Promise to Policy

Trace how an election promise becomes a federal program

USG.3.9 "Explain presidential elections and executive power by examining the presidency, including, but not limited to, election, exercise of presidential powers..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline how the candidate gains the presidency, circle actions the president can take, and number the steps that turn a bill into a working program. Use your marks to trace who has power at each step.

The School Water Promise

1. A candidate promises cleaner drinking water at public schools. On Election Day, voters in each state choose a slate of electors pledged to a candidate. The Electoral College votes determine the presidency; winning the national popular vote alone does not guarantee it. Suppose this candidate wins a majority of electoral votes and takes office. Campaign speeches may shape what the new president asks Congress to do, but a promise does not create a federal law. To turn the idea into a national grant program, the president needs Congress to pass legislation.

2. Congress debates the School Water Grants Act, a hypothetical bill that would fund grants administered by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for tests of school drinking water. Members decide which schools can receive grants and how much money the program gets. After both chambers pass the bill, the president can sign it into law or veto it. Congress can override a veto with a two-thirds vote in each chamber. The president also proposes a budget and talks with lawmakers, but cannot simply spend money that Congress has not provided. Even after signing the act, the president cannot change its eligibility rules by making a speech.

3. Now the law must work beyond the White House. The president appoints a secretary of Health and Human Services, a Cabinet official, and an EPA administrator, who leads an executive agency; both appointments require Senate confirmation. The president can direct these leaders to make water safety a priority within the law. For example, the EPA could publish grant instructions and review school applications, while the Cabinet department could offer health guidance about test results. Congress can question agency leaders and review spending. Its oversight helps check whether the program follows the law rather than the president's campaign promises.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How could the candidate win the presidency without winning the national popular vote, and why would that victory not make the water program law?

2. How do Congress and the president each shape the proposed grant program before it becomes law?

3. Why can the president direct agency leaders to prioritize water safety but not change which schools qualify for grants?

4. How could the EPA, the Cabinet department, and Congress each affect the program after the bill becomes law?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Suppose a president who campaigned for cleaner school air receives a bill from Congress that funds school air-filter grants. In five sentences, explain how the president gained office, how the president and Congress shape the law, how a Cabinet department and an executive agency could carry it out, and one limit on presidential action.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · USG.3.9

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline how the candidate gains the presidency, circle actions the president can take, and number the steps that turn a bill into a working program. Use your marks to trace who has power at each step. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How could the candidate win the presidency without winning the national popular vote, and why would that victory not make the water program law?	**A majority of Electoral College votes determines the presidency, but a campaign promise does not make law. Congress must pass legislation for the program.**
2	How do Congress and the president each shape the proposed grant program before it becomes law?	**Congress sets grant eligibility and funding and passes the bill in both chambers. The president can propose a budget, discuss the bill with lawmakers, and sign or veto it.**
3	Why can the president direct agency leaders to prioritize water safety but not change which schools qualify for grants?	**The president can guide implementation within the law, but Congress sets the program's eligibility rules in the law.**
4	How could the EPA, the Cabinet department, and Congress each affect the program after the bill becomes law?	**The EPA could issue grant instructions and review applications. Health and Human Services could offer guidance about test results. Congress could question agency leaders and review spending.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The president won office by receiving a majority of Electoral College votes after campaigning for cleaner school air. Congress passed a bill funding air-filter grants, and the president signed it rather than vetoing it. The president could ask the secretary of Education, a Cabinet official, to make the grants a priority. The Department of Education could review grant applications, while the EPA could offer advice about effective air filters. Congress could examine the department's spending, and the president could not give grants to schools the law excludes.

Accept other plausible assignments of work to Cabinet departments and executive agencies if they fit the hypothetical law. Responses should distinguish the president's influence over implementation from Congress's authority over the law and its funding.