Power With Purpose

Read how Oklahoma's goals shape the work of its government.

OKH.C.5.1 "Describe the purpose of the Oklahoma Constitution, its key principles, and its relationship to the Constitution of the United States of America..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the three goals named in the Preamble, circle an action by each state branch, and put a star beside a comparison with the national government.

When Oklahoma Needs to Act

1. After statehood in 1907, Oklahomans needed rules for governing their new state. Their constitution begins with the people, not an official: its Preamble says they seek to secure liberty, secure just and rightful government, and promote mutual welfare and happiness. These aims help explain why state government provides public schools and responds to problems that affect entire communities. The Oklahoma Constitution establishes state institutions and limits their powers. It operates beneath the U.S. Constitution, which is the nation's highest law. Oklahoma can make laws on many local matters, but a state law that conflicts with the U.S. Constitution cannot stand.

2. When a flood destroys a bridge, Oklahoma's three branches have different jobs, much like the national government's branches. The elected Legislature, made up of a House and Senate, can pass a budget for repairs; Congress plays the legislative role nationally. Oklahoma representatives serve two-year terms, while senators serve four-year terms. The elected governor, who must be at least 31, directs executive agencies that carry out state laws and signs or vetoes bills; the president leads the national executive branch. Oklahoma Supreme Court justices interpret state law and the state constitution, as federal judges interpret federal law and the U.S. Constitution.

3. Oklahoma's governor appoints Supreme Court justices from nominees screened by the Judicial Nominating Commission; voters later decide whether to keep them in retention elections. This differs from the federal process: the president nominates federal judges, and the U.S. Senate confirms them. State power also affects daily life beyond disasters. Since statehood, Oklahoma's constitution has required a system of free public schools. Today, lawmakers fund schools, the executive branch administers education programs, and courts can decide whether state actions follow the constitution. Each branch contributes differently, but the Preamble's goals provide a common test: Does government protect liberty and serve the public?

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does Oklahoma's requirement for free public schools connect to a goal in the Preamble?

2. If a flood destroys a bridge, how could the Legislature and governor carry out different parts of a response?

3. How does the selection of Oklahoma Supreme Court justices differ from the selection of federal judges?

4. What would happen to an Oklahoma law that conflicts with the U.S. Constitution? Explain why.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A severe heat wave closes several Oklahoma school buildings. In four or five sentences, propose a different response by each state branch, connect one response to a Preamble goal, and name a national branch with a similar role.

Power With Purpose

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the three goals named in the Preamble, circle an action by each state branch, and put a star beside a comparison with the national government. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does Oklahoma's requirement for free public schools connect to a goal in the Preamble?	**Free public schools support the Preamble's goal of promoting mutual welfare and happiness by providing education for children across the state.**
2	If a flood destroys a bridge, how could the Legislature and governor carry out different parts of a response?	**The Legislature could pass a budget for repairs. The governor could direct executive agencies to carry out the law.**
3	How does the selection of Oklahoma Supreme Court justices differ from the selection of federal judges?	**Oklahoma's governor appoints justices from nominees screened by a commission, and voters later decide whether to retain them. The president nominates federal judges, and the U.S. Senate confirms them.**
4	What would happen to an Oklahoma law that conflicts with the U.S. Constitution? Explain why.	**The state law could not stand because the U.S. Constitution is the nation's highest law, and the Oklahoma Constitution operates beneath it.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Oklahoma's Legislature could fund cooling upgrades in public schools. The governor could direct state education agencies to carry out the new funding law. If someone challenged the law, state courts could decide whether it follows the Oklahoma Constitution. These steps would promote mutual welfare, and Congress has a legislative role similar to Oklahoma's Legislature.

Accept other plausible branch-specific responses that stay within each branch's powers. The national comparison may use Congress, the president, or federal courts.