The Bridge Decision

How citizens can shape a state decision

IS.2.4 "Give examples of how citizens can participate in their state government and explain their rights and responsibilities, including civic engagement and voting."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three ways people can participate in state government, circle two rights, and number two responsibilities. Use your marks to distinguish what people may do from how they should participate.

Who Will Fix the Bridge?

1. After a winter storm, cracks appear on a bridge that carries students to school. The bridge is part of a state highway, so the state transportation department oversees its inspection and repairs. Residents can report the damage to that department and ask their state legislators to seek repair funding. A student might collect neighbors' accounts of delays and send them to a legislative office. Those actions are forms of civic engagement, participation in public decisions beyond an election. Residents do not have to wait for a ballot to bring a state problem to officials.

2. When lawmakers consider a transportation budget, a legislative committee may invite public testimony. A resident could describe how the closed bridge affects workers and ask the committee to fund repairs. People also have the right to speak about public issues, gather peacefully, and petition government for change. Those rights protect disagreement as well as support for a proposal, but they do not require officials to adopt it. Responsible participants check evidence before sharing claims, listen to other views, and follow hearing rules. A teenager who cannot yet vote can still contact officials or testify when the hearing allows public speakers.

3. At the next state election, eligible voters can choose legislators whose budget priorities they favor. U.S. citizens who are at least 18 can vote if they meet their state's registration and other lawful eligibility rules. Before voting, a citizen can compare candidates' plans and verify polling details with state or local election officials. Voting is a right, not a legal requirement in the United States, but staying informed and participating help citizens hold state leaders accountable. After an election, residents can keep tracking the bridge project and contact officials if promised repairs stall. Civic participation continues between elections.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How could a teenager take part in the bridge decision without voting? Give two actions from the passage.

2. What could a resident ask a legislative committee to do about the bridge? Name one responsibility the resident should meet when making the request.

3. Who can vote in the state election described in the passage? What is one responsible step to take before voting?

4. If officials reject the repair request, which rights still protect residents' efforts? What do those rights not guarantee?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine your state is deciding whether to improve access to a state park. In 4 to 5 sentences, propose one action a person under 18 could take and one action an eligible voter could take, then explain one relevant right and one responsibility involved.

ANSWER KEY

The Bridge Decision

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline three ways people can participate in state government, circle two rights, and number two responsibilities. Use your marks to distinguish what people may do from how they should participate. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How could a teenager take part in the bridge decision without voting? Give two actions from the passage.	**A teenager could send neighbors' accounts to a legislative office and contact officials or testify at a hearing that allows public speakers.**
2	What could a resident ask a legislative committee to do about the bridge? Name one responsibility the resident should meet when making the request.	**The resident could ask the committee to fund repairs and should check evidence before sharing claims, listen to other views, or follow hearing rules.**
3	Who can vote in the state election described in the passage? What is one responsible step to take before voting?	**U.S. citizens who are at least 18 and meet their state's registration and other lawful eligibility rules can vote. They can compare candidates' plans or verify polling details.**
4	If officials reject the repair request, which rights still protect residents' efforts? What do those rights not guarantee?	**The rights to speak, gather peacefully, and petition government still protect residents' efforts. They do not guarantee that officials will adopt the request.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A student could write to a state legislator describing why the park needs an accessible trail. An eligible voter could compare candidates' park plans and vote for a state legislator whose priorities they support. The right to petition protects the student's request even if the legislator disagrees. Both participants should check the trail's condition before making claims about it.

Accept other passage-supported participation methods and responsibilities in the short answers. For Part 3, accept feasible state-level actions that distinguish participation by a person under 18 from voting by an eligible voter.