Pipes and Priorities

Trace how a public need becomes a funded policy.

USG.C.7 "Analyze the processes and implementation of public policy in the United States of America. Explain how domestic policy is developed and implemented..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline actions by Congress or the president, circle actions by executive agencies or local officials, and number the choices that trade one public cost or need for another. Use your marks to trace how the pipe program is created, funded, and carried out.

Who Pays for Safer Water?

1. When a city detects lead in tap water from aging pipes, residents may ask Washington for help. Congress can use its constitutional powers to tax and spend to shape a national response. Lawmakers might pass a law offering grants for pipe replacement, while the president may sign or veto it. If it becomes law, Congress must still approve money through appropriations. The president directs executive agencies, such as the Environmental Protection Agency, to carry out the law. An agency can set grant rules within the law's limits; state and local officials then apply for funds and oversee construction.

2. The president proposes a federal budget, but Congress decides what to fund through spending bills. If Congress and the president do not enact funding on time, affected agencies may shut down, delaying some new grant work, though essential services continue. More pipe grants could mean less money for another need, higher taxes, or more borrowing. Borrowing adds to the national debt; growing interest costs can leave less room for future programs. Federal income taxes can support grants, while states may use sales taxes and cities may use property taxes for their shares. Each choice shifts costs among taxpayers and generations.

3. The pipe program also shows how policy choices affect the economy. During a recession, Congress and the president could increase grant spending to support construction jobs; this is fiscal policy, which uses taxes and government spending. Yet more spending may worsen deficits unless lawmakers raise taxes or cut elsewhere. Monetary policy works differently: the Federal Reserve, not the president, sets a target for short-term interest rates to influence borrowing and inflation. Higher rates may cool inflation, but they can also make loans for local pipe projects costlier. A city therefore weighs cleaner water against construction costs, tax burdens, and the timing of repairs.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Trace the steps from a proposed federal pipe-grant law to pipe work in a city. Include one action by Congress, the president, an agency, and local officials.

2. How could a stalled federal spending bill affect new pipe grants? Name one tax that could support federal grants and one that could help a city pay its share.

3. If Congress increases pipe grants, explain two possible budget trade-offs and one future risk of borrowing.

4. How might higher interest rates change a city's pipe project? Why is changing interest rates monetary policy rather than fiscal policy?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Your city proposes cooling centers during extreme heat. Write 5 to 6 sentences explaining how a federal grant could be created and carried out, one tax that could help pay for it, one budget trade-off, and how higher interest rates might affect a city loan for the centers.

Pipes and Priorities

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline actions by Congress or the president, circle actions by executive agencies or local officials, and number the choices that trade one public cost or need for another. Use your marks to trace how the pipe program is created, funded, and carried out. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Trace the steps from a proposed federal pipe-grant law to pipe work in a city. Include one action by Congress, the president, an agency, and local officials.	**Congress passes a grant law and approves funding. The president signs the law and directs an agency to carry it out. The agency sets grant rules, and local officials apply for funds and oversee construction.**
2	How could a stalled federal spending bill affect new pipe grants? Name one tax that could support federal grants and one that could help a city pay its share.	**Affected agencies may shut down and delay some new grant work. Federal income taxes could support the grants, and city property taxes could help pay the city's share.**
3	If Congress increases pipe grants, explain two possible budget trade-offs and one future risk of borrowing.	**Congress could spend less on another need or raise taxes. If it borrows instead, growing interest costs could leave less money for future programs.**
4	How might higher interest rates change a city's pipe project? Why is changing interest rates monetary policy rather than fiscal policy?	**Higher rates could make a city loan costlier and lead the city to delay repairs. Interest-rate decisions are monetary policy because the Federal Reserve uses them to influence borrowing and inflation, rather than changing taxes or government spending.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Congress could pass a law authorizing grants for cooling centers and approve money for them. The president could sign the law and direct an agency to put the program into practice. The agency could set application rules, and cities could choose sites and staff the centers. Federal income taxes could help pay for the grants. Funding cooling centers might leave less money for home weatherization, another way to protect people during heat waves. If the Federal Reserve raised interest rates, a city might delay borrowing to renovate a building because its loan would cost more.

Accept other plausible funding trade-offs and taxes if the student identifies the correct level of government. Responses should distinguish Federal Reserve interest-rate decisions from congressional and presidential tax and spending decisions.