

AP[®] UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS 2013 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 2

6 points

Part (a): 2 points

One point is earned for each of two correct descriptions of the functions of political parties in elections including:

- Provide cues for voters
- Provide a platform of issues
- Recruit candidates for government office
- Nominate candidates for government office
- Raise funds for their candidates' campaigns
- Support for candidates' campaigns
- Mobilize voters and get out the votes

Part (b): 1 point

One point is earned for the correct description of a role of political parties within Congress to promote the party's public policy agenda:

- Leadership positions in Congress are assigned on a party basis.
- Party leaders articulate legislative policy priorities of the party.
- Party leaders facilitate legislative policy priorities of the party.
- Majority party selects committee chairs who promote the party's legislative priorities in committee.
- Majority party appoints and controls the standing committees.
- Majority party controls floor debates.
- Majority party controls the rules and calendar favorable to majority party's policy priorities.

Part (c): 2 points

One point is earned for an explanation of how each of the following factors has weakened the influence of political parties over the political process:

- Direct primaries: Gives parties less control over the nomination process of candidates; candidates appeal directly to voters and bypass parties; candidates may win who are not favored by the party elite.
- Candidate-centered campaigns: Candidates appeal directly to voters; candidates can raise money by appealing to voters or PACs directly; candidates choose their own issues to campaign on.

Part (d): 1 point

One point is earned for an explanation of how party polarization has strengthened party influence in Congress:

Members of political parties vote along party line; therefore they are less likely to cross party lines to vote with the other party.

A score of zero (0) is assigned to an answer that is completely off task or is on task but earns no points.

A score of dash (—) is assigned to an answer that is blank.

2. Political parties play important roles in United States elections and government institutions. Over the past several decades, the influence of political parties in elections has declined while their strength in Congress has increased.
- Describe two important functions of political parties in United States elections.
 - Describe one important role political parties play within Congress to promote the party's public policy agenda.
 - Explain how each of the following factors has weakened the influence of political parties over the political process.
 - Direct primaries
 - Candidate-centered campaigns
 - Explain how party polarization has strengthened party influence in Congress.

a) 1) Aid candidates in their campaigns by establishing a party platform and having the candidate stick to it. Political parties unite people that share the same political views in an election. They create a strong party base and unite the electorate.

2) Help contribute to campaigns by donating money to campaigns, hold conventions to gain support of party. They also hold debates that are televised. They are responsible for educating voters on their candidate's views.

b) The majority party in ~~the~~ Congress promotes their party's public policy agenda. Especially in the house, the majority party has the power to place major party members on powerful committees in order to have their public policy bills passed. Their role in placing members on committees and delegating rules to how bills will be debated promote their public policy agenda and allow it to be passed ~~easier~~ more easily.

c) 1) Direct primaries - candidates used to ~~have~~ ~~be~~ ~~chosen~~ be chosen at party conventions by members of the party. they could choose the candidate they believed would

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enforce the party's platform the most. With direct primaries, this power has been taken away from them and they no longer have direct influence over what candidate will be chosen that they will have to advocate for. For example, in the recent 2012 election, Mitt Romney was not as conservative as the Republican party would have favored, and when he ultimately lost the election the party party blamed it on how he did not stick to their platform enough. If they had retained the power to choose their candidates then the outcome of the election could have been different.

a) candidate-centered campaigns — because campaigns have become more focused on the candidates rather than the party platform. Before, the party was able to accomplish what it wanted, while now the candidate has the ability to stray from the party's goals. People are starting to focus more on who a candidate is and what they stand for, rather than the party they belong to. This causes more candidate than party centered voting and less of a strong ~~base~~ base for political parties. This has weakened the influence of political parties over the political process because voters are beginning to pay less attention to the ~~party~~ party than the candidate, and the candidate can stray from what the party wants. For example, Mitt Romney was criticized for having public healthcare while he was governor of Massachusetts, which went against his party's platform.

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Question 2 is reprinted for your convenience.

2. Political parties play important roles in United States elections and government institutions. Over the past several decades, the influence of political parties in elections has declined while their strength in Congress has increased.
- Describe two important functions of political parties in United States elections.
 - Describe one important role political parties play within Congress to promote the party's public policy agenda.
 - Explain how each of the following factors has weakened the influence of political parties over the political process.
 - Direct primaries
 - Candidate-centered campaigns
 - Explain how party polarization has strengthened party influence in Congress.

d) Party polarization is a greater amount of separation in the two main party's ideals and a great separation on their ideas on public ~~policy~~ policy, foreign policy, and other main issues. Their differences in ideology strengthen their influence in Congress because Congress members vote based more on their party association. Because the two main parties disagree so much, when bills are actually passed they contain at least one aspect that the party supports because ~~everyone~~ most members have to like the bill to pass it, whether it is their party's bill or not. For example, the debate of gun control in Congress has become so polarized that if an agreement is eventually met, then each party will have an aspect of the bill that they like. Members of Congress are more likely to vote in their party's favor if there is a big divide in ideology, increasing the party influence in Congress.

2. Political parties play important roles in United States elections and government institutions. Over the past several decades, the influence of political parties in elections has declined while their strength in Congress has increased.
- (a) Describe two important functions of political parties in United States elections. *- that's how candidates are identified - they raise money*
- (b) Describe one important role political parties play within Congress to promote the party's public policy agenda. *If they control congress, they can more easily*
- (c) Explain how each of the following factors has weakened the influence of political parties over the political process.
- Direct primaries *already chosen candidates,*
 - Candidate-centered campaigns *- focus on candidate*
- (d) Explain how party polarization has strengthened party influence in Congress. *split ballot*
vote one way or another, not the other

A. Two important functions of political parties in U.S. elections:

1. Political parties help identify the candidate quickly. Although identification with particular parties are declining, people tend to make quick judgments and decisions on candidates based on the party to which they represent, because it provides a general idea of the candidate.

2. ~~Political~~ Political Parties are also a key way in raising support and funds for their nominated candidate, which ~~is~~ can often be key in winning an election.

B. Often times, one political party can have the majority of seats in Congress, which gives that political party more power and control, making it easier to promote their party's public policy.

C. Direct primaries have weakened political party influence in that the candidates have already been chosen and many people vote for the candidates rather than the party, an example of which being a split-ballot, in which one may vote one way for president and the other way for ~~Congress~~ ^{Congress}, not identifying with any

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single political party.

- Candidate-centered campaigns are another factor to weakened influence ~~of~~ of political parties over the political process in that people no longer look to which party is being represented, but instead which candidate they prefer. For example, in the 2012 election, President Obama's campaign typically did not invoke his party, but rather bumper stickers, signs, etc. that read "Obama" or "Obama/Biden 2012". This was true, also, for Republican candidate Mitt Romney. Even so, President Obama's signs were often in blue, ~~the~~ the representational color for Democrats, but both Romney and Obama incorporated our Nation's colors (red, white, and blue) in their advertising. Focusing on the candidates is also apparent in debates, as people and the media focus on personality and speeches over all else, including political parties.

D. Party polarization has strengthened party influence in Congress in that the Republican Congressman/Congresswomen vote the way other members of Congress who belong to similar parties vote. Because the House needs 2/3 vote to pass anything, it is much easier if political parties all vote one way or another (unless, of course, party members are evenly split. Then it would be easier to pass something if party polarization wasn't as strong) with the group (party they identify with).

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2. Political parties play important roles in United States elections and government institutions. Over the past several decades, the influence of political parties in elections has declined while their strength in Congress has increased.
- Describe two important functions of political parties in United States elections.
 - Describe one important role political parties play within Congress to promote the party's public policy agenda.
 - Explain how each of the following factors has weakened the influence of political parties over the political process.
 - Direct primaries
 - Candidate-centered campaigns
 - Explain how party polarization has strengthened party influence in Congress.

a) In the United States political parties serve many roles. One role is to act as a linkage institution between citizens and government. Another role political parties play is as political factions in which people who share the same beliefs can join together as a group.

b) Political Parties play an important role with Congress to promote the party's public policy agenda. This role is to have party officials elected into legislature to serve their parties agenda and pursue the party's beliefs.

c) Direct primaries have weakened the ~~ing~~ influence of political parties over the political process because ~~they~~ as they allow people to vote for whichever candidate is on the ballot without having to be affiliated with a political party. Candidate-centered campaigns also weaken the political parties influence because campaigns are now more focused on the candidate and his beliefs versus the party and their beliefs.

d) party polarization has strengthened party influence in congress because the more ~~party~~ party ~~members~~ members that get elected to congress causes the opposite party to get more of their party members elected in an ~~attempt~~ attempt to balance out.

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2013 SCORING COMMENTARY

Question 2

Overview

The question examined students' knowledge of roles of political parties in elections and government. Part (a) asked students to describe two functions of political parties in elections. In part (b) students were asked to describe a role of political parties within Congress. In part (c) students were asked to explain how direct primaries and candidate-centered campaigns weakened political parties. Finally, in part (d) students were asked to explain how party polarization strengthened political parties in Congress.

Sample: 2A

Score: 6

In part (a), the response earned 2 points. One point was earned for describing the function of providing a platform of issues that "create a strong party base." One point was earned for describing the function of political parties raising funds for their candidates' campaigns.

In part (b) the response earned 1 point for describing the role of the majority party in selecting committee chairs who promote their party's legislative priorities in committee.

In part (c), the response earned 2 points. One point was earned for explaining that the direct primary weakens the influence of the political party by giving parties less control over the nomination of the candidate by noting that the nomination power "has been taken away from them and they no longer have direct influence over what candidate will be chosen." One point was earned for explaining how candidate-centered campaigns have weakened the influence of political parties by explaining that "voters are beginning to pay less attention to the party than the candidate, and the candidate can stray away from what the party wants."

In part (d), the response earned 1 point for explaining how party polarization strengthens political parties in Congress by articulating that "members of Congress are more likely to vote in their party's favor if there is a big divide in ideology, increasing the party influence in Congress."

Sample: 2B

Score: 3

In part (a), the response earned 2 points. One point was earned for providing cues for voters by describing that "people tend to make quick judgments and decisions on candidates based on the party to which they represent." A second point was earned for noting that political parties raise funds for their candidates.

In part (b) the response failed to earn a point because it focuses on having a majority and does not describe a role or activity of the party within Congress presented on the rubric.

In part (c), the response earned 1 point. It failed to earn a point for explaining how direct primaries have weakened the influence of the political party because the response states the "the candidates have already been chosen". It earned 1 point for explaining how candidate-centered campaigns have weakened the influence of political parties by recognizing "that people no longer look to which party is being represented, but instead which candidate they prefer."

In part (d) the response failed to earn a point for explaining how party polarization has strengthened political parties in Congress because it focuses on the role of the individual congressman and not on the political party as a whole.

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Question 2 (continued)

Sample: 2C

Score: 1

In part (a), the response failed to earn points for describing two functions of political parties in elections. The description of linkage institution fails to specify what the political parties do within elections. The description of providing voter cues demonstrates what the voters do and not what the political party does.

In part (b) the response failed to earn a point for describing the role of political parties within Congress. The focus of the response is on electing people to Congress, not on what the party does within Congress.

In part (c), the response earned 1 point. It failed to earn a point for explaining how a direct primary weakened political party influence because it is explaining a blanket primary instead of a direct primary. The response earned 1 point for candidate-centered campaigns by explaining that candidates choose their own issues to campaign on and “campaigns are now more focused on the candidate and his beliefs versus the party and their beliefs.”

In part (d) the response failed to earn a point for explaining how party polarization has strengthened political parties in Congress because it is focusing on having a majority in Congress.