Who Handles What?

Compare the work of Alabama state bodies

SS24.AS.20b "Differentiate among the types of state bureaucratic bodies in Alabama, including commissions, boards, and agencies."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the three named state bodies, circle a different task for each, and number two places where the passage contrasts how they work.

Three Offices, Different Jobs

1 When a storm cuts power across Alabama, residents may call several state offices, but those offices do not all do the same kind of work. Alabama's state bureaucracy includes commissions, boards, and agencies. These names do not guarantee identical duties in every case. To tell the bodies apart, look at who makes decisions, what authority the body has, and what work its staff carries out. A commission or board often has several appointed members who vote on policy or cases. An agency usually has employees who manage programs and put laws or rules into practice. Some commissions and boards also have staff.

2 Consider a family's electric bill after the storm. The Alabama Public Service Commission regulates rates and service for many utilities, including investor-owned electric companies. Its commissioners make decisions in public proceedings, rather than repairing power lines. At a crowded clinic, the Alabama Board of Nursing has a different job: it licenses nurses and can discipline licensees who violate nursing rules. Board members make decisions about professional practice, while staff handle applications and other daily tasks. Both bodies use groups of decision makers, but one focuses on regulated utilities and the other on a licensed profession.

3 Now consider a driver headed to the clinic. The Alabama Law Enforcement Agency, or ALEA, issues driver licenses and carries out state law enforcement duties, including highway patrol work. Its employees provide services and enforce laws rather than serving as a voting board of professional licensees. The three bodies can all affect the same household, but their main responsibilities differ: utility oversight, nursing licensure, and public safety services. To classify a state office, use its actual powers and work, not just a familiar word in its name. Even a board or commission may employ staff who do agency-like work.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the Public Service Commission's decision-making structure differ from ALEA's day-to-day work?

2. Both the Public Service Commission and the Board of Nursing have members who make decisions. How do their responsibilities differ?

3. Why would a question about a nurse's professional license go to the Board of Nursing rather than ALEA, even though ALEA issues licenses too?

4. A friend says that any state body with staff must be an agency, not a board or commission. What in the passage shows why this test fails?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Invent a situation at a local event involving two residents with different needs, one related to utility rates or nursing practice and the other related to a different responsibility in the passage. In four sentences, name the two relevant state bodies, explain how their work differs, and tell why staffing or names alone cannot identify their roles.

ANSWER KEY

Who Handles What?

HIGH SCHOOL · SS24.AS.20b

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the three named state bodies, circle a different task for each, and number two places where the passage contrasts how they work. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the Public Service Commission's decision-making structure differ from ALEA's day-to-day work?	**Commissioners make decisions about utility rates and service in public proceedings. ALEA employees provide services, such as issuing driver licenses, and enforce laws.**
2	Both the Public Service Commission and the Board of Nursing have members who make decisions. How do their responsibilities differ?	**The commission regulates utility rates and service. The board licenses nurses and can discipline licensees who violate nursing rules.**
3	Why would a question about a nurse's professional license go to the Board of Nursing rather than ALEA, even though ALEA issues licenses too?	**The board handles nurse licensing and discipline. ALEA issues driver licenses, not professional nursing licenses.**
4	A friend says that any state body with staff must be an agency, not a board or commission. What in the passage shows why this test fails?	**Boards and commissions can also have staff. The Board of Nursing's staff, for example, handles applications and daily tasks.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

At a town health fair, Mina questions the rates on her electric bill, and her neighbor reports that a nurse may have violated professional rules. The Alabama Public Service Commission oversees utility rates, while the Alabama Board of Nursing licenses nurses and can discipline licensees. The commission's decisions concern regulated utilities, but the board's decisions concern a licensed profession. Both bodies may have staff, so their staffing and names alone do not show the full scope of their work.

Accept other plausible situations that match the bodies' responsibilities in the passage. Students should distinguish the bodies by their powers or work, not claim that only agencies employ staff.