Beyond the Ballot

How voters and supporters shape a public election

USG.5.6 "Explain how and why citizens in the United States participate in public elections as voters and supporters of candidates for public office."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two actions voters take, circle two actions candidate supporters take, and number two reasons citizens participate.

A Choice About City Buses

1 On a Tuesday evening, a city council candidate visits a neighborhood meeting about unreliable buses. The council approves the city budget, so its choices can affect how much money goes to local transit. Two candidates offer different plans: one wants to add late buses, while the other would focus on repairing existing routes. Residents ask how each plan would be paid for. A public election gives eligible citizens a way to choose who will make such decisions. Their votes can reward a plan they favor or replace an officeholder whose decisions they oppose.

2 Before election day, a citizen can compare candidates' proposals, examine their records, and check claims against reliable sources. To cast a ballot, an eligible citizen follows the state's registration and voting rules, which include deadlines. Depending on the state and election, voters may vote in person before election day, in person on election day, or by mail. Each voter marks a ballot privately, then submits it according to the rules. Voting lets citizens express their preferences without having to publicly defend their choice. Because one ballot rarely decides an election alone, many citizens vote to join others in shaping the outcome.

3 Citizens can also support a candidate before anyone casts a ballot. A volunteer might knock on doors to discuss the candidate's bus plan, distribute campaign information, or help neighbors find official voting instructions. Another supporter might donate money to help the campaign reach more voters, subject to campaign finance rules. Some supporters give time instead of money because they want neighbors to hear a proposal they believe would improve daily life. Campaign work may persuade undecided voters and help more eligible people participate, but a supporter cannot cast someone else's ballot. The winner represents the whole community, including people who voted differently.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How can a citizen use a ballot to influence the bus decision, and why could that choice matter?

2. How can a citizen prepare to vote and cast a ballot, and why vote if one ballot rarely decides the election?

3. How could a supporter help a candidate's bus plan gain support, and why would that effort matter before election day?

4. How is donating to a candidate different from voting for that candidate, and what purpose does each action serve?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a city council election in which one candidate proposes longer library hours and another proposes repairs to park equipment. In four or five sentences, explain how you would learn about the plans, vote for one candidate, and support that candidate before the election, including why each form of participation matters.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two actions voters take, circle two actions candidate supporters take, and number two reasons citizens participate. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How can a citizen use a ballot to influence the bus decision, and why could that choice matter?	**The citizen can vote for a council candidate whose bus plan they favor. Council budget decisions can affect local transit.**
2	How can a citizen prepare to vote and cast a ballot, and why vote if one ballot rarely decides the election?	**The citizen can compare proposals and records, check claims, follow registration rules, and submit a ballot by an available method. Voting joins that citizen's choice with others to shape the outcome.**
3	How could a supporter help a candidate's bus plan gain support, and why would that effort matter before election day?	**A supporter could discuss the plan at neighbors' doors or distribute campaign information. That effort could persuade undecided voters.**
4	How is donating to a candidate different from voting for that candidate, and what purpose does each action serve?	**A donation helps the campaign reach more voters, subject to campaign finance rules. A vote helps choose who will make council decisions.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would read both candidates' proposals and check how they would pay for them. I would choose the candidate who supports longer library hours because students need a quiet place to study after school. I would check my registration and follow my state's rules to cast a private ballot for that candidate. My vote would help decide who makes budget choices. Before election day, I would talk with neighbors about the library plan so they could decide whether to support it.

Accept either candidate choice if the response explains a reason for it. Voting and campaign support should be distinct actions, with a purpose given for each.