Citizenship and Sovereignty

What changed in 1924, and what did not

USH.C.4.1.H "Assess the effects of the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924 on the status of Tribal citizens with regards to dual citizenship, the divided Tribal reaction regarding sovereignty concerns, and efforts by some states to deny voting rights."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline how the act affected dual citizenship, circle two contrasting reactions to the law, and number the two state voting barriers 1 and 2.

A New Citizenship, Uneven Rights

1 In 1924, Congress passed the Indian Citizenship Act, declaring that Native people born in the United States who were not already citizens were U.S. citizens. Many Native people had gained citizenship earlier through treaties or other laws, so the act did not create citizenship for everyone at once. It also said that citizenship would not impair a person's right to Tribal or other property. A Tribal citizen could therefore be a citizen of both a Tribal nation and the United States. Yet U.S. citizenship did not replace a Tribal government's authority or settle every dispute about federal power.

2 The law met more than one response. Some Native people welcomed federal citizenship as another way to claim political rights while keeping ties to their Tribal nations. Others objected because Congress had acted without asking their nations for consent. The Onondaga Nation, for example, protested the law as an attempt to impose citizenship, not as a gift it had requested. For these critics, the question was not just whether a person could hold two citizenships. It was whether the federal government could make decisions about a sovereign nation's people and weaken its treaty relationship through a law passed without that nation's agreement.

3 Federal citizenship did not guarantee an easy path to the ballot. States controlled many voting rules and used them to block some Native citizens. In New Mexico, officials relied on a state constitutional ban on voting by "Indians not taxed." In Arizona, officials treated Native people living on reservations as under guardianship, a status the state used to deny voting. Courts struck down these exclusions in both states in 1948, but other barriers, including discriminatory registration practices, persisted. The act changed national citizenship status; it did not, by itself, force states to honor Native citizens' voting rights.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the act change citizenship for Native people who were not already U.S. citizens without ending their Tribal citizenship?

2. Why might someone have welcomed the act while the Onondaga Nation protested it?

3. Compare the reasons officials in New Mexico and Arizona used to deny some Native citizens the vote.

4. What do the 1948 court decisions show about what the 1924 act did and did not accomplish?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four- or five-sentence statement to a 1924 newspaper editor from the perspective of a Tribal citizen who welcomes U.S. citizenship but worries about Tribal sovereignty. Explain dual citizenship, the concern about consent, and how a state voting rule could limit the law's effect.

ANSWER KEY

Citizenship and Sovereignty

HIGH SCHOOL · USH.C.4.1.H

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline how the act affected dual citizenship, circle two contrasting reactions to the law, and number the two state voting barriers 1 and 2. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the act change citizenship for Native people who were not already U.S. citizens without ending their Tribal citizenship?	**It made them U.S. citizens while they could remain citizens of their Tribal nations. U.S. citizenship did not replace Tribal government authority.**
2	Why might someone have welcomed the act while the Onondaga Nation protested it?	**Someone might welcome a new way to claim political rights. The Onondaga Nation objected to Congress imposing citizenship without its consent, raising concerns about sovereignty.**
3	Compare the reasons officials in New Mexico and Arizona used to deny some Native citizens the vote.	**New Mexico officials invoked a ban on voting by "Indians not taxed." Arizona officials treated Native people on reservations as under guardianship.**
4	What do the 1948 court decisions show about what the 1924 act did and did not accomplish?	**The act granted U.S. citizenship, but it did not by itself stop states from denying some Native citizens the vote. Courts struck down the two state exclusions in 1948.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I am a citizen of my Tribal nation, and this new law also calls me a citizen of the United States. I welcome the chance to claim the political rights that should come with U.S. citizenship. But Congress made this decision without asking my nation, and I worry that officials will treat our sovereignty and treaties as less important. New Mexico's rule against voting by "Indians not taxed" shows that a federal citizenship law alone may not let our people cast ballots.

Accept other historically grounded statements that distinguish U.S. citizenship from Tribal citizenship and explain both a sovereignty concern and a state voting barrier. Responses should not claim that the act ended Tribal sovereignty or immediately secured voting access in every state.