

CHAPTER 37 ACTIVITY
Analyzing

Directions: Read the material below, and then answers the questions that follow.

In recent times, the government has increased its use of “free speech zones” to contain protests or demonstrations in a limited physical area when a political event is occurring. They were used at recent Democratic and Republican political conventions and are used frequently when the U.S. president visits cities around the country.

In the case of the presidential visits, these zones are kept out of sight of the president and the media. This means that the viewing public will not see the protests or demonstrations, since the zones are often placed within or behind barricades or blockades of some sort. The zones can be a city block to a quarter mile away from the president.

Presidential free speech zones have prompted several lawsuits, claiming that these free speech zones violate the First Amendment. The plaintiffs claim that the government uses these zones to censor protesters by putting them out of sight of the mass media, hence the public, as well as visiting dignitaries. In some of the cases, plaintiffs claim that demonstrators who protest against the president or his policies are removed to the free speech zones, while demonstrators who support the president are allowed to come closer and be filmed by the media. In defense of their actions, officials point to a post-9/11 need for crowd control and security. They claim that they are protecting the people attending the event as well as the demonstrators. They also deny that supporters are allowed to be closer while dissenters are confined to the free speech zone.

1. What is a free speech zone?

2. Why does the government use them?

3. What are the objections to their use?

4. With which side do you agree? Give your reasons.
