Who Sets the Limits?

Civil society and government power in a representative republic

USG.C.8.2.B "Examine how components of civil society (e.g., active communities, individual self-reliance, ethics, religion) contribute to the maintenance of limited government in a representative and democratic republic."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline an action by each of four parts of civil society: organized residents, self-reliance, honesty, and a religious community. Number each action and the words that show how it helps limit government power with the same number.

A Park for Everyone

(1) In the fictional town of Cedar Glen, the council proposes a permit for every gathering in a public park, even a small book club. The mayor says the rule would help prevent damage to park grounds. Residents want safe parks, but they worry that officials could use permits to block unpopular meetings. A neighborhood association invites people with different views to a public forum and sends the council a petition asking for permits only for large events. In a representative republic, elected officials make decisions, while organized residents can question those decisions before government power expands.

(2) The association does more than protest. Members volunteer to pick up litter after gatherings and share simple cleanup plans with park visitors. Their self-reliance makes it harder to argue that officials must supervise every small meeting to keep the park usable. Still, volunteers cannot replace the city's duty to maintain public land or enforce fair safety rules. At the forum, members practice an ethic of honesty: they correct a rumor that the mayor plans to ban all park meetings. Accurate information lets voters judge the actual proposal and hold council members accountable for their votes.

(3) A church offers its meeting room for people to prepare comments, and a nonreligious service club helps translate the petition. Both groups invite neighbors who disagree with them. Religious communities can contribute places to gather and habits of service, but no one must join a religious group to speak at the forum. At the next council meeting, residents ask members to publish clear permit standards and a way to appeal denials. The council approves a rule for large events only, with written reasons for any denial. Civic action has not erased government; it has helped keep its authority defined and open to challenge.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the neighborhood association try to limit the council's power without taking over the council's job?

2. How did volunteers' self-reliance weaken the case for permits at every gathering, and what city duty remained?

3. Why did correcting the rumor help residents hold council members accountable?

4. How could the church help residents challenge the proposal without making religious membership a condition for taking part?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine your town council plans to stop posting monthly spending reports. In four or five sentences, propose two different civil society actions, explain how each would help residents hold officials accountable, and name one government duty civic groups cannot take over.

ANSWER KEY

Who Sets the Limits?

HIGH SCHOOL · USG.C.8.2.B

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline an action by each of four parts of civil society: organized residents, self-reliance, honesty, and a religious community. Number each action and the words that show how it helps limit government power with the same number. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the neighborhood association try to limit the council's power without taking over the council's job?	**It held a public forum and petitioned for permits only for large events, while leaving the decision to elected council members.**
2	How did volunteers' self-reliance weaken the case for permits at every gathering, and what city duty remained?	**Their cleanup work showed that small gatherings did not need constant official supervision. The city still had to maintain the park and enforce fair safety rules.**
3	Why did correcting the rumor help residents hold council members accountable?	**It let voters judge the actual permit proposal and the council members' votes instead of reacting to a false claim.**
4	How could the church help residents challenge the proposal without making religious membership a condition for taking part?	**It offered a room for preparing comments, while people could speak at the forum whether or not they belonged to a religious group.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A neighborhood group could ask the council to keep posting monthly spending reports and invite residents to discuss them at an open meeting. Volunteers could check spending records obtained through a public records request before sharing claims about the budget. The first action would give residents a chance to question officials, while the second would help them use accurate evidence. The council would still be responsible for managing public funds lawfully.

Accept other passage-supported explanations of how civic action checks officials without replacing them. For Your Turn, look for two distinct actions, a clear accountability link for each, and a government duty that remains with officials.