From Need to Law

Trace a bill through Congress and the President's decision

8.C.4.4 "Examine the steps of the legislative process. Describe the constitutional roles of Congress and the President to produce necessary legislation in order to meet public needs..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the public need, circle the people or groups who act on the bill, and number the steps from the House committee to the President's decision.

A Bill for Hot Days

1. Imagine a summer when several U.S. towns face dangerous heat and crowded cooling centers. Local leaders ask for help paying for more places where people can escape the heat. A member of the House of Representatives proposes a fictional Heat Relief Grants Act. It would provide federal money to states that help towns open cooling centers. Congress has the constitutional power to make federal laws and decide how federal money is spent. The President may urge Congress to act, but cannot introduce a bill or vote on it in Congress.

2. First, the House sends the bill to a committee, where members study it, hear testimony, and may change its wording. If the committee advances it, the full House debates and votes. A majority vote sends it to the Senate, where a committee and then the full chamber consider it. Senators add a rule requiring centers to offer drinking water, but the House version lacks that rule. The two chambers must agree on identical wording before the bill can go to the President. They negotiate and each votes on the final text.

3. After both chambers pass the same bill, the President can sign it into law or veto it. Suppose the President objects to the cost and vetoes the Heat Relief Grants Act. Congress could still make it law by voting to override the veto with a two-thirds majority in each chamber. If Congress does not reach those vote totals, this bill does not become law. If the bill becomes law, federal agencies can distribute the approved grants, while states and towns decide how to run their cooling centers under the law's rules.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What public need does the proposed bill address, and why does a House member introduce it instead of the President?

2. Trace the bill's path through the House and Senate before the two chambers negotiate.

3. Why can't the Senate's version go straight to the President after senators add the drinking-water rule?

4. If the President vetoes the bill, what must Congress do to make it law? What happens if Congress cannot do that?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine Congress wants to help towns open phone-charging stations during long storm-related power outages. In 5 to 6 sentences, trace a possible bill from introduction to law, including the House and Senate steps, what happens if their versions differ, the President's choices, and Congress's possible response to a veto.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 8 · 8.C.4.4

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the public need, circle the people or groups who act on the bill, and number the steps from the House committee to the President's decision. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What public need does the proposed bill address, and why does a House member introduce it instead of the President?	**Towns need more cooling centers during dangerous heat. A member of Congress can introduce a bill, but the President cannot introduce one in Congress.**
2	Trace the bill's path through the House and Senate before the two chambers negotiate.	**A House committee studies the bill, then the full House debates and votes on it. A Senate committee considers it, followed by the full Senate.**
3	Why can't the Senate's version go straight to the President after senators add the drinking-water rule?	**The House version does not have that rule. Both chambers must agree on identical wording and pass the final text first.**
4	If the President vetoes the bill, what must Congress do to make it law? What happens if Congress cannot do that?	**Congress must override the veto with a two-thirds vote in each chamber. Without those votes, the bill does not become law.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

To help towns open phone-charging stations during long outages, a House member introduces a bill offering federal grants. A House committee studies the bill, and the full House votes to pass it. A Senate committee reviews it, and the full Senate votes on its version. If the Senate changes the grant rules, both chambers must agree on one text and pass that same text. The President can sign the final bill into law or veto it. After a veto, Congress can still make it law with a two-thirds vote in each chamber; otherwise, that bill does not become law.

Accept a bill introduced in either chamber for the open task. Students should distinguish the President's sign-or-veto decision from Congress's votes, including the separate votes needed to override a veto.