Power at the Polls

How elections keep representatives answerable

5.C.6.5.A "why voting in public elections is necessary to maintain a constitutional republic"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two ways voters can hold representatives answerable, and circle one limit on what an elected representative may do.

A Choice at the Library

1. In a small town, two candidates for the state legislature visit a crowded library. One wants the state to repair old bridges first. The other wants more money for buses. Voters listen, ask questions, and later choose a candidate in a public election. The winner will help make state laws, but must still follow the state and U.S. constitutions.

2. In a constitutional republic, people choose representatives to make decisions for them. A constitution sets limits on what those representatives can do. Voting gives people a way to choose who speaks for them in government. It also gives them a way to replace a representative who ignores their needs. Without voting, leaders could keep their seats without asking the people for their consent.

3. Suppose the bridge candidate wins and, after taking office, does little about unsafe bridges. At the next election, voters can question that lawmaker and choose someone else. If many eligible people stay home, a smaller group chooses the winner, so fewer voices shape the result. A vote does not promise the outcome any one person wants, but regular elections keep representatives answerable to the people.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why does choosing a state lawmaker by vote support a constitutional republic?

2. How can voters hold the bridge candidate answerable if that person wins but does little about unsafe bridges?

3. Why do fewer voices shape an election result when many eligible people stay home?

4. How do voting and constitutional limits work together to keep a lawmaker from having unchecked power?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine an election for a state lawmaker about an issue not named in the passage. In three sentences, name the issue and a choice voters could make, explain how voters could respond at the next election if the lawmaker ignores them, and tell why that power helps maintain a constitutional republic.

ANSWER KEY

Power at the Polls

GRADE 5 · 5.C.6.5.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two ways voters can hold representatives answerable, and circle one limit on what an elected representative may do. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why does choosing a state lawmaker by vote support a constitutional republic?	**People choose a representative to make government decisions for them.**
2	How can voters hold the bridge candidate answerable if that person wins but does little about unsafe bridges?	**Voters can question the lawmaker and choose someone else at the next election.**
3	Why do fewer voices shape an election result when many eligible people stay home?	**A smaller group of voters chooses the winner.**
4	How do voting and constitutional limits work together to keep a lawmaker from having unchecked power?	**Voters can replace the lawmaker in an election, and the lawmaker must follow the state and U.S. constitutions.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In an election about protecting drinking water, voters could choose a state lawmaker who promises to test wells. If the lawmaker ignores the issue, voters could choose a different candidate at the next election. This power helps maintain a constitutional republic because representatives must answer to the people who choose them.

Accept any new state issue and reasonable voter choice. The response should connect the chance to replace a representative with keeping that representative answerable to voters.