Promises in Practice

Read the Oklahoma Preamble as a guide to state responsibilities

OKH.C.5.1.A "Identify the responsibilities of state government by analyzing the Preamble to the Oklahoma State Constitution."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the three goals from the Oklahoma Preamble in the first paragraph. Then write 1, 2, or 3 beside the later example that best connects to each goal.

What Is State Government For?

1 At the start of Oklahoma's Constitution, the Preamble explains why the people established their state government. It begins by invoking the guidance of Almighty God. It then names three aims: to preserve liberty, to "secure just and rightful government," and to "promote our mutual welfare and happiness." The closing words say that "we, the people of the State of Oklahoma" establish the Constitution. Those words locate the government's source in the people, not in a governor or a court. The three aims are broad standards for judging what state government should do.

2 Consider a proposal requiring every student to share the passwords to personal accounts with a state agency. Even if officials say the plan might help them investigate threats, the Preamble's goals give Oklahomans a reason to question such a broad demand. Now consider a bill that would let an agency change important rules without any public notice or explanation. Residents could ask whether decisions made behind closed doors meet the Preamble's standard for government. Neither example settles a legal case. Instead, each shows how a goal in the Preamble can guide questions about a proposed state action.

3 When a severe storm cuts off roads in several counties, state leaders may coordinate emergency alerts and help communities reach safe drinking water. The benefits could reach people who cannot solve the problem alone, including families far from a hospital. That case raises a different question about what the state should help provide for everyone. Still, a preamble states purposes, not a detailed list of legal powers. To decide what an agency may actually do, a reader must also examine the Constitution's other provisions and state laws. A worthy goal does not automatically make every proposed method lawful.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Which goal in the Preamble gives people a reason to question the password proposal? Explain the connection.

2. Which goal could residents use to challenge rule changes made without public notice? Why?

3. Which goal best supports the state's response to the severe storm? Use a detail from the passage.

4. If a proposed action supports a Preamble goal, what else must officials check before taking that action?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A proposed state public health hotline would serve cities but not rural areas. Propose one change to the plan, explain how two different Preamble goals support your change, and identify what officials must check before acting. Write four sentences.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · OKH.C.5.1.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the three goals from the Oklahoma Preamble in the first paragraph. Then write 1, 2, or 3 beside the later example that best connects to each goal. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Which goal in the Preamble gives people a reason to question the password proposal? Explain the connection.	**Preserving liberty. Requiring all students to share personal passwords could intrude on their freedom and privacy.**
2	Which goal could residents use to challenge rule changes made without public notice? Why?	**Securing just and rightful government. Making rules without public notice or explanation raises questions about whether the process is fair.**
3	Which goal best supports the state's response to the severe storm? Use a detail from the passage.	**Promoting mutual welfare and happiness. Emergency alerts or access to safe drinking water could help people across several counties.**
4	If a proposed action supports a Preamble goal, what else must officials check before taking that action?	**They must check the Constitution's other provisions and state laws to determine whether the state has the authority to take that action.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Oklahoma should offer the hotline in rural areas as well as cities. Serving more residents would help "promote our mutual welfare and happiness." Offering access across communities would support "just and rightful government." Before launching the expanded hotline, officials should check state laws and the Constitution's other provisions for the authority and rules that apply.

Accept reasonable connections between each Preamble goal and the proposed action. For Part 3, look for one specific change, two distinct goals with explanations, and recognition that the Preamble alone does not grant legal authority.