Who Pays for Safety?

Trace how fiscal choices shape flood policy.

SS24.E.9b "Describe how Congress and state legislatures use fiscal policy to achieve their economic, social, and political goals, including taxing, spending, grants, and mandates."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each taxing or spending action, circle each grant or mandate, and number one economic, one social, and one political goal. Use your marks to trace who pays and who benefits.

A Flood Plan for Bellhaven

1. After repeated floods, residents of the fictional state of Bellhaven want safer streets. Congress considers a national flood-preparation bill. It would raise a small federal excise tax on certain building materials and use the revenue to pay for flood sensors along rivers. Lawmakers argue that earlier warnings could reduce property losses, an economic goal, and protect residents, a social goal. Some also expect voters to reward visible action after damaging storms, a political goal. A tax does not automatically fund a particular project, so Congress would also need to appropriate money for the sensors.

2. Congress also proposes grants to states that agree to update floodplain maps and publish local evacuation plans. The money would help states hire planners, but the conditions would steer state choices toward a national goal. Bellhaven's legislature considers accepting a grant and adding state funds to replace undersized drainage pipes near schools. To raise its share, it proposes a temporary increase in the state sales tax. State lawmakers expect fewer school closures, a social benefit, and steadier business activity, an economic benefit. Critics note that sales taxes can take a larger share of income from lower-income households.

3. Bellhaven's legislature also debates a mandate requiring every county to inspect storm drains twice a year. Unlike the proposed grant, the mandate would set a rule even for counties that receive no extra state money. Supporters say regular inspections would protect neighborhoods and let officials show they responded to voters. County leaders warn that inspections would pull staff from other services unless the state pays for them. Legislators could revise the plan by funding inspections, narrowing the rule, or keeping it as written. Each choice balances safety, local costs, and political accountability differently.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How would Congress use both taxing and spending to pursue two different goals in its flood-preparation bill?

2. How could Congress's proposed grants influence state decisions while helping states pay for flood planning?

3. How would Bellhaven's proposed tax and spending work together, and what tradeoff do critics identify?

4. Compared with a grant, how would Bellhaven's proposed mandate change what counties must do and pay for?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

In four or five sentences, propose a state legislative response to extreme heat using at least two fiscal tools, including a grant or mandate. Explain who pays, one economic goal, one social or political goal, and one tradeoff.

ANSWER KEY

Who Pays for Safety?

GRADE 12 · SS24.E.9b

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each taxing or spending action, circle each grant or mandate, and number one economic, one social, and one political goal. Use your marks to trace who pays and who benefits. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How would Congress use both taxing and spending to pursue two different goals in its flood-preparation bill?	**Congress would tax certain building materials and appropriate money for river sensors. Earlier warnings could reduce property losses, an economic goal, and protect residents, a social goal.**
2	How could Congress's proposed grants influence state decisions while helping states pay for flood planning?	**The grants would help states hire planners, but states would have to update floodplain maps and publish evacuation plans to receive the money.**
3	How would Bellhaven's proposed tax and spending work together, and what tradeoff do critics identify?	**A temporary state sales tax increase would help pay to replace drainage pipes near schools. The work could reduce closures and support business activity, but the tax could take a larger share of lower-income households' income.**
4	Compared with a grant, how would Bellhaven's proposed mandate change what counties must do and pay for?	**The mandate would require every county to inspect storm drains, even without extra state money. Counties might have to shift staff from other services, while a grant would provide funds to recipients.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

To prepare for extreme heat, my state legislature would raise the state income tax on high earners and spend the added revenue to install cooling systems in public libraries. It would also offer matching grants to counties that extend library hours during heat alerts. These steps could reduce missed workdays, an economic goal, and prevent heat illness, a social goal. Counties would need to supply their share of the grant, and some might decline because their budgets are tight.

Accept other passage-supported explanations that correctly connect a fiscal tool to a goal or cost. For Part 3, accept feasible state proposals that identify who pays, both required types of goals, and a tradeoff.