Justice for Everyone

How rights and courts support the rule of law

8.C.4.5.E "Describe how the Bill of Rights and the United States of America's judicial system uphold the rule of law guaranteeing fair and equal application of the law and the accountability of all persons under it."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details showing that the mayor and volunteer must be treated alike, and circle two safeguards that keep the investigation or trial fair.

The Missing Library Laptops

1. At the town library, two laptops disappear after a weekend event. A security camera shows the mayor and a library volunteer entering the storage room at different times, but it does not show anyone taking a laptop. Police investigate both people. The rule of law means a person's position does not put them above the law, and a suspicion does not prove guilt. The same theft law applies to the mayor and the volunteer. Investigators must gather evidence instead of deciding that one person deserves special treatment.

2. Suppose officers want to search each person's home for the missing laptops. The Fourth Amendment protects people from unreasonable searches. Officers generally need a warrant supported by probable cause to search a home. A judge reviews the facts before issuing a warrant, whether the home belongs to the mayor or the volunteer. If either faces serious criminal charges, the Sixth Amendment protects that person's right to counsel and an impartial jury. These safeguards limit what the government can do, even when the public wants quick answers.

3. A judge must follow the law rather than favor a powerful defendant or assume that a suspect is guilty. In this state case, the Fourteenth Amendment requires the state to provide due process and equal protection of the laws. Due process includes fair legal procedures; equal protection means the state cannot unfairly apply its laws to people differently. If evidence proves either person guilty through a fair process, that person can face a legal penalty. If evidence does not prove guilt, neither should be punished. Fair treatment and accountability work together.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why can't investigators assume the volunteer is guilty or excuse the mayor because of their positions?

2. How do the warrant requirement and a judge's review limit a search of either person's home?

3. If either person faces serious criminal charges, how do Sixth Amendment rights help make the trial fair?

4. How do due process and equal protection allow accountability without unfair punishment in this case?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A city council member and a park worker are each suspected of taking tools from a public shed. Write four sentences explaining how the Bill of Rights and the courts should protect both people while still allowing accountability. Include a search safeguard, a trial safeguard, and what must happen before either person is punished.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 8 · 8.C.4.5.E

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two details showing that the mayor and volunteer must be treated alike, and circle two safeguards that keep the investigation or trial fair. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why can't investigators assume the volunteer is guilty or excuse the mayor because of their positions?	**The same theft law applies to both people. Investigators need evidence because a person's position and a suspicion do not prove guilt.**
2	How do the warrant requirement and a judge's review limit a search of either person's home?	**Officers generally need a warrant supported by probable cause, and a judge reviews the facts before issuing it for either home.**
3	If either person faces serious criminal charges, how do Sixth Amendment rights help make the trial fair?	**Both have the right to counsel and an impartial jury, rather than a trial that favors or disadvantages one person.**
4	How do due process and equal protection allow accountability without unfair punishment in this case?	**The state must use fair procedures and apply its laws equally. Either person can face a legal penalty if proven guilty through a fair process, but neither should be punished without proof.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Police should gather evidence about both people rather than favor the council member. If officers seek to search either person's home, they generally need a warrant supported by probable cause, reviewed by a judge. If either faces serious criminal charges, that person has a right to counsel and an impartial jury. A court should apply the law equally and punish either person only if the evidence proves guilt through a fair process.

Accept equivalent explanations that connect specific rights or court procedures to equal treatment and evidence-based accountability. For the open task, look for four sentences addressing both suspects, a search safeguard, a trial safeguard, and proof before punishment.