Who Makes the Law?

Trace two ways Oklahoma voters can shape state law.

USG.C.3.5.D "Describe how some state constitutions, such as Oklahoma's, provide for more direct public involvement in the legislative process through such provisions as the initiative and referendum."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline who starts each process, circle the petition and voting steps, and label the initiative path I and the referendum path R to show how the two paths differ.

Two Paths to a Public Vote

1. In Oklahoma, state lawmakers usually write and vote on bills. The state constitution also reserves lawmaking powers for the people through the initiative and referendum. These tools let eligible voters participate directly, rather than only asking elected officials to act. An initiative starts with a proposed state law or constitutional amendment from the public. Supporters must gather enough valid petition signatures to place the proposal before voters. If it qualifies, voters choose whether to adopt it on a statewide ballot. The constitution sets different signature requirements for proposed laws and constitutional amendments.

2. Imagine residents want Oklahoma to require bottle-refill stations at new state park buildings. They could draft a proposed state law and use the initiative process to seek signatures. If they meet the constitutional and legal requirements, the proposal can go to voters even if legislators have not passed it. Voters who support the idea could vote yes, while voters who oppose it could vote no. This route does not mean a small group can make a law alone. The petition opens a path to a public decision, and the statewide vote determines the result.

3. A referendum works from a different starting point: an act the legislature has already passed. Imagine lawmakers approve a new weekend parking fee at state parks. Opponents could seek a referendum by collecting enough valid petition signatures under state rules. If the measure qualifies for a statewide vote, voters can approve or reject the legislative act. Oklahoma's constitution limits when referendum petitions can be used, including rules for emergency measures. Unlike an initiative, a referendum does not begin with a new proposal written by petitioners. Together, these powers give the public ways to shape state laws before or after legislative action.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How could residents seek a vote on bottle-refill stations without waiting for legislators to pass a bill?

2. How could voters respond if lawmakers passed the weekend parking fee?

3. How do the starting points of an initiative and a referendum differ?

4. How could an initiative change Oklahoma's constitution in a way the referendum described here could not?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose a statewide policy issue not mentioned in the passage. In four or five sentences, describe how Oklahoma residents could use an initiative to propose a rule about it and how they could use a referendum if legislators instead passed a rule about the same issue; explain what voters would decide in each case.

ANSWER KEY

Who Makes the Law?

HIGH SCHOOL · USG.C.3.5.D

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline who starts each process, circle the petition and voting steps, and label the initiative path I and the referendum path R to show how the two paths differ. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How could residents seek a vote on bottle-refill stations without waiting for legislators to pass a bill?	**They could draft a proposed state law and gather enough valid signatures to qualify an initiative for a statewide vote.**
2	How could voters respond if lawmakers passed the weekend parking fee?	**Opponents could seek a referendum through a qualifying petition, giving voters a chance to approve or reject the legislative act.**
3	How do the starting points of an initiative and a referendum differ?	**An initiative starts with a proposal from the public. A referendum starts with an act the legislature has already passed.**
4	How could an initiative change Oklahoma's constitution in a way the referendum described here could not?	**The public can use an initiative to propose a constitutional amendment for a statewide vote. The referendum described here lets voters approve or reject a legislative act.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Suppose Oklahoma residents want public schools to offer a daily vegetarian lunch option. They could draft a proposed state law and collect enough valid signatures to seek an initiative vote. If it qualifies, voters would decide whether to adopt that proposal. If lawmakers instead passed a law banning vegetarian lunch options, residents could seek a referendum by gathering enough valid signatures under state rules. If it qualifies, voters would decide whether to approve or reject the lawmakers' ban.

Accept any plausible statewide issue outside the passage. The response should distinguish a public proposal from an already passed legislative act and identify what voters decide in each process.