

**THE PROPER ROLE OF GOVERNMENT  
IN CITIZENS' LIVES**

**DIRECTIONS:** Read the background information provided, and think about the three kinds of government involvement in citizens' lives shown in the Venn diagram. Study the list of government activities in the Fact Bank on the next page. Write the number of each phrase in the area of the diagram you think most accurately describes the extent of the government's right to be involved in that activity.

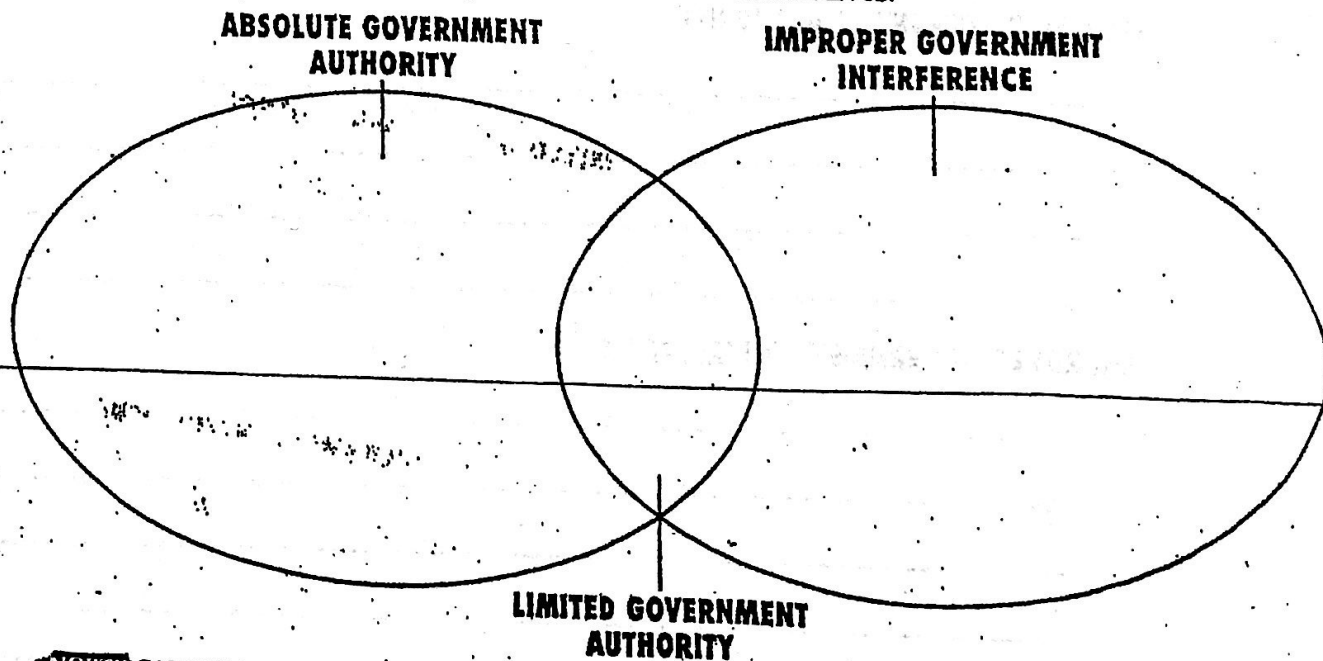
The American economic, legal, and political systems are based on a balance between protection of individual rights and society's need for effective government. The Bill of Rights in the Constitution places strict limits on government powers. Because the Constitution is the supreme law of the land, these limitations also apply to state and local governments. Almost all Americans agree that government, if it is to protect all citizens, must have some powers that limit the rights of individuals. They agree to abide by a set of rules and to accept the government's authority. They also agree that there must be checks on government to prevent the abuse of those powers.

In many cases the issue is clear-cut. Most Americans agree that the state has a legitimate right to require that residents obtain a license before driving an automobile on public roads. The state has an obligation to

protect pedestrians, other motorists, and property. Administering a test assures them that an individual has the skills, maturity, and understanding of laws to operate the vehicle without endangering others. At the same time, every state recognizes out-of-state driver's licenses. To do otherwise would be inefficient and an abuse of power. It would interfere with a citizen's right to travel freely between states for work or pleasure. The process of stopping non-resident drivers to check for a valid in-state license would unnecessarily obstruct traffic.

Other issues are not so easily resolved. At what point does the legitimate exercise of government powers become improper interference in the personal lives of citizens? This subject continues to be debated. On many issues, Americans hold very different views on the proper role of government in individual lives.

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OBJECTIVE 1.6

# ELP ACTIVITY



## THE PROPER ROLE OF GOVERNMENT IN CITIZENS' LIVES (continued)

### FACT BANK

- |                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 1. airport security checks  | 8. licenses to practice medicine                        |
| 2. mandatory seat belt laws | 9. age requirements for alcohol and cigarette purchases |
| 3. wiretapping phone lines  | 10. censoring criticism of a government policy          |
| 4. dog licenses             | 11. warning labels on music tapes and CDs               |
| 5. hunting licenses         | 12. motorcycle helmet laws                              |
| 6. hand gun licenses        |   |
| 7. curfews                  |   |

**DIRECTIONS:** Review your answers in the Venn diagram and choose one topic from each area. In the spaces provided below, write a paragraph explaining why you placed the activity in that section of the diagram. Include an introductory topic sentence, supporting arguments, and a conclusion. Use additional sheets of paper if necessary.

### ABSOLUTE GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY

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### LIMITED GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY

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### IMPROPER GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE

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