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Which criterion should be given more weight when assessing government officials, their determination to carry out the will of the people they serve or their ability to stand by their own decisions? While some designate government officials as public servants, others appreciate officials’ resolution to make their own judgement, with public's will relegated to a secondary concern. While both of these views have merit, I argue that they are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

On the one hand, I concede that government officials are created by the demands from the people they serve and therefore officials should behave in accordance with the will of those people. First, government's central role in regulating its nation's affairs obliges officials to work for their citizen's benefits. In addition, government officials are simultaneously citizens themselves, which gives them unique insight and understanding of citizen request. While Abraham Lincoln has perished in history long ago, we could still see every generation of government officials bestirring themselves indefatigably at their positions, echoing Lincoln's prestigious motto "of the people, by the people and for the people." Those officials prioritize what the public desire not only because they derive their power from the public, but also because they are citizens themselves and accordingly benefit from their own achievements.

In great contrast, people who believe that officials should base their decisions on their own judgement assign little importance to the will of the people. From this perspective, officials' individual preference take absolute precedence. While this claim might initially sound somewhat implausible and might remind us of obdurate bureaucracy or headstrong leaders, it can in some circumstances serve the greater good. Officials confronted by dilemmas which force them to choose between the public's wishes and their own judgement may choose to sacrifice the former for the latter. We cannot call those officials tyrannical, however, since their actions are based on the long-term interests which will benefit the majority. Roosevelt's New Deal sufficiently exemplifies my argument. Had Roosevelt not subordinated capitalist interest and conjured up a marriage between market economy and government regulation, current Americans might still be suffering from the effects of the Great Depression. Even Roosevelt implemented a series of policies in spite of business opposition, we do not judge him to have acted irresponsibly or autocratically. On the contrary, we applaud his policies because they stemmed from comprehensive concerns of what would benefit Americans overall. In this way, Roosevelt well embodies an effective and efficient leader who struck a harmonious balance between the public's wishes and his own decisions.

The above-stated examination of the two views discloses my appreciation for both of them. Nevertheless this not to say that I suggest appraising these two perspectives in isolation. Rather, I would like view the process of policy-making of government officials as a continuum that includes public voices and officials' individual decisions. An insightful official should and is able to make their decisions on the basis of the will of the people he serves; meanwhile citizens should attempt to understand that those policies have undergone thorough considerations regarding the potential benefits and consequences. The ideal world I depict is one in which leaders and public enjoy a harmonious relationship and both benefit from policy decisions.