Who Fixes What?

Local responsibilities and state authority in Oklahoma

USG.C.3.5.C "Explain the differences among the types of local governments in Oklahoma (e.g., county, city) as well as their operational relationship with the state government."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one county responsibility and one city responsibility in the passage. Circle two phrases that show how state authority shapes their work.

After the Rain in Willow Bend

1 After a hard rain near the fictional Oklahoma town of Willow Bend, water clogs a culvert beneath a county road outside town. Drivers cannot reach a nearby farm. The county government, led by its elected board of county commissioners, arranges repairs to that county road and its culvert. County government serves the whole county, including places outside city limits. Inside Willow Bend, a blocked storm drain floods a city street. The city government, led by its council, handles that drain and street. Both governments solve local problems, but their responsibilities follow different boundaries and assignments.

2 Now suppose water also covers a state highway that crosses Willow Bend. The Oklahoma Department of Transportation, not the county road crew or city street crew, is responsible for maintaining that highway. The three governments may share warnings about unsafe routes, even though each maintains different roads. County officials can tell the city about a detour; city officials can tell the state where highway traffic is backing up. Cooperation does not erase their separate duties. A city street does not become a state highway simply because drivers use it to reach one.

3 Oklahoma's state constitution and laws set the basic powers and duties of counties and cities. Counties carry out responsibilities assigned by state law, such as maintaining county roads. Cities are incorporated municipalities that can make local decisions, including how to manage city streets, within authority granted by the state constitution and state law. State rules still apply: a city cannot simply ignore statewide traffic requirements when closing a street. Likewise, county commissioners cannot claim responsibility for a state highway because it runs through their county. In the flood, local officials decide how to perform their own jobs while operating within state rules.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Which local government handles the clogged culvert, and which handles the blocked storm drain? Explain why their jobs differ.

2. Why does the state, rather than Willow Bend, maintain the highway that crosses town?

3. How does state authority shape both county work and city decisions? Give one difference between their roles.

4. County and city officials share detour information after the flood. Why does that cooperation not give the city control of county road repairs?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Willow Bend wants to change a speed limit on a city street, while county commissioners want to repair a county road outside town. In four sentences, explain who handles each decision, how the decisions differ, and how state authority applies to both.

ANSWER KEY

Who Fixes What?

HIGH SCHOOL · USG.C.3.5.C

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one county responsibility and one city responsibility in the passage. Circle two phrases that show how state authority shapes their work. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Which local government handles the clogged culvert, and which handles the blocked storm drain? Explain why their jobs differ.	**The county handles the culvert beneath the county road. Willow Bend handles the drain on its city street. Each maintains facilities assigned to its government.**
2	Why does the state, rather than Willow Bend, maintain the highway that crosses town?	**It is a state highway, which the Oklahoma Department of Transportation maintains. Passing through town does not make it a city street.**
3	How does state authority shape both county work and city decisions? Give one difference between their roles.	**The state constitution and laws set their powers and duties. Counties carry out assigned duties such as maintaining county roads, while cities make local decisions about city streets within state authority.**
4	County and city officials share detour information after the flood. Why does that cooperation not give the city control of county road repairs?	**Sharing warnings helps the governments respond, but it does not change their duties. The county remains responsible for repairs to the county road.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Willow Bend's city government would consider the speed limit change on its city street. The county commissioners would arrange repairs to the county road outside town. The city is considering a traffic rule within its limits, while the county is maintaining a road assigned to it. Both must act within Oklahoma's constitution and laws, so neither can ignore applicable state rules.

Accept answers that distinguish a city's responsibility for its streets from a county's responsibility for county roads, even when officials cooperate. Students should identify the state as the source of legal authority for both local governments and as responsible for maintaining state highways.