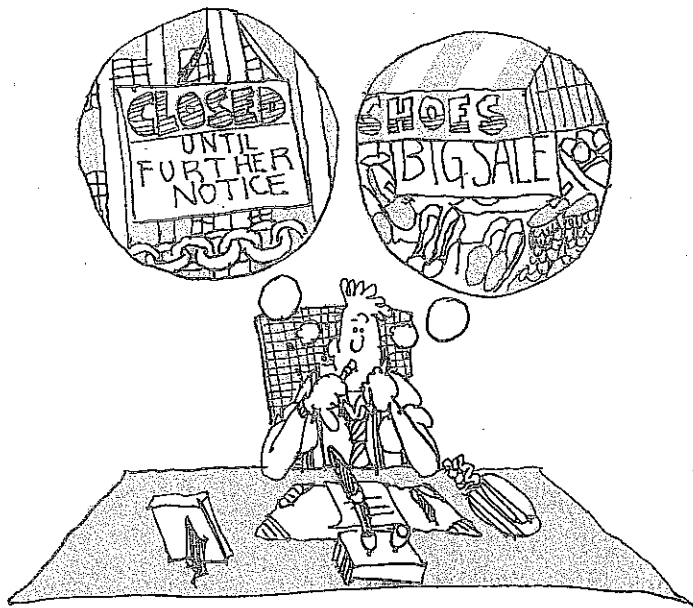


What is the common welfare?

The Framers believed that the people must have civic virtue if the new Constitution was to succeed. People with civic virtue put the common welfare—the good of all the people—over their own interests. Therefore, citizens should elect people to public office who will put the common welfare over narrow and local interests.

While the common welfare is clear in some cases, at other times it is hard to agree upon what it is. For example, everyone would agree that the common welfare is helped by laws against murder. But people cannot agree whether placing a high tax on goods from other countries would serve the common welfare. Some leaders say it would. Others say it would only serve the interests of particular groups in society. Such a tax on cars, for example, might be good for people who work in the automobile industry. It might not be so good for the person buying a new car.



What should Congressman Jones consider when making his decision?

Problem solving

Read the following situation and answer the questions that follow. Be prepared to discuss and defend your answers.

Conflicting responsibilities of a representative

Congressman Jones represents a district where many people work in factories that make shoes. These factories are laying off more and more workers because American shoes can no longer compete with those made in other countries. Shoes can be made at lower cost in other countries because the workers there are paid lower wages. These shoes are sold at lower prices than those made in America.

The low prices may be good for people buying shoes. They are not so good for the people losing their jobs because of them. The problem for Congressman Jones is this: should he support a bill that places a tax on shoes made in other countries?

- If the bill passes, more American shoes will be sold. Then, many Americans' jobs will be saved.
- If the bill passes, it will cause the price of shoes to go up. This will make them more expensive for people who need to buy them.

1. What should Congressman Jones think about in making his decision?
2. Make an argument in favor of his supporting the tax.
3. Now make an argument against his supporting the tax.
4. What would you do if you were the Congressman? Why?