

Name: _____

Block: _____

From December 19-22, 2012 - Gallup asked people in the United States:

In general, do you feel that the laws governing the sale of firearms should be made more strict, less strict, or kept as they are now?

Here are the responses:

More Strict - 58%

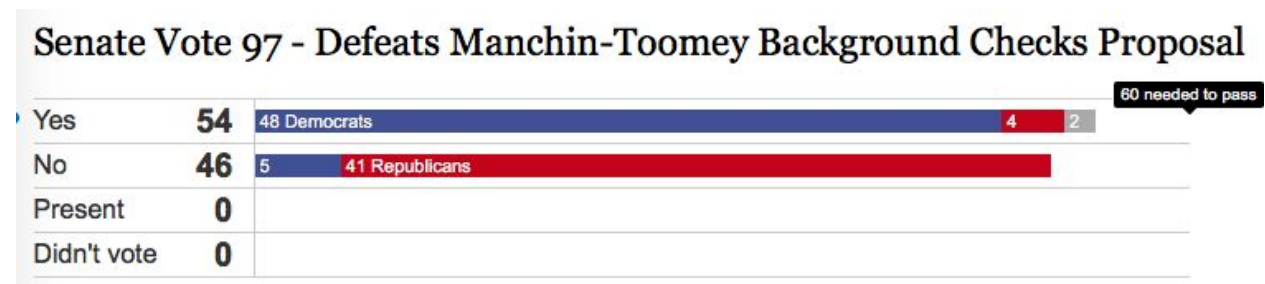
Kept as they are now - 34%

Less strict - 6%

No opinion - 2%

Four months later, the United States Senate voted on a proposal to require criminal background checks on each person trying to buy a gun.

Here are the results:



Back in December, 2012 did people favor gun control legislation? Explain

Did the U.S. Senate reflect the “will of the people” when voting on the Background Checks proposal?

Was the Senate being **democratic**?

What are the characteristics of an **effective democracy**?

WHAT IS DEMOCRACY?

After the U.S. Invasion of Iraq, the United States attempted to help Iraq create a democratic government. The essay "What is Democracy" by Larry Diamond is a Stanford University president's attempt to explain the essential elements of democracy to the Iraqi people.

What are three important elements of a democracy and why are they important?
Does the United States government live up to Diamond's ideal of democracy?

Meets: Use the excerpts from Diamond's speech on this page and write a one-paragraph response to the above prompts.

Exceeds: Read Diamond's entire speech and write a one-page response to the prompts.

Either way, make sure your response is a High Quality Response in your own words with your own ideas, examples, analysis and/or anecdotes. Include a heading (format below)

Name

Social Studies Block

Teacher

Date

Title

EXCERPTS FROM “What is Democracy?” by Larry Diamond

Democracy as a Political System of Competition for Power

Democracy is a means for the people to choose their leaders and to hold their leaders accountable for their policies and their conduct in office.

Government is based on the consent of the governed. . . Power flows from the people to the leaders of government who hold power only temporarily.

Laws and policies require majority support . . . , but the rights of minorities are protected.

The people are free to criticize their elected leaders and representatives, and to observe how they conduct the business of government.

Elected representatives at the national and local levels should listen to the people and respond to their needs and suggestions. Elections have to occur at regular intervals . . . Those in power cannot extend their terms in office without asking for the consent of the people again in an election. . . All parties and candidates must have the right to campaign freely, to present their proposals to the voters both directly and through the mass media. Voters must be able to vote in secret, free of intimidation and violence.

Participation: The Role of the Citizen in a Democracy

Citizens have an obligation to become informed about public issues, to watch carefully how their political leaders and representatives use their powers, and to express their own opinions and interests.

Participation can . . . involve campaigning for a political party or candidate, standing as a candidate for political office, debating public issues, attending community meetings, petitioning the government, and even protesting.

Democracy depends on citizen participation But participation must be peaceful, respectful of the law, and tolerant of the different views of other groups and individuals.

The Rule of Law

Democracy is a system of rule by laws, not by individuals.

In a democracy, the rule of law protects the rights of citizens, maintains order, and limits the power of government.

No one is above the law, not even a king or an elected president.

Office holders cannot use their power to enrich themselves. Independent courts and commissions punish corruption, no matter who is guilty.

The Limits and Requirements for Democracy

When you express your opinions, you should also listen to the views of other people, even people you disagree with. Everyone has a right to be heard.

Don't be so convinced of the rightness of your views that you refuse to see any merit in another position. Consider different interests and points of view.

In a democracy, one group does not always win everything it wants. Different combinations of groups win on different issues. Over time, everyone wins something.

If one group is always excluded and fails to be heard, it may turn against democracy in anger and frustration.

Everyone who is willing to participate peacefully and respect the rights of others should have some say in the way the country is governed.