Who Gets a Vote?

Compare how constitutions limit government power over elections.

OKH.P.2.1 "Demonstrate an understanding of the principles of government, the benefits of democratic systems, and their responsibilities as citizens..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each rule that limits government power, circle a change in who could vote, and number two actions citizens can take to protect voting rights.

Rules for the Ballot

1. In 1919, a newspaper might have reported a debate over who could cast a ballot. The U.S. Constitution originally left voter qualifications mainly to states, and many states barred women from voting. Ratified in 1920, the Nineteenth Amendment prohibited federal and state governments from denying a citizen the vote because of sex. This limited government power, but it did not remove every voting barrier. Citizens still had to organize, vote, and challenge unfair rules.

2. In South Africa, apartheid laws had denied the Black majority national voting rights. In 1994, the country's first national elections with voters of all races ended that exclusion. The 1996 Constitution then guaranteed every adult citizen the right to vote and required regular elections, a common voters' roll, and a multiparty system. Those rules restrict officials' power to exclude voters or cancel elections. They also give citizens a way to replace leaders whose policies they oppose.

3. Both documents make elections a source of government authority, but they do different work. The Nineteenth Amendment forbids one reason for excluding voters; South Africa's Constitution also sets rules for how national elections must operate. For example, if officials proposed canceling an election, South Africans could point to the constitutional requirement for regular elections. In either country, legal protections matter when citizens use them by voting, monitoring officials, and asking courts to enforce voting rights.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does each document limit government power over voting? Name one difference between them.

2. How did voting participation change over time in each country?

3. Suppose South African officials propose separate voters' rolls for different racial groups. Which constitutional rule could citizens use to oppose the plan, and why?

4. Why might a voting right written into law still require action from citizens?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence advisory note to a new democracy drafting an election constitution. Recommend two rules inspired by the passage, explain how each limits government power, and name one citizen action that would help make the rules effective.

Who Gets a Vote?

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each rule that limits government power, circle a change in who could vote, and number two actions citizens can take to protect voting rights. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does each document limit government power over voting? Name one difference between them.	**The Nineteenth Amendment bars denial of the vote because of sex. South Africa's Constitution guarantees adult citizens the vote and sets election rules, including regular elections.**
2	How did voting participation change over time in each country?	**The Nineteenth Amendment barred states from excluding voters because of sex. South Africa's 1994 election included voters of all races after apartheid had denied the Black majority national voting rights.**
3	Suppose South African officials propose separate voters' rolls for different racial groups. Which constitutional rule could citizens use to oppose the plan, and why?	**Citizens could cite the requirement for a common voters' roll because separate rolls would not be common.**
4	Why might a voting right written into law still require action from citizens?	**A legal protection may not remove every barrier. Citizens can monitor officials and challenge unfair rules, including by asking courts to enforce voting rights.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Require elections at fixed intervals so leaders cannot stay in office by refusing to schedule a vote. Put all adult citizens on one shared voters' roll so officials cannot separate groups into different rolls. Together, these rules would help voters replace leaders whose policies they oppose. Citizens should monitor election plans and challenge unfair rules in court.

Accept accurate paraphrases of the documents' limits on government power. For the advisory note, look for two distinct rules, an explanation of each rule's effect, and a specific citizen action.