Rights Under Pressure

Compare a Founding Era conflict with a present-day decision

USG.2.4 "Explain and analyze historical and contemporary examples of Founding Era principles of American government including natural rights, federalism, social contract, constitutionalism, representative democracy, political factions, liberty..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two ways people seek change peacefully, circle one government response in each case, and number the two conflicts between liberty and public safety or law enforcement. Use your marks to compare how these principles work in practice.

When People Oppose a Rule

1. In 1791, Congress passed a tax on distilled spirits to help pay federal debts. Many western farmers turned grain into whiskey because transporting grain to distant markets was difficult. They argued that the tax hit them harder than larger producers. In western Pennsylvania, opponents held meetings and signed petitions, ways to ask their representatives for change. Some also threatened tax collectors and attacked the home of a federal tax inspector in 1794. The conflict forced a hard question: how could people challenge a law while the new government kept its power to collect taxes and protect public safety?

2. President George Washington called militia from several states into federal service. Thousands marched toward western Pennsylvania in 1794, and the uprising collapsed with little fighting. Washington's response showed federalism in action: the national government enforced a federal law using forces supplied by states. It also exposed a tension between liberty and security. Peaceful petitions were one thing; attacks on officials were another. Yet sending an army against fellow citizens raised concerns about how much force a republic should use. Many leaders believed laws made by elected representatives should be challenged through politics, not violence.

3. Imagine a state today orders residents to leave a wildfire zone. Some families ask their state legislators to change the order so they can return briefly for medicine or pets. Others argue that exceptions would put firefighters at risk. State officials must consider individual liberty alongside the common good, including the safety of neighbors and rescue crews. Unlike the whiskey tax, an evacuation order responds to an immediate hazard, but both cases raise the same question: when may government enforce a rule that people oppose? Petitioning elected lawmakers gives residents a peaceful way to seek changes without ignoring the rule.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did opponents of the whiskey tax use representative democracy, and how did some actions go beyond peaceful protest?

2. How did Washington's response demonstrate federalism? What concern about government power did it raise?

3. In the wildfire example, how do individual liberty and the common good come into conflict?

4. Compare how people can seek a change in the two cases. How is the purpose of the wildfire order different from the purpose of the whiskey tax?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine town officials propose closing a public library meeting room to groups that criticize town policies because they worry about disruptions. In four sentences, identify two principles from the passage, explain how they apply, compare this proposal with one passage example, and suggest a rule that protects both public access and safety.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · USG.2.4

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two ways people seek change peacefully, circle one government response in each case, and number the two conflicts between liberty and public safety or law enforcement. Use your marks to compare how these principles work in practice. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did opponents of the whiskey tax use representative democracy, and how did some actions go beyond peaceful protest?	**Opponents held meetings and signed petitions to ask representatives for change. Some also threatened tax collectors and attacked an inspector's home.**
2	How did Washington's response demonstrate federalism? What concern about government power did it raise?	**The national government enforced its law with militia supplied by states. Sending an army against citizens raised concerns about how much force a republic should use.**
3	In the wildfire example, how do individual liberty and the common good come into conflict?	**Families want the freedom to return for medicine or pets, but exceptions could endanger firefighters, neighbors, and rescue crews.**
4	Compare how people can seek a change in the two cases. How is the purpose of the wildfire order different from the purpose of the whiskey tax?	**People can petition their elected representatives in both cases. The evacuation order addresses an immediate danger, while the whiskey tax helped pay federal debts.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The proposal involves individual liberty and the common good. Barring groups for criticizing officials limits their chance to speak, while the town has an interest in keeping the library safe. Like residents who ask legislators to revise a wildfire order, library users could petition elected officials instead of breaking a rule. The town should allow meetings regardless of viewpoint and enforce the same conduct and safety rules for every group.

Accept other accurate comparisons that distinguish peaceful efforts to change a rule from threats or violence. For the open task, look for two relevant principles, a specific comparison, and a safety rule applied equally to all groups.