

SS.7.C.2.13 Benchmark Clarification 3: Students will examine how multiple perspective shape participation in the political process.

Citizen participation in the political process is shaped by multiple perspectives. Citizens work independently, join **interest groups**, or join **political parties** to share their perspectives on the direction that the government should take.

Individuals show their multiple perspectives in the political process when they use their **First Amendment** rights and when they vote. First Amendment rights give individuals the right to express their political views through speech, press, peaceable assembly, and petitioning the government. Voting rights give individuals the chance to express their perspectives by choosing one candidate or **public policy** over another.

Interest groups also show multiple perspectives in the political process when they use their First Amendment rights to peaceable assembly, free speech, and petitioning the government. Interest groups form because of a common goal, and they try to influence people by working together in support of that goal. Interest groups can work with members of Congress or with other elected legislators to get laws passed. This is usually referred to as **lobbying**. They can educate members of their interest group on key issues they want their members to support. Through lobbying, making campaign contributions, and getting their message out to influence **public opinion**, interest groups reflect multiple perspectives through their participation in the political process.

Political parties also reflect multiple perspectives in the political process. A political party is a group of citizens with similar views on public issues who work together to elect candidates who represent their views. Competing political parties give voters a choice among candidates and ideas.

citizen - a legal member of a state and/or country

First Amendment - an amendment to the U.S. Constitution prohibiting Congress from establishing a religion, and from interfering with freedom of religious exercise, press, speech, assembly, or petition

individual - a person

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

political party - an organization that seeks political power by electing members to public office so that their political ideas can become laws or policies

public opinion – the views of the general public

public policy - government actions in the form of laws, rules, or regulations

