

American democracy research paper

[Politics](#), [Democracy](#)



One of the greatest ideals of the American society is democracy. Democracy is a cherished virtue on which the American government is built upon and upon which the whole society takes pride in and guards jealously. “

Democracy is defined as a government of the people, for the people and by the people. Thus, in a way, the government is ruled by the citizens of the country, in a democracy.” (Patterson 2008 47).

Such is the value of democracy in government that the American society promotes this ideology in other foreign nations and thus forms a core policy in America’s foreign policy. Nevertheless, a question that has been lingering in the minds of Americans as this happens is, what is true democracy and is it really taking place at home?

Over the last few decades, there has been a wide disparity in the society where there has been constant threat on America’s democracy institutions due to the new era of constant and rising inequalities. Disparities of income, wealth, and access to opportunity are growing more sharply in the United States than in many other nations, and gaps between races and ethnic groups continue to persist. As a result the development towards the realization of democracy principles has slowed down in some institutions while in some it has prospered.

Research shows that in order for democracy to prosper, there are three issues that have to play a role they are; citizen involvement, Government receptiveness and patterns of policy/ legislation making. Citizen participation forms the core issue in American democracy thus for any democracy to prosper, citizen participation must be allowed to prosper and grow.

In the American society, generations of Americans have been involved in setting forth the American democracy ideals and have had their voices heard as one voice though there were differences between them for instance, income, religion, race or gender. However over the last few decades the level of citizen participation has declined due to several reasons and thus some voices of the citizens are heard unequally with some of the citizens have an advantage over the others whereby their voices can be heard while others cannot.

Over the last few years there has been a growing need for Americans to effectively and equally participate in the way the government is run. As a result, there has been an increase in effective and efficiently run organizations and committees that are used as a gateway to press for their demands and have their voices heard equally. Out of such organizations, the government through its public officers has been more receptive to the needs and concerns of the participants.

However such organizations do not represent the whole society but a certain quota. Organizing such committees and having the influence to have the government listen to their demands requires a lot, thus, only the privileged members of the society can afford such time, organization and money to run such platforms as they feel that what the government does directly affects them.

On the other hand, citizens of lower and middle class do not actively participate in such forums due to ignorance as they feel that they are voiceless or lack the organization and influence to have their concerns

listened to. In addition, government officials do not really take into consideration the concerns of such persons as there are a lot of bureaucracies in the system (Philbrook, 2003, 78).

As a result of the above discrepancies, the question does American democracy work still persists among various stakeholders of the American democracy. Thus a look at whether political action as opposed to inaction collectively advances the citizens agendas. It should be noted that the while the American Government can achieve its obligations in many sectors, its ability to effectively and efficiently achieve success will lay with the participation of the American citizens/society in the process.

Thus participation from the Americans is very crucial for the government to succeed in its agenda and will require participation from citizens who possess the right qualifications, capability, knowledge and commitment. Therefore it's crucial for the paper to analyze whether the American democracy embodies such values and whether in doing so it propels the wishes and desires of the American society.

One of the largest participation forums of American citizens is in the policy making arena. Many Americans have shown a desire to have changes initiated in many of America's government agencies whereby, these changes take various forms. Some of the active participants require changes in the way a certain process is carried out while others want to do away with counterproductive legislations and laws and others requiring total change in certain culture for instance the current call for the use of a more comprehensive web 2.0 technologies (Wittman, 2005 47).

Participating in democracy and having ones voice heard is quite a difficult and challenging task as there are several obstacles faced by citizens in the process. Some of the challenges faced by them include deep-rooted rules and structures that form part of the larger bureaucratic procedures. In addition, the groups are faced with financial limitations which hinder their active and effective participation while criticism from opposing sectors such as congress and the media result in the citizens being change averse.

Nevertheless citizens have been able to have their concerns heard and thus participate positively in the American democracy. Citizens have developed an effective structure through which they voice their concerns to the Government agencies through the Public officials who thereby pass it on to relevant agencies. Change by us and other organizations have been able to effectively do this through organizing their participation framework. First, it has been agreed between them that there ought to be a clear goal which the organization wants addressed and not multiplicity of agendas which normally results in ambiguity.

Secondly, the organization has developed networks that include participants who were like minded and thereby had the mass numbers to gain attention from the government. These networks represent diverse members of the society and thus are a true reflection of the multicultural society that America is.

Through these networks, members share their concerns and develop a fine print of what they require done by the government. “ In addition they can also provide leverage by building support for change in diverse parts of the

organization, replicating changes throughout the organization, and continuously expanding each other's networks." (Schelling, 2000 196).

Thirdly, the organization has been able to maintain optimism that the government will take their issues into concern and effect the necessary changes while at the same time cultivating credibility between the government agencies and the public/members.

In addition, before a bill is presented to the President for final approval, it passes through several committees and subcommittees. These stages allow for participation by various stakeholders through debates and amendments ensuring only an acceptable bill is passed. Therefore through publication of the committee report, the public can be called to participate in debating the bill where their opinions will be taken into consideration and the bill amended where necessary before the final stage.

Another process often used by civil societies is petitioning the government through collecting signatures of stakeholders whereby the signatures are presented to government officials (Wolfe, 2007 52)

Cities across the USA are facing numerous challenges as demands by the residents are increasing while resources are decreasing at an alarming rate. As a result, there is a need for both the Government and the public to come up with a solution. Citizens' participation was thus necessary to bring effective changes through the government. Change by Us is a forum through which citizens can participate in government policies in relation to the change they want in their respective cities.

The group participates through a digital platform which enables the public to collaborate with the public officials to effect the change they need in their cities. Thus, this form of platform acts as a form of civic engagement. The platform enables the public to share ideas on how to better their environment which in turn the government uses to set up policies and legislations.

The online platform was created by a New York media company which was a nonprofit project. “ Change by Us is great opportunity to put new technological tools in the hands of innovative community members, so that citizen action can be at the center of community change.” (Hayes, 2011 29)

The American constitutional also provides for a way through which citizen participation can be carried out thus ensuring that democracy is a constitutional right for all Americans. The constitution provides that all government agencies shall keep and maintain a public register which shall be made public through publishing it. The purpose of publishing the Federal register is to ensure public participation and awareness.

Public information; agency rules, opinions, orders, records, and proceedings

(a) Each agency shall make available to the public information as follows:

(1) Each agency shall separately state and currently publish in the Federal Register for the guidance of the public –

(A) descriptions of its central and field organization and the established places at which, the employees (and in the case of a uniformed service, the

members) from whom, and the methods whereby, the public may obtain information, make submittals or requests, or obtain decisions;

(B) statements of the general course and method by which its functions are channeled and determined, including the nature and requirements of all formal and informal procedures available;

(C) rules of procedure, descriptions of forms available or the places at which forms may be obtained, and instructions as to the scope and contents of all papers, reports, or examinations;

(D) substantive rules of general applicability adopted as authorized by law, and statements of general policy or interpretations of general applicability formulated and adopted by the agency; and

(E) each amendment, revision, or repeal of the foregoing. Except to the extent that a person has actual and timely notice of the terms thereof, a person may not in any manner be required to resort to, or be adversely affected by, a matter required to be published in the Federal Register and not so published. For the purpose of this paragraph, matter reasonably available to the class of persons affected thereby is deemed published in the Federal Register when incorporated by reference therein with the approval of the Director of the Federal Register.

Illustrated from; Wolfe, 2007 45

The American democracy is a vital and cherished ideal that is vital for all Americans. Achieving democracy for any country in the world is not an easy

task as it calls for tolerance, sacrifices and willingness of the society and government in achieving this. In order for any government to ensure that it remains focused in achieving the needs of its people, it's vital that there is an open channel of communication between both institutions.

For the quality of democracy to excel, both the involvement of citizens, the receptiveness of the government as well as the policy making processes all have to work in a systematic manner. It is thus evident to confirm that for the American democracy to work, there ought to be proper citizen participation in the American governance.

As much as American democracy works, it is limited to an advantaged few in the society apparently those whom can organize committees to influence the government. This is so because for these committees to have any influence on the government, they require ample time and resources. At the same time, the less privileged that is both the lower and middle class have very little or no influence on the government; this reduces the quality of democracy in America.

The lower and middle class members of the American society tend to be ignorant when it comes to exercising their democratic roles since they have the perception that they lack a voice in airing their views to the government.

Due to bureaucracies in the system of governance, public officials tend to ignore the concerns of people in both the lower and middle classes of the society. This less privileged society faces both economic limitations as well

as censure from the media and congress and this results in them not actively participating in making their concerns heard by the government.

On the other hand, there are organizations that have been involved in promoting their stance on the issue of democracy in America. These organizations actively participated in carrying out their democratic rights whereby for them to be considered by the government, they have built large networks that include substantial members who have similar thoughts and demands with regards to their governance.

In addition to this, the organizations are composed of versatile participants of the society hence portraying a picture that their demands are centered on the whole society's interests. In addition, the American society has several avenues through which it can actively participate in democracy issues, such avenues are also entrenched in the American society thus giving the society a constitutional right. Other avenues include participation in creation of policies and legislations, government projects and other issues of public interest.

Thus American democracy does work well even though there are several challenges faced by the society in ensuring that their voices and concerns are heard equally. There is thus a need for the government to provide adequate avenues through which the public can participate equally, for example through embracing technology which will ensure that the public can access participation forums.

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