Who Decides Hours?

Trace how public debate becomes a town policy.

USG.1.2 "Define the terms and explain the relationship between politics, government, and public policy."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the definitions of politics, government, and public policy. Then number one example of each in the order they appear: a political action, a government decision, and the policy put into effect.

A Later Closing Time

1. Imagine that the public library in Harborview closes at 5 p.m. on Saturdays. Teens who work after school want later hours, while some residents prefer to spend town funds on road repairs. **Politics** is the process through which people debate, organize, and compete to influence shared decisions. At a public meeting, teens describe why evening hours matter. Other residents question the cost. Both groups sign petitions and ask neighbors to speak. These actions are politics because people are trying to shape a choice that affects the community, even though neither group can make the official decision alone.

2. **Government** is the set of institutions and officials with authority to make and carry out public decisions. In Harborview, the elected town council has authority over the library's budget. Council members hear both sides, ask the library director about staffing, and vote to fund a three-month trial of later Saturday hours. The director then assigns staff and posts the new schedule. The council's vote is a government action, not just another petition. The people who argued at the meeting influenced the choice, but the council had the legal authority to approve spending.

3. **Public policy** is a government plan or course of action for addressing a public issue. Harborview's policy is to use town funds to keep the library open until 8 p.m. on Saturdays for three months, then review the trial. The schedule turns an idea debated in politics into a service carried out by government. After the trial, residents might report who used the extra hours and whether the cost was worthwhile. Their responses can restart political debate, and the council could keep, change, or end the policy. Policy is a result of political choices, but it can also become the subject of new political choices.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why are the petitions and public comments examples of politics rather than government decisions?

2. How did the town council turn the political debate into a government decision?

3. What is Harborview's public policy, and how is it more specific than a request for later hours?

4. How could the public policy lead to another round of politics?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose a school or community issue other than library hours. In 4 to 5 sentences, describe a political action people could take, a government body that could decide, and a specific public policy it could adopt; explain how the three connect.

ANSWER KEY

Who Decides Hours?

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the definitions of politics, government, and public policy. Then number one example of each in the order they appear: a political action, a government decision, and the policy put into effect. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why are the petitions and public comments examples of politics rather than government decisions?	**They are attempts to influence a shared decision. The residents do not have the council's authority to approve spending.**
2	How did the town council turn the political debate into a government decision?	**Council members heard both sides, asked about staffing, and voted to fund a three-month trial.**
3	What is Harborview's public policy, and how is it more specific than a request for later hours?	**The town will fund library hours until 8 p.m. on Saturdays for three months, then review the trial. The policy specifies the hours, funding, and trial period.**
4	How could the public policy lead to another round of politics?	**Residents could discuss the trial's use and cost, then try to influence whether the council keeps, changes, or ends the policy.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In my town, people want more shade at the public playground. Parents could speak at a city council meeting and ask neighbors to sign a petition, which is politics because they are trying to influence a shared decision. The city council, a government body with budget authority, could vote to fund shade structures at two playgrounds. The public policy would direct the parks department to install those structures this year and check whether families use them.

Accept other accurate examples that distinguish efforts to influence a decision from a government body's authority to make it. The proposed policy should specify an action the named government body could authorize.