Reform Becomes Law

Trace how reform ideas shaped Oklahoma's constitution

OKH.C.4.4 "Examine the influence of the national Progressive Movement and local social reformers, such as Kate Barnard, on the state constitutional convention (e.g., accountable government, child labor, and public education)."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline national Progressive goals, circle Kate Barnard's local concern, and number the constitutional rules that reflect those ideas. Use your marks to trace how reform ideas became rules.

Who Shaped Oklahoma's Constitution?

1. In 1906, delegates met in Guthrie to write a constitution for the future state of Oklahoma. Across the nation, Progressives argued that government should answer to ordinary voters instead of powerful companies and political insiders. Oklahoma delegates adopted two tools associated with that movement: the initiative, which lets voters propose laws, and the referendum, which lets voters approve or reject certain laws. The constitution also created a Corporation Commission to regulate businesses such as railroads. These choices did not end the influence of wealthy interests, but they gave voters and state officials ways to question decisions made behind closed doors.

2. Local reformers brought other concerns to the convention. Kate Barnard, an Oklahoma advocate for working children, urged protection from dangerous labor. Delegates wrote a rule into the constitution that barred the employment of children younger than fifteen in work harmful to their health or morals or especially dangerous to life or limb. Barnard's advocacy helped put this issue before the convention, while delegates made the final decision. The rule shows how a local reformer's concern became a constitutional limit, rather than remaining a request that employers could ignore. It made children's safety a responsibility of state government.

3. Progressives also promoted public education as a way to prepare people for civic life. Oklahoma's constitution directed the legislature to maintain free public schools for the state's children. Yet the same document required separate schools for Black and white children. That requirement denied equal treatment and shows that reform did not reach everyone on equal terms. Reading these provisions together reveals a tension: delegates expanded the state's responsibility for education while protecting racial segregation. To examine the convention's influences, ask whose goals became rules, what each rule changed, and who remained outside its promise.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the initiative and referendum put a national Progressive goal into practice in Oklahoma?

2. Why would creating the Corporation Commission appeal to Progressives concerned about powerful companies?

3. Trace Kate Barnard's influence from her concern to a rule in the constitution. What decision remained with the delegates?

4. How did the constitution's school provisions both reflect a Progressive goal and limit its reach?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 75 to 95 word note to a state official proposing one new policy that builds on a constitutional rule in the passage. Connect your proposal to either a national Progressive goal or Barnard's local reform work, and explain how it would affect a specific group.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · OKH.C.4.4

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline national Progressive goals, circle Kate Barnard's local concern, and number the constitutional rules that reflect those ideas. Use your marks to trace how reform ideas became rules. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the initiative and referendum put a national Progressive goal into practice in Oklahoma?	**They gave voters ways to propose laws and approve or reject certain laws, making government more answerable to voters.**
2	Why would creating the Corporation Commission appeal to Progressives concerned about powerful companies?	**It gave the state a way to regulate businesses such as railroads instead of leaving those businesses unchecked.**
3	Trace Kate Barnard's influence from her concern to a rule in the constitution. What decision remained with the delegates?	**Barnard urged protection for children from dangerous labor. Delegates wrote a rule barring children under fifteen from harmful or especially dangerous work, and the delegates made the final decision to include it.**
4	How did the constitution's school provisions both reflect a Progressive goal and limit its reach?	**The requirement for free public schools reflected the goal of expanding education, but the requirement for separate schools for Black and white children denied equal treatment.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Dear state official, fund inspectors to visit factories and mines and investigate reports of children working in dangerous jobs. The constitution bars harmful work for children under fifteen, but a written rule cannot protect a child if no one checks employers. Kate Barnard's local campaign made children's safety a public issue. Inspectors would turn that concern into daily protection. Children in low-income families could benefit because they might have fewer ways to challenge an employer. Publish inspection results so families can see whether the state is enforcing its promise.

Accept other accurate links between reform goals and constitutional rules. For the note, look for a distinct proposed policy, a clear connection to a stated influence, and a plausible effect on a named group.