Paths to Change

Citizenship, civic action, and constitutional amendments

SS24.6.13c "Analyze key elements of the Constitution that deal with citizenship and civic participation, including the path to citizenship and the process for amending the Constitution."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline rules or steps about becoming a citizen, circle ways people can take part in government, and number the two stages of amending the Constitution. Use your marks to trace how people gain citizenship and how a proposed change becomes law.

A Neighbor's Two Questions

1. At a neighborhood meeting, Sam hears two questions: Who is a U.S. citizen, and how can citizens change the rules of government? The Constitution helps answer both. The Fourteenth Amendment says people born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to its jurisdiction, are citizens. Being born in the country is one route; naturalization is another. Naturalization is the legal process that lets eligible immigrants become citizens. The Constitution gives Congress the power to set one uniform rule for naturalization, so the basic rule is national, not different in each state.

2. Sam's neighbor is getting ready to apply for citizenship. Under current federal law, an eligible applicant generally must have held a green card for a required period, apply, and complete an interview that includes English and civics tests. Some applicants qualify for exceptions. To finish, an approved applicant takes an oath of allegiance. Citizenship brings ways to take part in government, such as voting in federal elections if other voting requirements are met. Citizens can also contact lawmakers about issues, including proposed changes to the Constitution. These actions help people shape public decisions.

3. Suppose Sam wants a new constitutional rule. A letter to a lawmaker can start a conversation, but it cannot change the Constitution by itself. Article V sets two stages. First, an amendment can be proposed by two-thirds of each house of Congress or by a convention requested by two-thirds of state legislatures. Next, three-fourths of the states must ratify it, through their legislatures or special conventions, as Congress directs. This high bar makes change possible while requiring broad support. Citizens can urge lawmakers to propose changes, but only this process can add an amendment.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the Constitution identify two routes to citizenship, and who sets the national rule for one of them?

2. How can Sam's neighbor move from applying for citizenship to taking part in government? Give one step in the process and one way to participate.

3. Why would a letter to a lawmaker not be enough to add an amendment? Name the two stages that must follow.

4. Compare what citizens can do to support a constitutional change with what the states must do for that change to become an amendment.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a short message for a community bulletin to someone who plans to naturalize and wants to support a constitutional change. Explain one step toward citizenship, one way to participate, both stages of amending the Constitution, and why one person's action cannot add an amendment alone.

ANSWER KEY

Paths to Change

GRADE 6 · SS24.6.13c

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline rules or steps about becoming a citizen, circle ways people can take part in government, and number the two stages of amending the Constitution. Use your marks to trace how people gain citizenship and how a proposed change becomes law. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the Constitution identify two routes to citizenship, and who sets the national rule for one of them?	**People born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to its jurisdiction, are citizens. Congress sets the national rule for naturalization.**
2	How can Sam's neighbor move from applying for citizenship to taking part in government? Give one step in the process and one way to participate.	**The neighbor could complete the required interview and, if approved, take the oath of allegiance. Once a citizen, the neighbor could vote in a federal election if other voting requirements are met.**
3	Why would a letter to a lawmaker not be enough to add an amendment? Name the two stages that must follow.	**A letter can urge action, but an amendment must be proposed under Article V and then ratified by three-fourths of the states.**
4	Compare what citizens can do to support a constitutional change with what the states must do for that change to become an amendment.	**Citizens can contact lawmakers and urge them to propose a change. Three-fourths of the states must ratify a proposed amendment.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

If you plan to naturalize, you may need to complete an interview with English and civics tests before taking the oath of allegiance. You can tell a lawmaker which constitutional change you support. Your message can encourage action, but it cannot add an amendment by itself. First, an amendment must be proposed by two-thirds of each house of Congress or by a convention requested by two-thirds of state legislatures. Then three-fourths of the states must ratify it.

Accept another accurate naturalization step or form of civic participation from the passage. For the amendment process, responses should distinguish proposing an amendment from state ratification.