



AP[®] Government and Politics: United States 2001 Sample Student Responses

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The graph shows the ~~no~~ House incumbents are reelected at a higher rate than their Senate counterparts. ^{consistently} Also, the Senate shows this trait more ~~than~~ than the House, but for most Presidential election years, the number of incumbents reelected seems to drop and then rise again at the mid-term elections.

In both houses, the graph shows a high incumbency reelection rate. This is because congressional incumbents have many advantages over their challengers. One example is that they have had the opportunity to work and provide services for their constituents. If voters in their home district recognize their name and are able to learn what ~~the~~ legislation their ~~to~~ representative has worked to pass to aid their community, the voter is more likely to reelect that Representative because they know they will work for their constituents. A second advantage is contributions from PAs. While in office, the representative has had the opportunity to work with many PAs and gain their support both financially and in policy making. When it comes time to run a reelection campaign, the PAs are going to support the incumbent whom they have worked with and whom they feel has a strong chance of winning. This allows the incumbent to run a larger, more organized campaign and give them a better chance to win.

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Incumbency advantage is obviously good for the incumbents in office, but it may not always be good for the nation's political process. Incumbents in office may be more likely to abuse their power and start to get a false sense that they ~~do not~~ do not have to work as hard to get reelected. It is also harder for new candidates with new political ideas to get into the system, so often older traditional ideas are just recirculated.

The graph shows that ~~the~~ the percentage of ^{incumbent} house members to be reelected almost consistently exceeds the percentage of incumbents reelected in the Senate. Also displayed is the fact that the ~~the~~ reelection of senators ranges from ~~the~~ 58% to 95%, indicating that from year to year, the likelihood of a senator being reelected changes rapidly and constantly, ^{although always in the majority.}

The most effective factor that is advantageous to incumbents is name recognition. Because their constituents and the general public may have familiarity with their name, they are more likely to vote for a candidate who is vaguely familiar, rather than a total stranger. Because ~~most~~ many voters tend to be less educated when it comes to congressional members rather than presidential candidates, the simple fact of knowing a candidate's name can sway their vote to the more experienced incumbent. Another advantage is Political Action Committee contributions. PACs rarely give money to incumbent challengers simply because they are less likely to win, and PACs donate money to a candidate so that if elected, they have legislative influence.

Because of the numerous ~~advantages~~ advantages to incumbents in the United States, it is very hard for challengers to raise funds for elections. ~~Because~~ Confidence in

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the united states political arena rests with incumbents, so challengers do not attract attention from Political Action Committees or general contributors in the American public.

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QUESTION 2

Since 1948 up until 1996 the rate of Congressional incumbent reelections differ greatly in the House of Representatives than in the Senate. This vast difference in the reelection rate is because of change in demographics, incumbency advantage, and incumbency disadvantage.

The Census, which takes place every 10 years is where how we find out where (in terms of party identities) and where we live. The southwest and midwestern parts of the United States are growing at a faster rate than the areas of the Northeast and mid-Atlantic region. Due to the change in demographics, a state may lose a seat and in the same way may gain a seat because of the population increase or decrease.

The two patterns displayed in the graph are quite different. Since 1948 until 1996, the House of Representative incumbent reelection rate has been ~~was~~ gradually increasing, due to demographics. The Senatorial incumbency reelection rate has not been steady at all. Before 1960 it was increasing but after the scandals of Watergate peoples faith in politicians dropped causing the reelection rate to go significantly down in the 1950's. From 1960-1996 it has been fairly steady at a 90% reelection rate.

There are factors that contribute to the incumbency advantage shown in the graph. One of those is voter familiarity. Senators have the ~~part~~ privilege of knowing the voter's needs due to the Congressional Research Committee and along with Interest Groups for their respective states. Along with voter familiarity, Senators can separate

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themselves from the "mess in Washington" Senators also receive PACs, matching funds, as well as private money.

However, there are consequences in incumbency advantage in the United States political process. With a high reelection rate, you are more prone to scandals and criticism. The voting public is more likely to scrutinize you and keep track of your voting record.

In conclusion, the rate of Congressional incumbent reelection rates differ greatly in the House and Senate. This is due to demographics, incumbency advantage, and incumbency disadvantages.