Name: _____ Date: _____

Town Rule, State Law or National Law?

Circle group

A person lives under several layers of law at once. A rule about where you may park comes from your town. A rule about how old you must be to drive comes from your state. A rule about sending mail comes from the nation. The United States is built this way on purpose. Power is shared between the national government and the state governments. This is called federalism. States also give some powers to cities, towns, and counties.

Local governments make ordinances. An ordinance is a rule for one community. Leash rules for dogs, the hours a park is open, and the places where fireworks are allowed are common examples. State legislatures pass laws for the whole state. These cover things like licenses and rules for public schools. Congress passes federal laws about matters for the whole country. These include coining money, running the postal service, and national defense.

What happens when two layers disagree? A town rule cannot contradict the law of its state. A state law cannot contradict the Constitution or a valid federal law. The Constitution says that it, with the federal laws made under it, is the supreme law of the land. A court can decide that a lower rule must give way.

Knowing which layer makes a rule tells you where to take your ideas. If you want a crosswalk at your school, the town council is probably the place. If you want to change the age for a driver's license, look to the state legislature. Good citizens learn who is in charge of each decision, so the right people can hear them.

Questions

1. What is federalism?

_____

_____

2. What is an ordinance?

_____

_____

3. Which level of government passes laws about the postal service?

_____

_____

4. What does the Constitution say about itself?

_____

_____

5. Why is the town council the right place to ask for a school crosswalk?

_____

_____

6. What happens if a town rule contradicts the law of its state?

_____

_____

Words to know

federalism: a system that divides power between a nation and its states
ordinance: a rule made by a town or city
legislatures: the groups that make the laws for states
contradict: to say or do the opposite of something
supreme: highest, with more power than anything else

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Town Rule, State Law or National Law?

Triangle group

A single person lives under several layers of law at the same time. A rule about where you may park comes from your town, a rule about how old you must be to drive comes from your state, and a rule about sending mail comes from the nation. The United States is built this way on purpose. Power is divided between the national government and the state governments, a system called federalism, and states in turn give some powers to cities, towns, and counties.

Local governments make ordinances, which are rules for one community. Leash rules for dogs, the hours a park stays open, and the places where fireworks are allowed are common examples. State legislatures pass laws that apply across the entire state, such as requirements for licenses and rules for public schools. Congress passes federal laws about matters that concern the whole country, including coining money, running the postal service, and national defense.

What happens when two layers disagree? A town rule cannot contradict the law of its state, and a state law cannot contradict the Constitution or a valid federal law. The Constitution says that it, along with federal laws made under it, is the supreme law of the land. A court can decide that a lower rule must give way.

Knowing which layer makes a rule tells you where to take your ideas. If you want a crosswalk at your school, the town council is probably the place. If you want to change the age for a driver's license, you would look to the state legislature. Good citizens learn who is responsible for which decision, so they can be heard by the right people.

Questions

1. What is federalism?

_____

_____

2. What is an ordinance?

_____

_____

3. Which level of government passes laws about the postal service?

_____

_____

4. What does the Constitution say about itself?

_____

_____

5. Why is the town council the right place to ask for a school crosswalk?

_____

_____

6. What happens if a town rule contradicts the law of its state?

_____

_____

Words to know

federalism: a system that divides power between a nation and its states
ordinance: a rule made by a town or city
legislatures: the groups that make the laws for states
contradict: to say or do the opposite of something
supreme: highest, with more power than anything else

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Town Rule, State Law or National Law?

Square group

A single individual lives under several overlapping layers of law at the same time. A rule about where you may park originates with your town, a rule about the age at which you may drive originates with your state, and a rule about sending mail originates with the nation. The United States is constructed in this manner deliberately. Authority is divided between the national government and the state governments, an arrangement known as federalism, and states in turn delegate certain powers to cities, towns, and counties.

Local governments create ordinances, which are rules that apply to a single community. Leash requirements for dogs, the hours during which a park remains open, and the locations where fireworks are permitted are familiar examples. State legislatures enact laws that apply throughout the entire state, such as requirements for licenses and standards for public schools. Congress passes federal laws on matters that concern the whole country, including the coining of money, the operation of the postal service, and national defense.

What happens when two layers of law disagree? A town rule may not contradict the law of its state, and a state law may not contradict the Constitution or a valid federal law. The Constitution declares that it, together with the federal laws made under it, is the supreme law of the land. A court can rule that a lower rule must give way.

Understanding which layer is responsible for a rule tells you where to bring your ideas. If you want a crosswalk installed at your school, the town council is probably the right audience. If you want to change the age for a driver's license, you would turn to the state legislature. Thoughtful citizens learn who is responsible for which decision, so that their voices reach the right people.

Questions

1. What is federalism?

_____

_____

2. What is an ordinance?

_____

_____

3. Which level of government enacts laws on the operation of the postal service?

_____

_____

4. What does the Constitution declare about itself?

_____

_____

5. Why is the town council the right audience for a request about a school crosswalk?

_____

_____

6. What happens if a town rule contradicts the law of its state?

_____

_____

Words to know

federalism: a system that divides power between a nation and its states
ordinance: a rule made by a town or city
legislatures: the groups that make the laws for states
contradict: to say or do the opposite of something
supreme: highest, with more power than anything else

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

For the teacher: Town Rule, State Law or National Law?

Each student sheet carries a shape, not a level. The same topic and facts, written three ways.

Circle: Town Rule, State Law or National Law?

Easier · 268 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 5.9

1. A system where power is shared between the national government and the state governments.
2. A rule for one community.
3. Congress, the national government.
4. That it, with the federal laws made under it, is the supreme law of the land.
5. A crosswalk is a local matter, and towns make rules for their own community.
6. The town rule must give way, because a court can decide that a lower rule loses.

Triangle: Town Rule, State Law or National Law?

This passage · 278 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 8.6

1. A system in which power is divided between the national government and the state governments.
2. A rule for one community.
3. Congress, the national government.
4. That it, with the federal laws made under it, is the supreme law of the land.
5. A crosswalk is a local matter, and towns make rules for their own community.
6. The town rule must give way, because a court can decide that a lower rule loses.

Square: Town Rule, State Law or National Law?

Harder · 297 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 10.8

1. An arrangement in which authority is divided between the national government and the state governments.
2. A rule that applies to a single community.
3. Congress, the national government.
4. That it, together with the federal laws made under it, is the supreme law of the land.
5. A crosswalk is a local matter, and towns create rules for their own community.
6. The town rule must give way, because a court can rule that a lower rule loses.