Beyond the Ballot

Compare how parties appear in two kinds of elections

9-12.GOV.48 "Compare partisan and non-partisan offices and elections."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline details about party labels and nominations in the legislative race, and circle the contrasting details in the mayoral race so you can compare the election rules.

Two Races, Different Rules

1. In a state legislative race, the ballot may print a candidate's name beside a party label, such as Republican or Democrat. Party organizations often help recruit candidates and campaign for them. In this state's election, voters in a party primary choose which candidate will represent that party in the general election. An independent candidate can also appear if state ballot-access rules are met. The party label gives voters a quick clue about a candidate's likely positions, but it does not tell them how that person will vote on every issue.

2. Now picture a city mayoral race run under nonpartisan election rules. The ballot lists candidates without party labels, even if some candidates belong to political parties. The city might use a preliminary election to narrow the field, but its rules do not designate an official party nominee for mayor. To compare the two races, look at the rules for ballot labels and nominations, not the name of the job. Some cities elect mayors in partisan elections, while others use nonpartisan elections. The office itself does not determine the election format.

3. A nonpartisan ballot does not keep parties out of politics. A party might endorse a mayoral candidate, and a candidate might tell voters about a personal party affiliation. Neither action puts a party label next to that candidate's name on this city's ballot. Likewise, a party label on the legislative ballot does not prove that every party member agrees about every policy. Both kinds of races ask voters to judge candidates for public office. In the legislative race, voters can use the printed party label as one clue. In the mayoral race, voters must look beyond the ballot for that clue.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How do the two ballots differ in the party information printed beside candidates' names?

2. How do the rules for choosing an official party candidate differ between the legislative and mayoral races?

3. If a party endorses a mayoral candidate, why is that race still different from the partisan legislative race?

4. Why should voters in both races look beyond the ballot to judge candidates' positions?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence voter guide for an invented nonpartisan school board election. Give a candidate a made-up name and a party endorsement, then compare that race with the passage's legislative election using ballot labels and party nominations.

Beyond the Ballot

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline details about party labels and nominations in the legislative race, and circle the contrasting details in the mayoral race so you can compare the election rules. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How do the two ballots differ in the party information printed beside candidates' names?	**The legislative ballot may show party labels beside candidates' names. The nonpartisan mayoral ballot does not.**
2	How do the rules for choosing an official party candidate differ between the legislative and mayoral races?	**Voters in a party primary choose a party's legislative candidate. The mayoral election rules do not designate an official party nominee.**
3	If a party endorses a mayoral candidate, why is that race still different from the partisan legislative race?	**An endorsement does not add a party label to the mayoral ballot or make the candidate an official party nominee under the election rules. The legislative race uses party nominations and may print party labels.**
4	Why should voters in both races look beyond the ballot to judge candidates' positions?	**A legislative candidate's party label does not predict every vote. The mayoral ballot has no party labels, although candidates may have party affiliations.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The Democratic Party endorses Dana Ortiz in this imagined nonpartisan school board election. Ortiz's party does not appear beside her name on the ballot, and the election rules do not make her a party nominee. In the passage's state legislative race, voters in a party primary select a party nominee, and the general election ballot may show party labels. The endorsement may inform voters, but it does not turn the school board election into a partisan one.

Accept comparisons that distinguish election rules from a candidate's personal affiliation or an endorsement. The invented school board race should remain nonpartisan despite the party endorsement.