Who Shows Up?

Voting, candidacy, and turnout in a local election

USG.C.5.1 "Analyze how citizens participate in our constitutional republic by voting in public elections and running for public office; describe factors that affect voter turnout, trends in voter turnout, and attempts to increase voter participation."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two ways residents can shape public decisions, circle factors that may affect turnout, and number the steps Brookfield proposes to increase participation.

The Brookfield Ballot

1. Imagine Brookfield, a fictional town debating whether to repair its aging water pipes or build a new sports field. Residents who can vote may choose a mayor and council members whose budget decisions affect both proposals. Voting does not decide every detail, but it helps select the people who will. An eligible resident might instead run for council, file the required paperwork under local election rules, and campaign on a plan to fix the pipes. If elected, that person can propose budget priorities and negotiate with other council members. Candidates still need voters' support, so these forms of participation connect.

2. Suppose 68 percent of Brookfield's registered voters cast ballots in a presidential election, but 31 percent did so in its next council election. Council-election turnout was lower, even though council members make decisions close to home. Presidential races often attract more news coverage and campaign activity, which can help explain this common pattern. It does not mean every local election has low turnout. Work schedules, transportation, and uncertainty about where or how to vote may also keep some registered voters away. Because these percentages count registered voters, they do not show how many eligible residents never registered.

3. Brookfield volunteers propose a nonpartisan guide that explains what the council controls, where to find candidate statements, and how to check voting rules. Clear information could help residents who overlook a council race or feel unsure about the ballot. Where state law allows, early voting or voting by mail can give people more options when election day conflicts with work. These steps cannot guarantee higher turnout, and mail voting still requires voters to follow deadlines and eligibility rules. A broader candidate pool can also give voters more choices if residents learn how to qualify and decide to run.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How could voting for council members and running for council each affect Brookfield's budget decision?

2. Compare turnout in Brookfield's two elections. What factor in the passage could help explain the difference?

3. How could a work schedule affect someone's ability to vote, and which option in the passage might help?

4. How would Brookfield's voter guide and its proposed voting options address different reasons people might skip the council election?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

In another fictional town, school board turnout is lower than presidential turnout, and many residents work on election day. In five or six sentences, propose a plan that helps residents vote and encourages eligible residents to run for school board. Explain how your plan responds to the turnout gap and name one limit or safeguard.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · USG.C.5.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two ways residents can shape public decisions, circle factors that may affect turnout, and number the steps Brookfield proposes to increase participation. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How could voting for council members and running for council each affect Brookfield's budget decision?	**Voters select council members who make budget decisions. A resident who runs and wins can propose budget priorities and negotiate with other members.**
2	Compare turnout in Brookfield's two elections. What factor in the passage could help explain the difference?	**Brookfield's council-election turnout was lower than its presidential-election turnout, 31 percent versus 68 percent of registered voters. Presidential races often receive more news coverage and campaign activity.**
3	How could a work schedule affect someone's ability to vote, and which option in the passage might help?	**Work may conflict with voting on election day. Early voting or voting by mail, where allowed, could provide another option.**
4	How would Brookfield's voter guide and its proposed voting options address different reasons people might skip the council election?	**The guide addresses lack of information about the race or voting rules. Early or mail voting could help people whose schedules conflict with election day.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Because fewer residents vote in the school board election than in the presidential election, I would organize a nonpartisan candidate forum at the public library. To reach workers, I would share official information about early or mail voting options if local rules allow them. I would also host a session explaining how eligible residents can check the filing requirements for a school board seat. More candidates could offer voters a wider range of ideas about schools. These steps might increase participation, but I would verify election deadlines before sharing them and would not promise that turnout will rise.

Accept other passage-supported explanations for the turnout gap, including schedule and transportation barriers. For Part 3, look for a voting strategy, a candidacy strategy, a connection to lower school board turnout, and a realistic limit or safeguard.