face opportunity with government leaders. During these meetings, individuals can influence officials by sharing their opinions about their issues of concern.

15. The right to petition the government, one of the freedoms listed in the First Amendment, means any nonviolent, legal means of encouraging or disapproving government action. Doing a petition is another way that we as individuals can influence the government.

16. Citizens can write a petition about an issue and collect signatures in support of that issue. Citizens can then present these signed petitions to government officials hoping to influence how they make or enforce public policy. But keep in mind that petitioning the government can also mean doing things like public protests or marches.

17. Finally, citizens, like you or I, can run for local, state, or federal office. By running for office and getting elected, individuals can become part of the government and can closely monitor and influence government activities. By running for office and getting elected, individuals become part of the government and can closely influence government activities.

18. Let's Check In – Try to answer the following in your own words.

19. What are four ways that individuals can influence the government?

20. ANSWER TO QUESTION

21. Let's recap what we've learned so far. We know the First Amendment plays a big role in how we influence and monitor government. Individual citizens can influence the government by voting, attending civic meetings, creating and submitting petitions, and running for public office. Remember that we don't have to influence or monitor the government alone. Sometimes we can form what are called interest groups.

22. Interest groups, sometimes called special interest groups, are formed because they have a common goal or issue. They work to influence the government and other people to believe in their positions, and will try to influence government and society through political parties or committees in Congress in order to implement their goals.

23. One type of interest group, called political action committees, or PAC, works to raise money and campaign for candidates who support their issues. They often do this by hiring lobbyists who meet with candidates and lawmakers.

24. Lobbyists try to get lawmakers to introduce or support legislation that the PAC cares about. Lobbying is a powerful way that interest groups try to influence government officials.

25. Interest groups also work to influence the government by educating interest group members, such as regular folks like you and me, on issues it wants those members to support. For example, interest groups will ask their members to vote for and give money to candidates.

26. Let's Check In – Try to answer the following question in your own words. In what ways do interest groups work to influence the government?

27. ANSWER TO QUESTION

28. Well, so far, we've learned a little bit about how we influence the government. Let's recap what we've learned so far. The First Amendment is an important tool in influencing the government. Interest groups form because of a common goal and try to influence the government and people to support their issues. Political Action Committees, or PACs, are special interest groups who raise money and campaign for candidates. Lobbyists are used by special interest groups to get lawmakers to support legislation.

29. So what's the impact of individuals, media, and interest groups on government, and our ability to influence, and monitor, the government? Well, voting, petitioning the government, and going to meetings lets the government know what we want and that we are watching them. And running for office gives us a personal chance to change things.

30. Interest groups give us a larger way to influence and monitor the government, and the media lets us know if the government is listening and what it's done.

31. We the people have the ability to influence and monitor the government!

32. That's all the time we have for now. Keep building your civics knowledge by exploring some of our other topic areas on Civics360!