Forecasts and Votes

How new tools shape daily life and civic participation

USH.7.2 "Describe developing trends in science, media, and technology (especially social media, the Internet, and computing), and explain how they impact the lives of Americans and the democratic processes."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one advance in science or computing, and circle two ways digital media spread election information. Number one benefit and one risk these trends create for voting.

An Election Week Storm

1 Imagine an election week when a hurricane approaches a coastal town. Since the 1980s, weather scientists have combined satellite observations with computer models to improve forecasts. A forecast still has uncertainty, but it can give residents time to plan for flooding and power outages. Election officials might use the same forecast to prepare backup power or tell voters about legally approved changes to polling places. The science does not decide an election. It can, however, shape whether people travel safely and whether voting remains accessible during an emergency.

2 Before most households used the Internet, a voter might learn about a changed polling place from a newspaper, radio station, or phone call. Today, a local election office can post updates on its official website, and residents can check them on a phone. Neighbors may share those links through social media, reaching people faster than a printed notice. Online posts can also help volunteers coordinate rides or explain how to request a ballot where state law permits. These tools can make civic participation easier, especially when plans must change quickly, but a person without reliable Internet access may miss the update.

3 Speed also carries a cost. A false post might claim that every polling place in town has closed, even if only one site changed. Social media feeds may promote posts that draw strong reactions, so an alarming claim can spread before anyone checks it. A voter who trusts the claim might stay home, weakening fair participation. Election officials can correct the record on their websites and through local news outlets, while voters can compare a post with those sources. Yet a correction may not reach everyone who saw the original claim, making access to trustworthy information an ongoing democratic challenge.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How could improved weather forecasting affect both a resident's plans and access to voting during the storm?

2. How can an election office's website help voters when plans change quickly, and who might still miss the information?

3. Explain one way social media could increase participation and one way it could reduce participation in this election.

4. Why might a false claim spread quickly through social media feeds, and what could voters do before acting on it?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A school district launches an AI tool that summarizes school board proposals and lets residents share them. In five or six sentences, explain one possible effect on daily life and two different effects on public participation or decisions, including a risk and a practical safeguard.

ANSWER KEY

Forecasts and Votes

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one advance in science or computing, and circle two ways digital media spread election information. Number one benefit and one risk these trends create for voting. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How could improved weather forecasting affect both a resident's plans and access to voting during the storm?	**It could give residents time to prepare for flooding or outages and help election officials keep voting accessible through backup power or approved polling-place changes.**
2	How can an election office's website help voters when plans change quickly, and who might still miss the information?	**The office can post updates that voters check on a phone, but people without reliable Internet access may miss them.**
3	Explain one way social media could increase participation and one way it could reduce participation in this election.	**Neighbors could share official updates or coordinate rides through social media. A false post claiming polling places have closed could cause voters to stay home.**
4	Why might a false claim spread quickly through social media feeds, and what could voters do before acting on it?	**Feeds may promote posts that draw strong reactions. Voters could compare the claim with the election office's website and local news.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The AI summary could help families understand a proposed change to bus routes and plan their mornings. Residents who have little time might use the summary to find a meeting and speak about the proposal. However, if the tool leaves out the plan's cost, people might support it without knowing a major trade-off. The district should link each summary to the full proposal and provide paper copies at the library. Residents could check those sources before commenting or voting for school board members.

Accept other passage-supported effects and safeguards in Parts 1 and 2. For Part 3, look for a clear effect on daily life, two distinct civic effects, a plausible risk, and a safeguard that addresses it.