



AP[®] United States Government & Politics 2003 Sample Student Responses

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Question 2

While voting is the way that most people in the United States participate in the political process, there are ways to participate outside of voting that even those who cannot vote can participate in. Peaceful protesting, and even the simple act of writing letters to a person's representatives are ways to be involved in the political process, and can achieve great success.

Protesting is an activity that anyone can take part in, whether they can vote or not. The most important aspect of this form of participation is that it calls attention to an issue, or makes an otherwise unknown issue a focus to many people. By bringing a subject into the spotlight, those most concerned with the issue have the advantage of bringing more people on their side of ~~the~~ fight their fight or cause. Protests also have the ability to generate media attention, which is also an advantage to the protesters. Many people rely on the media as their source of information, and the media often dictates what a person should be thinking about, if a story about protesters and the cause they are fighting for makes ~~the~~ front page news, a person is more likely to take that story and form their own opinion on it, and possibly join the cause of the protesters.

A quieter, but ~~as~~ just as effective way of participating in politics is writing letters to one's representatives, whether it be local, state, or federal. Again, this form offers the advantage

Question 2

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of making issues known. Letter writing campaigns, with many people writing to the same person about the same issue, allow the representative to see that a number of people are dealing with the same issues. At the local level especially, writing letters can be very advantageous. Local leaders depend on the happiness of their constituents, especially when it comes time for elections, and by responding to these letters, they are sending a message that they care.

The political process extends far beyond just voting to areas anyone can participate. You can be an effective means of getting points across, and allow for participation at all times, rather than just voting times.

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2

To get involved with your government is the best thing to do for yourself. Some people may choose to vote or not to vote but voting is just one of many ways to participate. You can propose a bill to a Congressman, or run for an office, join a Political Action Committee (PAC) or start your own interest group. In today's politics though, I would say the most influential options would be to run for an office (and win) or to join a PAC group (and lobby Congress).

If an individual runs for a political office and wins that individual will then become part of his government. He will then have a say in laws that affect the whole country, or whole state, or whole county, city, etc. Any one holding an office has the responsibility of running, participating, and adding to our government.

PAC groups have become extremely influential. A PAC group may lobby, support a candidate with funds, or trash a candidate. PAC groups help determine the outcome of bills, therefore they too play a key role in our government. A PAC group usually represents an idea

2

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or a concept. Therefore if a PAC group decided to say bad things about a politician, citizens that support the group won't ~~be~~ support the candidate.

There are advantages to participating in both ways that I have stated. The advantage is the same in both cases, that an individual gets to have an influence on the government. By participating in any way, the government isn't the government any more it is social contract theory, the consent of the people to be governed. The people are running the government.

Any way that a person may choose to participate in their government is a good way. Participation improves our government because then the government will be designed to help all kinds of people. Our government affects everyone, so everyone should have their say.

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QUESTION # 2

There are many other ways citizens can choose to participate in the political process. One way a citizen can participate is by joining a political action committee. A citizen can influence how many voters vote and to whom they may vote for. PAC's often help raise money for the political party campaign. PAC's are an advantage because they are in the decisions of independent or undecided voters. Also PAC's contribute to the overall voter turnout in some areas and districts. Political organizational committee's are another way citizens can choose to participate in the political process. Political organizational committee's help to provide substantial amount of volunteers to assist in the campaign. These committee's tend to organize speeches, PAC's, and other political assisting programs.