Two States, Two Ballots

How state rules shape the voting process

9-12.GOV.54 "Explain the role of state governments in administering elections and compare different state's voting rules and elections laws."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two ways states administer elections, then circle one Oregon rule and one Texas rule about voting by mail. Number the circled rules 1 and 2 so you can compare them.

Same Election, Different Rules

1 Imagine two eligible voters preparing for the same presidential election. One lives in Oregon, and the other lives in Texas. They are voting for candidates for the same federal office, but they will follow different state rules to cast their ballots. The U.S. Constitution gives states a major role in running elections, while federal law sets some requirements. State governments establish voting procedures, and local election officials put those procedures into practice. Those officials maintain voter records, provide ballots, and count votes. A voter's experience depends partly on choices made by the state where that voter lives.

2 In Oregon, election officials mail a ballot to each active registered voter before the election. A voter can return the completed ballot by mail or place it in an official ballot drop box. Officials check the signature on the ballot return envelope against the voter's signature on file before counting the ballot. Voting by mail is the usual method there, so voters do not need to qualify for a special mail-ballot option. Oregon voters still must follow state rules, including the voter registration deadline and the deadline for returning ballots. The mailed ballot does not remove the need for election officials to verify it.

3 Texas takes a different approach. Most voters cast ballots in person, either during the early voting period or on Election Day. To vote by mail, a Texas voter must meet a state eligibility rule, such as being at least 65 years old or having a qualifying disability. A mail-ballot voter must provide an identification number that officials can match to the voter's registration record. Unlike Oregon, Texas does not send ballots to all active registered voters. These differences affect how voters plan ahead, but officials in both states must check that ballots meet their state's requirements before counting them.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How do state governments and local election officials each help administer the election described in the passage?

2. How does getting a ballot by mail differ for an active registered voter in Oregon and one in Texas?

3. Compare how Oregon and Texas officials verify the mail ballots described in the passage.

4. A voter wants to avoid voting in person. How would that voter's options differ between Oregon and Texas?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Design a mail-voting policy for an imaginary state. In five sentences, explain who can vote by mail, how officials will verify those ballots, and one benefit or tradeoff of your policy compared with a rule in Oregon or Texas.

ANSWER KEY

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two ways states administer elections, then circle one Oregon rule and one Texas rule about voting by mail. Number the circled rules 1 and 2 so you can compare them. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How do state governments and local election officials each help administer the election described in the passage?	**States establish voting procedures. Local officials carry them out by maintaining voter records, providing ballots, and counting votes.**
2	How does getting a ballot by mail differ for an active registered voter in Oregon and one in Texas?	**Oregon mails a ballot to each active registered voter. In Texas, a voter must meet an eligibility rule to vote by mail.**
3	Compare how Oregon and Texas officials verify the mail ballots described in the passage.	**Oregon officials check the return-envelope signature against one on file. Texas officials match a voter-provided identification number to the registration record.**
4	A voter wants to avoid voting in person. How would that voter's options differ between Oregon and Texas?	**An active registered Oregon voter can return a mailed ballot by mail or at an official drop box. A Texas voter must meet a state eligibility rule to vote by mail; otherwise, the voter generally votes in person.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In my state, any registered voter may request a ballot by mail. Election officials will send a ballot only after checking the request against the voter's registration record. When a ballot comes back, officials will compare the return-envelope signature with the signature on file. Unlike Oregon, my state will not automatically mail ballots to all active registered voters. This policy gives voters a mail option, but they must plan ahead to request it.

Accept accurate paraphrases that distinguish state rules from the work of local officials. For Your Turn, accept other workable policies if the response addresses mail eligibility, verification, and a specific comparison.