Who Gets a Say?

Voting, representation, and constitutional limits

USG.C.8.2.D "Describe the right to vote as a cornerstone of a constitutional republic and the most direct way for citizens to participate in government."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one sentence in each paragraph that shows how voting gives citizens a say in who governs, and circle one sentence that shows a limit on what a vote can do.

A Choice on the Ballot

1. In a constitutional republic, government officials must follow a constitution, and citizens elect people to make many public decisions. A vote is a citizen's direct choice about who will hold an elected office. That choice links the people governed to the people who govern. A constitution also places limits on officials, even when those officials win an election. Voting does not let a majority erase constitutional rights. Instead, elections give citizens a way to choose leaders within a system of rules. Without a meaningful vote, officials could claim to represent the public without having to earn its consent.

2. Imagine a city where late buses stop running before many workers finish their shifts. The city council helps decide how to spend money on bus service. One candidate for council supports later routes; another wants to keep current hours and use available funds elsewhere. Eligible citizens can cast ballots for the candidate they prefer. Their votes help determine who will sit on the council and debate the budget. A ballot does not directly write the bus schedule or guarantee that a campaign promise becomes law. It does give voters a direct say in choosing a person who will make those decisions.

3. Citizens can also speak at council meetings, contact officials, and organize with neighbors. Those actions can influence decisions, but they do not themselves select the council member. Voting is the most direct way for citizens to take part in choosing their representatives. Regular elections also make elected officials answerable to voters: citizens can keep them in office or choose someone else. Not everyone agrees about the best bus plan, and some voters may lose a particular election. Still, each eligible voter has a chance to help decide who holds power, rather than leaving that choice only to current officials.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How do voting and constitutional limits work together in the republic described in the passage?

2. In the bus example, what can voters choose directly, and what can their ballots not decide directly?

3. Why is voting a more direct way to choose representatives than speaking at a council meeting?

4. How do regular elections let citizens hold elected officials accountable, even if some voters lose an election?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Invent a local issue other than bus service and describe two candidates' different approaches to it. In four or five sentences, explain how voting in their election lets citizens choose a representative, and why the election does not automatically settle the issue.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · USG.C.8.2.D

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one sentence in each paragraph that shows how voting gives citizens a say in who governs, and circle one sentence that shows a limit on what a vote can do. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How do voting and constitutional limits work together in the republic described in the passage?	**Citizens vote to choose officials, but those officials must follow the constitution and cannot erase constitutional rights just because they won.**
2	In the bus example, what can voters choose directly, and what can their ballots not decide directly?	**Voters can choose who serves on the council. Their ballots do not directly set the bus schedule or guarantee that a candidate's plan becomes law.**
3	Why is voting a more direct way to choose representatives than speaking at a council meeting?	**Speaking at a meeting may influence officials, but casting a ballot helps determine who holds the elected office.**
4	How do regular elections let citizens hold elected officials accountable, even if some voters lose an election?	**At later elections, voters can keep officials in office or choose someone else.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A town is deciding whether to add weekend hours at its library. One council candidate favors funding longer hours, while another prefers putting the money into park repairs. Eligible citizens vote for the candidate they want on the council, giving them a direct say in who represents them. The winner must still work with other council members on a budget, so the election does not automatically change the library's hours.

Accept other accurate explanations of how ballots choose officials while constitutional rules limit their power. For Part 3, accept any plausible local issue with two distinct candidate approaches and a clear distinction between electing a representative and deciding a policy.