Three Branches, Two Levels

Compare how Oklahoma and national government share power.

OKH.C.5.1.B "Compare the structure of state government to the national system's three branches with similar functions and powers."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each Oklahoma branch named in the passage and circle its national counterpart. Write matching numbers beside branch pairs that do similar work.

Who Decides About Bus Lights?

1 Imagine Oklahoma lawmakers debating brighter warning lights on newly purchased school buses. A proposal begins in the Oklahoma Legislature, made up of a House of Representatives and a Senate. Members in both chambers debate changes and vote before a bill can reach the governor. At the national level, Congress also has two chambers, the House of Representatives and the Senate. Its members debate and vote on bills that address national concerns, such as rules for new vehicles. Both legislatures make laws, but an Oklahoma law applies within the state, while a federal law can apply across the country.

2 After lawmakers vote, another branch has a turn. Oklahoma's governor may sign a state bill into law or veto it. The president has similar choices when Congress sends a federal bill. Each executive branch also puts laws into action: Oklahoma agencies carry out state laws, while federal agencies carry out federal laws. For example, the appropriate agency might explain a new vehicle rule to the people expected to follow it. Neither the governor nor the president gets to replace the legislature's vote with a personal rule about what the bill says. A veto can be overridden by the relevant legislature under its rules.

3 Now imagine a dispute over whether a warning-light law was applied fairly. Oklahoma courts hear cases involving state law and the Oklahoma Constitution; the Oklahoma Supreme Court is the state's highest court. Federal courts hear cases involving federal law or the U.S. Constitution; the U.S. Supreme Court is the highest federal court. Courts at both levels interpret laws and can decide whether government action conflicts with the constitution they must apply. Yet their authority is not identical: a state court's ruling on a state-law question does not automatically settle a nationwide federal-law question. All three branches have counterparts, but their reach differs.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How are the Oklahoma Legislature and Congress structured alike, and how does the reach of their laws differ?

2. How are the governor's and president's choices about a bill alike, and which legislature sends a bill to each?

3. How do Oklahoma and national executive branches do similar work after a law takes effect? What differs?

4. What work do Oklahoma and federal courts share, and what kinds of cases does the passage say each hears?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A neighborhood group proposes a law requiring covered water fountains in Oklahoma state parks. In four or five sentences, trace the proposal from lawmakers to a possible court case, compare each Oklahoma branch with its national counterpart, and explain one difference in their reach.

ANSWER KEY

Three Branches, Two Levels

HIGH SCHOOL · OKH.C.5.1.B

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each Oklahoma branch named in the passage and circle its national counterpart. Write matching numbers beside branch pairs that do similar work. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How are the Oklahoma Legislature and Congress structured alike, and how does the reach of their laws differ?	**Both have a House of Representatives and a Senate. Oklahoma laws apply within the state; federal laws can apply across the country.**
2	How are the governor's and president's choices about a bill alike, and which legislature sends a bill to each?	**Both may sign or veto a bill. The Oklahoma Legislature sends bills to the governor; Congress sends bills to the president.**
3	How do Oklahoma and national executive branches do similar work after a law takes effect? What differs?	**Both use agencies to carry out laws. Oklahoma agencies carry out state laws, while federal agencies carry out federal laws.**
4	What work do Oklahoma and federal courts share, and what kinds of cases does the passage say each hears?	**Both interpret laws and review government action. Oklahoma courts hear cases involving state law and the Oklahoma Constitution; federal courts hear cases involving federal law or the U.S. Constitution.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The Oklahoma Legislature would debate and vote on the fountain bill, much as Congress does for national bills. The governor could sign or veto it, just as the president can sign or veto a bill from Congress. If it becomes law, Oklahoma agencies would carry it out, while federal agencies carry out federal laws. If someone challenges how the state law is applied, Oklahoma courts could hear the case, just as federal courts hear cases involving federal law. The Oklahoma law would apply within the state, not automatically across the country.

Accept comparisons that correctly pair the legislative, executive, and judicial branches. Students may note that state courts can also hear questions involving federal law; the passage does not describe their jurisdiction as exclusive.