Who Shapes the Vote?

Trace how authority, resources, and public action shape a local decision.

S.7.3 "Discuss the concept of political power and factors that influence political power."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline who has the authority to decide, circle resources that help groups influence the decision, and number the points where people work together. Use your marks to compare the different sources of political power.

The Last Bus from Harbor Point

1. In the fictional city of Harbor Point, the last bus leaves the hospital at 8 p.m., before many workers finish their shifts. Nurses and cleaners ask the city council to add a 10 p.m. trip. Political power means the ability to shape a public decision, not just the right to speak. The council can approve a route change because city law gives it authority over bus funding. The transit director can offer a schedule, but cannot approve the added spending alone. At a public meeting, workers describe the cost of rides home, while council members ask how many people would use the bus.

2. The hospital's managers also want the later bus. They send the council a report showing how many employees leave after 8 p.m. Their data makes the need harder to dismiss, and their regular meetings with officials give them access that some workers lack. A business group opposes the trip, arguing that a new bus would raise costs for the city. The group pays for ads and asks members to contact council offices. Money buys a louder message, but it does not give the group a vote on the council. Workers collect signatures and speak together, showing that organized numbers can also build influence.

3. Before voting, council members learn that the bus agency can move an existing vehicle to the later trip, but doing so would shorten service on another route. That constraint changes the debate: supporters must now explain why their route should take priority. Riders from the other route speak at the next meeting, adding voices the first plan overlooked. Council members face pressure from several groups, yet only members can cast the deciding votes. Their options are constrained by available funding, while public demands affect which trade-offs seem acceptable. In this case, political power depends on rules, resources, information, and people working together.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the council's power differ from the transit director's power in this decision?

2. How do the hospital managers and the business group use different resources to influence the council?

3. Why might collecting signatures increase the workers' political power even though they cannot cast council votes?

4. How does the possible loss of service on another route change who can influence the decision?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a town council is deciding whether to replace a playground with a parking lot. In one paragraph, identify two groups, explain how three distinct factors, including formal authority, could shape political power in this decision, and describe one trade-off that could limit either group's influence.

Who Shapes the Vote?

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline who has the authority to decide, circle resources that help groups influence the decision, and number the points where people work together. Use your marks to compare the different sources of political power. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the council's power differ from the transit director's power in this decision?	**City law gives the council authority over bus funding, so it can approve the change. The director can propose a schedule but cannot approve the added spending alone.**
2	How do the hospital managers and the business group use different resources to influence the council?	**The managers provide employee data and have regular access to officials. The business group pays for ads and asks members to contact council offices.**
3	Why might collecting signatures increase the workers' political power even though they cannot cast council votes?	**Signatures show that many people support the later trip, which could influence council members who cast the votes.**
4	How does the possible loss of service on another route change who can influence the decision?	**It brings riders from the other route into the debate. They can explain how the change would affect them and press the council to consider their needs.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Parents might organize a petition to keep the playground, while shop owners might pay for flyers supporting parking. The petition could show council members how many residents value the play space, and the flyers could spread the owners' message. Neither group can make the final decision: the town council has formal authority to vote. Council members must also weigh the trade-off. More parking could help shoppers reach local stores, but removing the playground would leave children with less space to play. Strong public support for each side could make either plan difficult to approve.

Accept other passage-supported explanations of influence, including access to officials, information, money, organized participation, and legal authority. For Your Turn, look for two identified groups, three distinct factors including formal authority, and a trade-off connected to the proposed change.