Who Makes the Rule?

Follow one public concern through three levels of government.

9-12.GOV.46 "Compare the lawmaking process at the national, state, and local level."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the voting step in each paragraph, circle the official who may sign or veto the proposal, and write N, S, or L beside each paragraph to show which level of government it describes.

Three Ways to Address Water Pipes

1. Imagine that aging water pipes have raised concerns about lead in drinking water. Residents ask who can make a law that reaches every state. In Congress, a member could introduce a bill to fund the replacement of lead service lines across the country. A committee may study and revise it before the House and Senate each debate and vote. Both chambers must pass the same text. The president can sign the bill or veto it, and Congress can override a veto with enough votes. A national law can provide funding, but it does not automatically replace every pipe.

2. At the state level, lawmakers might propose a different response: testing drinking water in every public school in their state. A state legislator introduces a bill, and a committee may revise it or hold a public hearing. In most states, both legislative chambers must approve the same version before it goes to the governor, who may sign or veto it. Legislatures can sometimes override a governor's veto under state rules. Unlike a national funding law, this testing law would apply within that state. State lawmakers must follow federal law but can set additional protections when federal law allows them.

3. Closer to home, a city might consider an ordinance requiring advance notice to residents before planned replacement of city water pipes. Residents could speak at a council hearing, and city council members would vote under procedures set by the city's charter and state law. In some cities, the mayor can approve or veto an ordinance; in others, the council's vote is final. Unlike a congressional bill or a bill in most state legislatures, this proposal goes through one council, not two chambers. The ordinance applies within the city, and it cannot conflict with controlling state or federal law.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How do the voting steps for the national and state bills compare with the voting step for the city ordinance?

2. Compare the president's, governor's, and mayor's roles after lawmakers vote. What can vary at the city level?

3. How would the reach of each proposed law differ, and what would each one address?

4. Compare the legal limits on the proposed state law and city ordinance.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A neighborhood wants safer routes to school. In 70 to 100 words, propose one national law, one state law, and one city ordinance, then compare who votes on each, who may approve or veto it, and where each applies.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · 9-12.GOV.46

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the voting step in each paragraph, circle the official who may sign or veto the proposal, and write N, S, or L beside each paragraph to show which level of government it describes. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How do the voting steps for the national and state bills compare with the voting step for the city ordinance?	**The House and Senate must pass the same national bill, and both legislative chambers must pass the same state bill in most states. The city ordinance goes through one council.**
2	Compare the president's, governor's, and mayor's roles after lawmakers vote. What can vary at the city level?	**The president and governor may sign or veto their respective bills. In some cities the mayor may approve or veto an ordinance, but in others the council's vote is final.**
3	How would the reach of each proposed law differ, and what would each one address?	**The national bill would fund lead pipe replacement across the country. The state bill would require school water testing within one state. The city ordinance would require notice before planned city pipe replacement within the city.**
4	Compare the legal limits on the proposed state law and city ordinance.	**The state law must follow federal law. The city ordinance cannot conflict with controlling state or federal law.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Congress could fund grants for safer walking routes in communities across the country. The House and Senate would pass the same bill, and the president could sign or veto it. In a state with two legislative chambers, lawmakers could set speed limits on state highways near schools. Both chambers would pass the bill before the governor could sign or veto it; it would apply within that state. A city council could require marked crossings on city-controlled streets, if state law permits. That ordinance would apply within the city, and the mayor's role would depend on its charter.

Accept other plausible proposals that fit each government's authority and reach. Students should distinguish the usual two-chamber national and state votes from a city council vote and note that a mayor's role varies by city.