Who Decides What?

Four ways Oklahoma voters can shape public decisions

OKH.C.5.5.A "direct primary, initiative petition, and referendum (including the power to recall government officials in some local jurisdictions)"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline what voters do in each of the four processes, and circle the decision their action affects. Use your marks to compare the powers voters have in each process.

Four Decisions on the Ballot

1. On a Tuesday in Oklahoma, a voter opens a sample ballot before an election. One section lists people seeking a party's nomination for a state office. In a direct primary, eligible voters, rather than party leaders alone, choose which candidate will represent the party in the general election. Winning the primary does not itself put that person in office. Other names may appear on the general election ballot, and voters make the final choice then. This two-stage path matters when neighbors ask whether a candidate has won a nomination or has actually won the office.

2. Now imagine residents want a new state law requiring clearer notice of public meetings. They could organize an initiative petition to place their proposal before Oklahoma voters, if they meet legal requirements, including collecting enough valid signatures. The voters would then decide whether to adopt the proposed law. A referendum works in the other direction: a law has already been passed by the legislature, and voters are asked whether to approve or reject it. Oklahoma voters may reach that choice through a petition to refer a law or a legislative referral. In either case, the ballot decision belongs to voters.

3. Picture a city where residents believe an elected mayor should leave office before the term ends. Recall is a vote on whether to remove an official, not a contest to nominate a party candidate or a vote on a new state law. Some Oklahoma local governments allow recall under their local rules; it is not a general statewide power to remove state officials. Residents must check that jurisdiction's rules for petitions and elections before claiming recall is available. Each process gives voters a different decision: choose a nominee, act on a proposed measure, review a law, or decide whether an official stays in office.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. A candidate wins a direct primary. What has that candidate won, and what decision must voters still make?

2. Why is the public-meeting proposal an example of an initiative petition rather than a referendum?

3. A law has already passed the Oklahoma legislature. Name the process that could let voters approve or reject it, and give one way it could reach voters.

4. Why should residents check local rules before trying to recall an elected official?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Invent four new civic situations, one for each process in the passage. In four sentences, name each process and explain what voters would decide; for recall, also explain why local rules matter.

ANSWER KEY

Who Decides What?

HIGH SCHOOL · OKH.C.5.5.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline what voters do in each of the four processes, and circle the decision their action affects. Use your marks to compare the powers voters have in each process. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	A candidate wins a direct primary. What has that candidate won, and what decision must voters still make?	**The candidate has won a party's nomination. Voters still choose who wins the office in the general election.**
2	Why is the public-meeting proposal an example of an initiative petition rather than a referendum?	**Residents are proposing a new state law for voters to adopt, not asking voters to review a law already passed by the legislature.**
3	A law has already passed the Oklahoma legislature. Name the process that could let voters approve or reject it, and give one way it could reach voters.	**A referendum could let voters approve or reject it. It could reach voters through a petition to refer the law or a legislative referral.**
4	Why should residents check local rules before trying to recall an elected official?	**Recall is available in some Oklahoma local governments, not as a general statewide power, and local rules govern its petitions and elections.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In a direct primary for governor, voters choose which candidate will represent a party in the general election. Through an initiative petition proposing a new state holiday, residents seek enough valid signatures to let voters decide whether to adopt it. If the legislature passes a vehicle inspection law that is referred to voters, a referendum lets them approve or reject that law. In a town whose rules allow recall, voters could decide whether to remove an elected council member before the term ends, but residents must first follow that town's rules.

Accept other accurate examples that distinguish nomination, a proposed measure, review of a law already passed, and removal from office. Recall examples must acknowledge that availability and procedures depend on local rules.