Who Holds Power?

Trace public influence and constitutional limits in a federal decision.

USG.C.1.3.B "Analyze how the United States of America's government reflects both a democracy and a republic."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two ways people influence the water-testing proposal, circle two decisions made by elected officials, and number one constitutional limit. Use your marks to trace how the same process reflects both democracy and a republic.

A Water-Testing Law

1. After a storm contaminates wells in several states, residents ask Congress to help communities test drinking water. They call representatives, sign petitions, and compare candidates' plans before the next election. These actions reflect democracy: political power rests with the people, who can influence public decisions. In the United States, voters do not usually write federal laws themselves. Instead, they elect members of Congress to debate and vote on proposed laws. That arrangement reflects a republic, a system in which elected representatives govern on the people's behalf under a constitution.

2. Suppose a member of the House introduces a bill to fund water testing. Voters may tell that member what they want and later decide whether to reelect them. The member still must weigh evidence, debate the proposal, and cast a vote. If both houses of Congress approve the same bill, it goes to the president, who can sign it or veto it. Citizens can also contact senators and the president during this process. Public input does not replace representatives' votes, but elections give the public a way to hold those officials accountable.

3. Imagine the law also lets officials search any home for water samples without a warrant or consent. Even if many voters support the law, public support alone cannot erase constitutional protections against unreasonable searches. A court could review a challenge and rule that the search provision violates the Fourth Amendment. This limit is part of the constitutional republic: officials must follow higher law, not just popular demands. At the same time, voters can organize, argue about the policy, and choose lawmakers who promise a lawful alternative. The two features work together rather than cancel each other out.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How do the residents' actions in the first paragraph show democracy while Congress's role shows a republic?

2. Why can voters hold the House member accountable even though they do not cast the member's vote on the bill?

3. How can citizens influence the bill after its introduction without replacing the decisions of Congress and the president?

4. If many voters support the search provision, why might a court still reject it? What does that reveal about the republic?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine Congress proposes a national emergency alert law that also bans people from publicly criticizing the alerts. In four sentences, explain how people could influence the proposal, what elected officials would do, and how a constitutional limit could shape the law; identify which actions show democracy and which show a republic.

ANSWER KEY

Who Holds Power?

HIGH SCHOOL · USG.C.1.3.B

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two ways people influence the water-testing proposal, circle two decisions made by elected officials, and number one constitutional limit. Use your marks to trace how the same process reflects both democracy and a republic. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How do the residents' actions in the first paragraph show democracy while Congress's role shows a republic?	**Residents influence the proposal by contacting representatives, petitioning, and considering candidates. Elected members of Congress debate and vote on laws on the people's behalf.**
2	Why can voters hold the House member accountable even though they do not cast the member's vote on the bill?	**Voters can tell the member what they want and later decide whether to reelect that member.**
3	How can citizens influence the bill after its introduction without replacing the decisions of Congress and the president?	**Citizens can contact senators and the president, but Congress must vote on the bill and the president can sign or veto it.**
4	If many voters support the search provision, why might a court still reject it? What does that reveal about the republic?	**A court could find that the provision violates the Fourth Amendment's protection against unreasonable searches. Officials must follow the Constitution even when a policy is popular.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

People could petition Congress to improve the alerts and oppose the speech ban, showing democracy through public participation. Elected members of Congress could debate and vote on the proposal, showing the republic at work. If the ban became law, a court could rule that it violates the First Amendment's protection of speech. Officials would then need a lawful way to provide alerts without banning criticism.

Accept other accurate forms of public influence and descriptions of elected officials' decisions. Responses should distinguish public participation from representative lawmaking and recognize that constitutional protections limit what a law may do.