Who Decides?

Trace how citizens influence decisions at different levels of government.

USG.5.2 "Analyze the roles and responsibilities of citizens in Indiana and the United States."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two ways residents try to influence a decision, circle the government body that makes each decision, and number two legal responsibilities. Use your marks to distinguish citizen choices from duties and identify who has authority.

The Sidewalk by the Library

1. A cracked sidewalk beside an Indiana city library forces people with wheelchairs into the street. The city council is preparing its annual budget, which determines how much money the city may spend on sidewalk repairs. Council members can approve funding, while the city public works department plans and carries out repairs within that budget. Mara, a resident, emails her council member photographs and asks to speak at a council meeting. Her neighbors start a petition requesting the repair. These actions do not guarantee a vote in their favor, but they give decision makers evidence of a local need.

2. Mara also studies the council candidates before the next election. If she is an eligible, registered voter, she may vote, but the law does not require her to vote. Residents who cannot vote may still contact officials or sign a petition. Speaking at a meeting depends on its rules. These are ways people can influence a public decision, not powers to order an immediate repair. Mara's member of Congress represents her in federal lawmaking, not in setting this city's sidewalk budget. Sending that member a sidewalk request would not put the repair in the city budget.

3. Citizens' roles extend beyond one city problem. Indiana voters choose state legislators, who make state laws in the Indiana General Assembly; voters also choose members of Congress, who make federal laws. Residents can contact a state legislator about a proposed state law or a member of Congress about a proposed federal law. Some responsibilities are not optional: people must obey applicable laws and pay taxes they legally owe. An eligible person summoned for jury service must respond as directed, though the court may excuse that person. Voting, petitioning, and contacting officials remain choices, not legal duties.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why does Mara contact the city council rather than her member of Congress about the sidewalk budget?

2. How might Mara's email influence the current budget decision differently from her vote in the next council election?

3. If the council funds sidewalk repairs, what does the public works department do that the council does not?

4. A neighbor says, "I must vote, but responding to a jury summons is optional." What is wrong with each part of that claim?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

The Indiana General Assembly is considering a state law requiring more warning signs near schools. In four or five sentences, identify who decides whether to pass the law, explain two different ways a resident could try to influence the decision, and contrast one voluntary action with one legal responsibility from the passage.

Who Decides?

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two ways residents try to influence a decision, circle the government body that makes each decision, and number two legal responsibilities. Use your marks to distinguish citizen choices from duties and identify who has authority. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why does Mara contact the city council rather than her member of Congress about the sidewalk budget?	**The city council approves funding in the city budget. Members of Congress make federal laws, not decisions about this city's sidewalk budget.**
2	How might Mara's email influence the current budget decision differently from her vote in the next council election?	**Her email gives current council members evidence of the need for a repair. Her vote helps choose who will serve on the council after the election.**
3	If the council funds sidewalk repairs, what does the public works department do that the council does not?	**The department plans and carries out repairs within the budget; the council approves the funding.**
4	A neighbor says, "I must vote, but responding to a jury summons is optional." What is wrong with each part of that claim?	**Voting is a choice, not a legal duty. An eligible person summoned for jury service must respond as directed, although the court may excuse that person.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The Indiana General Assembly decides whether to pass the proposed state law. A resident could contact a state legislator and explain why more warning signs might help. Residents could also start a petition and send it to state legislators to show that others support the proposal. Contacting legislators and petitioning are voluntary, but people must pay taxes they legally owe.

Accept other passage-supported distinctions between voluntary civic actions and legal responsibilities. Students should identify the Indiana General Assembly, not the city council or Congress, as the state lawmaking body.