Who Decides?

State power, citizen action, and Tribal sovereignty

OKH.C.5 "Evaluate the constitutional powers exercised by the state government and the role of the Oklahoma citizen. Describe the purpose of the Oklahoma Constitution, its key principles..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the constitutional goals and powers in the passage, circle ways citizens can act, and number the steps a bill takes toward becoming law. Use your marks to explain who can act and what limits their power.

Making a Crossing Safer

1. After several crashes at an Oklahoma highway crossing, residents ask who can make it safer. Oklahoma's Constitution begins by calling for just government and the people's mutual welfare and happiness. It gives the state authority to address public needs, while the U.S. Constitution remains the supreme law. Like the national government, Oklahoma divides power among a legislature that makes laws, a governor who carries them out, and courts that interpret them. Legislators could propose a road safety measure, but neither the governor nor a judge can simply vote as a legislator on a bill.

2. A state senator introduces a bill to require new warning signs at dangerous state highway crossings. A committee studies it, and both the Senate and House must pass the same text. The governor may sign it or veto it; lawmakers can override a veto with sufficient votes. Residents can testify at a committee hearing, contact their legislators, and urge the governor to sign or veto. Oklahoma's Article II protects freedom of speech and the right to petition government, as the U.S. Bill of Rights does. Those rights protect public debate, not a guaranteed victory for either side.

3. Citizens also have routes beyond contacting lawmakers. Oklahoma's Constitution permits an initiative petition to put a proposed law before voters after required signatures and other rules are met; a referendum can send a legislative act to voters. These tools give citizens a direct role, but they do not erase constitutional limits. The state may manage its highways, while the federal government has powers of its own. Tribal nations are sovereign governments, not state agencies. If a crossing affects a Tribal community, state officials should work with that nation rather than assume state law controls every issue on Tribal land.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does a road safety bill serve a goal in Oklahoma's Constitution, and which branch makes the law?

2. How could residents influence the crossing bill before it becomes law, and what could lawmakers do if the governor vetoes it?

3. Residents want voters to consider their own proposed crossing law. Which route could they use, and how do both constitutions protect their public campaign?

4. Why should state officials work with a Tribal nation affected by the crossing instead of treating it as a state agency?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write four or five sentences proposing a state flood-warning law that could help communities near Tribal land. Explain how it serves a goal in Oklahoma's preamble, name two steps toward enactment, describe one way citizens could participate, and explain how state officials should treat Tribal governments.

Who Decides?

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the constitutional goals and powers in the passage, circle ways citizens can act, and number the steps a bill takes toward becoming law. Use your marks to explain who can act and what limits their power. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does a road safety bill serve a goal in Oklahoma's Constitution, and which branch makes the law?	**A safer crossing could promote mutual welfare. The legislative branch makes laws.**
2	How could residents influence the crossing bill before it becomes law, and what could lawmakers do if the governor vetoes it?	**Residents could testify at a committee hearing, contact legislators, or urge the governor to sign or veto. Lawmakers could override a veto with sufficient votes.**
3	Residents want voters to consider their own proposed crossing law. Which route could they use, and how do both constitutions protect their public campaign?	**They could use an initiative petition if they meet its requirements. Oklahoma's Article II and the U.S. Bill of Rights protect their speech and their right to petition government.**
4	Why should state officials work with a Tribal nation affected by the crossing instead of treating it as a state agency?	**A Tribal nation is a sovereign government, not a state agency. State officials should not assume state law controls every issue on Tribal land.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A statewide flood-warning bill would promote mutual welfare by helping residents prepare for dangerous storms. A legislator could introduce it, and both chambers would have to pass the same text. Residents could testify at a committee hearing and ask the governor to sign the bill. Because Tribal nations are sovereign governments, state officials should consult them about warnings affecting their communities. That cooperation would respect their authority rather than treating them as state agencies.

Accept other accurate citizen actions and bill steps stated in the passage. For the open task, look for a connection to just government or mutual welfare and a clear distinction between Tribal governments and state agencies.