

AP[®] UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

2007 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 1

5 points

Part (a): 1 point

One point is earned for a description of the winner-take-all feature of the electoral college. A correct description is: the candidate who gets the most votes (or a majority, a plurality, more than any other candidate) wins all of a state's electoral votes.

Part (b): 1 point

One point is earned for an explanation of how the winner-take-all feature of the electoral college affects how presidential candidates from the two major parties run their campaigns. The explanation must include a specific campaign management or campaign strategy, and it must clearly be tied to the winner-take-all feature at the state level.

Acceptable explanations include:

- Resource allocation or focus on competitive states, swing states, and large states where candidates spend their time or money or buy media.
- Issues (an issue may swing a bloc of voters in a state).
- Choice of Vice-President (regional balance).

Part (c): 1 point

One point is earned for an explanation of how or why the winner-take-all system hinders third parties at the state level.

Acceptable explanations include:

- Third-party candidates may get a lot of popular votes but no electoral votes unless they carry a state.
- The difficulty of winning electoral votes hampers the ability to raise funds and gain other campaign resources.

Part (d): 2 points

One point is earned for each correct explanation of why the electoral college has not been abolished. The explanation must be tied to the national perspective.

Acceptable explanations include:

- Helps to ensure that a majority of electoral votes are earned by one candidate.
- History/tradition.
- Would require constitutional amendment.
- No clear consensus on an alternative.
- Collectively benefits small states.
- Racial minorities (and interest groups) in some states like the electoral college because it protects their votes.

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Question 1 (continued)

- Collectively benefits large states.
- Competitive states like it.
- Favors two-party system.

A score of zero (0) is earned for an attempted answer that receives no points.

A score of dash (—) is earned for a blank or off-task answer.

~~Intro/ Descript. How pres can.~~

The winner-take-all system that is in place vastly affects how our electoral college works. The winner-take-all system basically says that, within each state, whoever wins the most votes, either a majority or plurality, gets all the electoral college votes from that state.

This affects how presidential candidates from each of the major two parties run their campaigns. A major way that it affects campaigns is that candidates ~~will~~ spend more of their time in states where they are uncertain of either victory or ~~defeat~~ defeat, hoping to gain the most votes and win the state. This is because we don't have a proportional system, where the ~~number~~ percentage of votes is how the electoral college decides how to vote. Of course, having a winner-take-all system hinders third-party candidates. Because they aren't going to get any votes in the electoral college unless they can win a plurality in a state, it makes it much more unlikely that any third party candidate will win a presidential election.

While some may think that changing to a proportional system might be a good thing, there are ~~de~~ reasons the electoral college hasn't been abolished. To start, the electoral college is in the constitution. To change that, an amendment would have to be passed, which is a very unlikely thing to happen, as the founders of our country made it

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Write in the box the number of the question you are answering on this page as it is designated in the exam.

1A2

Difficult to amend the constitution. The other reason why the electoral college hasn't been abolished is because it helps to keep the current people in power. These parties, which have grown up with the broad-based coalition type party in place because of the electoral college, is unlikely to want to change the winner take all system in place currently, as it jeopardizes the power they already have.

The way we run our presidential elections to the reasons for keeping it in place are all done because of the electoral college, and it's winner-take-all feature.

Write in the box the number of the question you are answering on this page as it is designated in the exam.

1

1B1

Although the people do vote ~~for th~~ in presidential elections, the President is ultimately elected by the electoral college. In this system, each state is given a certain number of electoral votes based on its population. After the people have voted, the candidate with the most votes in each state is awarded all of that state's electoral votes. Because all of the electoral votes are given to one candidate rather than distributed based on the proportion of votes received, this is known as the winner-take-all feature of the electoral college.

After all of the electoral votes are counted, the candidate with the most is announced as the winner of the election. The outcome of certain states, including states with high populations and states without a definitive party identification, can swing an election either way. Due to this fact and the winner-take-all feature of the electoral college, candidates from the two major political parties will focus their campaigns in these states in an effort to gain a large number of electoral votes

that can greatly influence the outcome of an election. For example, a candidate will spend more time campaigning in highly populated states, such as Texas and California, than in smaller states, such as Rhode Island, because the reward for winning support and votes in larger states is much greater. Also, some swing states in recent elections have included Florida and Ohio. Candidates will campaign hard in these states to win votes that are up for grabs and that could ultimately decide the outcome of the election.

Politics in the United States is a two-party system, dominated by Republicans and Democrats. Third parties find it difficult to gain support and are put at an even greater disadvantage due to the winner-take-all feature of the electoral college. Third-party candidates are not rewarded for the little support they do receive. Rather than receiving some electoral votes from each state based on the proportion of votes received there, third-party candidates receive nothing as candidates from the two major parties dominate states and

receive all of the electoral votes. In order to gain electoral votes, third-party candidates must gain enough support to defeat a major party candidate in at least one state. Because this is difficult to do in America's two-party political system, third-party candidates are hindered from receiving votes and America continues to be dominated by two major parties. It would seem that the electoral college, with its winner-take-all feature, hurts the political process and should be abolished. However, the electoral college was created due to the fear of placing the power of electing the president in the hands of the people alone. This fear still exists today and, along with the belief that ~~higher~~ more populated states should ~~influence~~ have more impact than smaller ones, ^{prevents} ~~is keeps~~ the electoral college from being abolished.

- (a) The winner-take-all feature of the electoral college is a system in which if a candidate wins a majority of the districts/regions in a election they win (take) all of the electoral votes for that state.
- (b) One major way the winner-take-all feature of the electoral college is that presidential candidates tend to focus on larger states, because they have more electoral votes.
- (c) In many instances a third party candidate is able to win some districts in an election, however in a winner-take all system this is meaningless, because all of the electoral votes are given to the majority candidate.
- (d) One reason the electoral college has not been abolished is due to the fact that it is in the Constitution, and in order to change/modify/or abolish the electoral college a new constitutional amendment must be drafted. Another reason we have not abolished the electoral college is because it has worked well as of now, the electoral college, a majority of the time, represents the will of the people.

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Question 1

Overview

The overall intent of this question was to examine the winner-take-all feature of the electoral college and to see if students could address the consequences of the system. The question focused on specific aspects of the system by asking students (1) to define the winner-take-all feature of the electoral college; (2) to explain how the winner-take-all feature affects the campaign strategy of the presidential candidates from the two major political parties; (3) to explain one way in which the winner-take-all feature of the electoral college hinders third-party candidates; and (4) to explain two reasons why the electoral college has not been abolished.

Sample: 1A Score: 5

In part (a) the response earned 1 point for describing the winner-take-all system of the electoral college: “whoever wins the most votes, either a majority or plurality, gets all the electoral college votes from that state.”

In part (b) the response earned 1 point for explaining how the winner-take-all system affects how presidential candidates from the two major political parties run their campaigns: “candidates spend more of their time in states where they are uncertain of either victory or defeat, hoping to gain the most votes and win the state” (the campaign strategy and connection to winner-take-all feature of the electoral college).

In part (c) the response earned 1 point for explaining one way in which the winner-take-all feature of the electoral college hinders third-party candidates: “Because they aren't going to get any votes in the electoral college unless they can win a plurality in a state ...”

In part (d) the response earned 1 point for explaining one reason why the electoral college has not been abolished. The specific example that the student uses is a constitutional amendment: “To change that, an amendment would have to be passed, which is a very unlikely thing to happen, as the founders of our country made it difficult to amend the constitution.” The response earned a second point in part (d) for explaining another reason why the electoral college has not been abolished. The specific example that the student uses is the two-party system: “... it helps to keep the current people in power. These parties, which have grown up with the broad-based coalition type party in place because of the electoral college, is [*sic*] unlikely to want to change the winner take all system in place currently, as it jepordizes [*sic*] the power they already have.”

Sample: 1B Score: 3

In part (a) the response earned 1 point for defining the winner-take-all system of the electoral college: “the candidate with the most votes in each state is awarded all of that state’s electoral votes.”

In part (b) the response earned 1 point for explaining how the winner-take-all system affects how presidential candidates from the two major political parties run their campaigns: “The outcome of certain states, including states with high populations and states without a definitive party identification, can swing an election either way. Due to this fact and the winner-take-all feature of the electoral college,

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Question 1 (continued)

candidates from the two major political parties will focus their campaigns in these states in an effort to gain a large number of electoral votes ... because the reward for winning support and votes in larger states is much greater.”

In part (c) the response earned 1 point for explaining one way in which the winner-take-all feature of the electoral college hinders third-party candidates: “Rather than receiving some electoral votes from each state based on the proportion of votes received there, third-party candidates receive nothing as candidates from the two major parties dominate states and receive all of the electoral votes. In order to gain electoral votes, third-party candidates must gain enough support to defeat a major party candidate in at least one state.”

In part (d) the response did not earn a point because the explanations of why the electoral college has not been abolished are not valid.

**Sample: 1C
Score: 1**

In part (a) the response did not earn a point because it refers to winning “a majority of the districts/regions.” The winner-take-all system is not based on winning districts and/or regions.

In part (b) the response did not earn a point because it does not provide an acceptable explanation of a campaign strategy affected by the winner-take-all system.

In part (c) the response did not earn a point because the explanation is based on a misunderstanding of the winner-take-all system.

In part (d) the response earned 1 point for explaining one reason why the electoral college has not been abolished: “it is in the Constitution, and in order to change/modify/or abolish the electoral college a new constitutional amendment must be drafted.”