Liberty in Action

How individual rights help people hold government accountable

USG.C.6.4.A "Explain how individual liberties are essential to the functioning of the United States of America constitutional republic society."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each liberty or legal safeguard named in the passage. Circle a nearby phrase that shows how it helps people hold officials accountable.

When the Water Runs Brown

1. Imagine a city where tap water sometimes runs brown. Residents collect photos and ask whether old pipes are to blame. The First Amendment protects their freedom to speak about the problem, even when their words criticize the mayor. A local newspaper can investigate records and publish what it finds because freedom of the press protects independent reporting. Neither liberty guarantees that every claim is true, but both make it harder for officials to hide mistakes. Voters can compare evidence and promises before choosing representatives, so these liberties help elections do more than simply count votes.

2. Some neighbors hold a peaceful gathering outside city hall. Freedom of assembly lets them join together, making a concern that one person might struggle to raise more visible. Others send a signed request asking the council to test the water. The right to petition gives people a way to press government for action, even if they did not vote for the officials in office. The council may reject a proposed repair, but it must still face public questions and possible election consequences. These liberties connect everyday people to decisions made in their name.

3. Suppose city officials fine a resident for criticizing the water plan without offering a chance to challenge the penalty. Due process, protected by the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments, requires fair legal procedures when government takes away life, liberty, or property. A person can challenge government action in court, where a judge can consider whether it follows the Constitution. Such safeguards matter even if most neighbors support the officials. In a constitutional republic, majority rule alone is not enough: limits on government power protect each person's ability to take part without fearing arbitrary punishment.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does residents' freedom to criticize the mayor help elections hold officials accountable?

2. Why does freedom of the press matter if the newspaper's reporting does not guarantee that every claim is true?

3. How do the gathering and the signed request give residents ways to influence decisions between elections?

4. How does due process help a resident take part in public debate without fearing arbitrary punishment?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A state proposes blocking residents from sending written requests to lawmakers about public transit. In four sentences, explain which liberty the rule threatens, how that liberty helps a constitutional republic function, and illustrate your explanation with an original transit problem.

ANSWER KEY

Liberty in Action

HIGH SCHOOL · USG.C.6.4.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each liberty or legal safeguard named in the passage. Circle a nearby phrase that shows how it helps people hold officials accountable. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does residents' freedom to criticize the mayor help elections hold officials accountable?	**Residents can raise concerns about the water, and voters can use that information to compare candidates' promises before choosing representatives.**
2	Why does freedom of the press matter if the newspaper's reporting does not guarantee that every claim is true?	**Independent reporting can uncover evidence and make it harder for officials to hide mistakes, giving voters information to evaluate.**
3	How do the gathering and the signed request give residents ways to influence decisions between elections?	**The gathering makes the concern more visible, while the request presses the council to act. Both bring public attention to decisions officials make.**
4	How does due process help a resident take part in public debate without fearing arbitrary punishment?	**Fair legal procedures give the resident a way to challenge a penalty rather than leaving punishment entirely to city officials.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The rule threatens the right to petition the government. Residents might write lawmakers because the only bus to a hospital stops running before evening shifts end. Their requests would tell elected officials about a problem they might otherwise miss. Protecting this liberty lets residents press for changes and judge lawmakers' responses at the next election.

Accept answers that connect a named liberty or safeguard to public participation, informed voting, or limits on government power. For Part 3, the transit problem must be the student's own example, not the passage's water problem.