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# AP United States Government and Politics

## Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary

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#### **Free Response Question 3**

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**AP<sup>®</sup> UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS  
2018 SCORING GUIDELINES**

**Question 3**

**5 Points**

**Part (a): 1 point**

One point is earned for describing the constitutional principle of checks and balances.

One branch of government exercises power in order to prevent another branch from becoming too powerful.

**Part (b): 2 points**

One point is earned for describing the veto in the legislative process.

The veto allows the president to refuse to approve a bill passed by Congress.

One point is earned for describing the role of the State of the Union in the legislative process.

The State of the Union is given by the president to Congress to outline the president's legislative agenda/agenda setting, or to influence legislation.

**Part (c): 1 point**

One point is earned for using the data in the chart to describe a relationship between the number of presidential vetoes and the number of congressional overrides.

- Veto overrides are rare compared to presidential vetoes.
- Generally the more presidential vetoes, the more veto overrides.

**Part (d): 1 point**

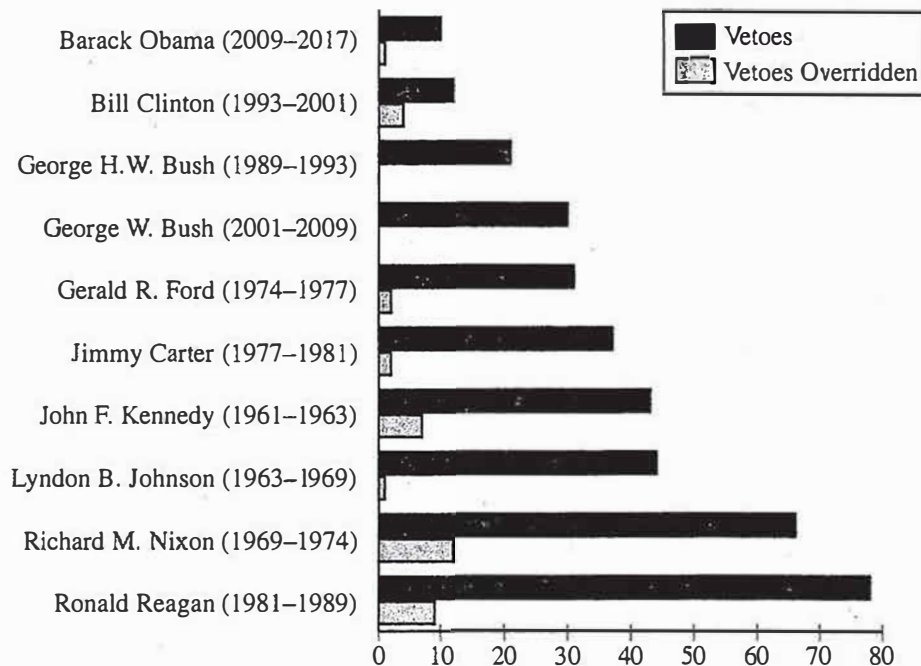
One point is earned for explaining how Congress can reduce the likelihood of a presidential veto.

- Withdraw the legislation.
- Make concessions to the president.
- Negotiate with the president.
- Rally the public to influence the president.

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

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

3A1



Source: United States House of Representatives

3. The United States Constitution gave Congress and the president specific legislative powers. As a result, the interactions between the two are dynamic and complex.

(a) Describe the constitutional principle of checks and balances.

(b) Describe EACH of the following presidential powers in the legislative process:

- Veto
- State of the Union address

(c) Using the data in the chart, describe the relationship between the number of presidential vetoes and the number of congressional overrides.

(d) Explain how Congress can reduce the likelihood of a presidential veto.

a) The constitutional principle of checks and balances is to ensure that one branch does not have a lot more power than another branch. Each branch regulates each other to ensure that all actions are constitutional.

b) The veto is a presidential check on the legislative branch. The legislative branch may write up a law, but it needs presidential approval.

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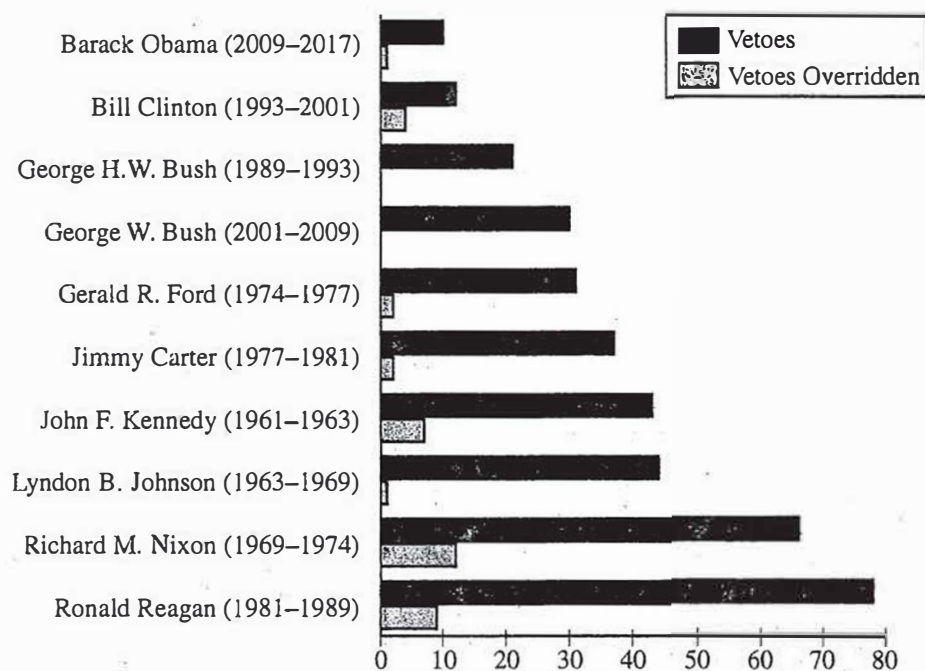
## ADDITIONAL ANSWER PAGE FOR QUESTION 3

The veto allows the president to reject legislation that he/she does not approve of, sending it back to the legislative branch to review and reconsider. The state of the union address is very important in the president's agenda setting. Here, he/she announces their plan for what legislation they hope to pass during ~~that year~~ that year. This raises ~~the~~ Congress' awareness of what is to happen, and sets their agenda of what to write legislation about.

c) This graph shows that the veto holds a lot of power. There are very few times that a presidential veto is overridden by Congress. This shows that if a president does veto something, it is not extremely likely that Congress would override that veto.

d) Congress can work together with the president during the legislative process and have good communication about what to and not to include. The president uses his/her veto when they disagree. Therefore, if Congress attempts to write legislation that follows the president's agenda, they can avoid the likelihood of a presidential veto.

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Source: United States House of Representatives

3. The United States Constitution gave Congress and the president specific legislative powers. As a result, the interactions between the two are dynamic and complex.
- Describe the constitutional principle of checks and balances.
  - Describe EACH of the following presidential powers in the legislative process:
    - Veto
    - State of the Union address
  - Using the data in the chart, describe the relationship between the number of presidential vetoes and the number of congressional overrides.
  - Explain how Congress can reduce the likelihood of a presidential veto.

a.) Checks and balances were incorporated in the constitution in order to prevent one branch of government from becoming too powerful.

b.) The president can veto a bill proposed by congress, and thus the bill will not become a law. However, congress has the ability to override vetoes, but the president

## ADDITIONAL ANSWER PAGE FOR QUESTION 3

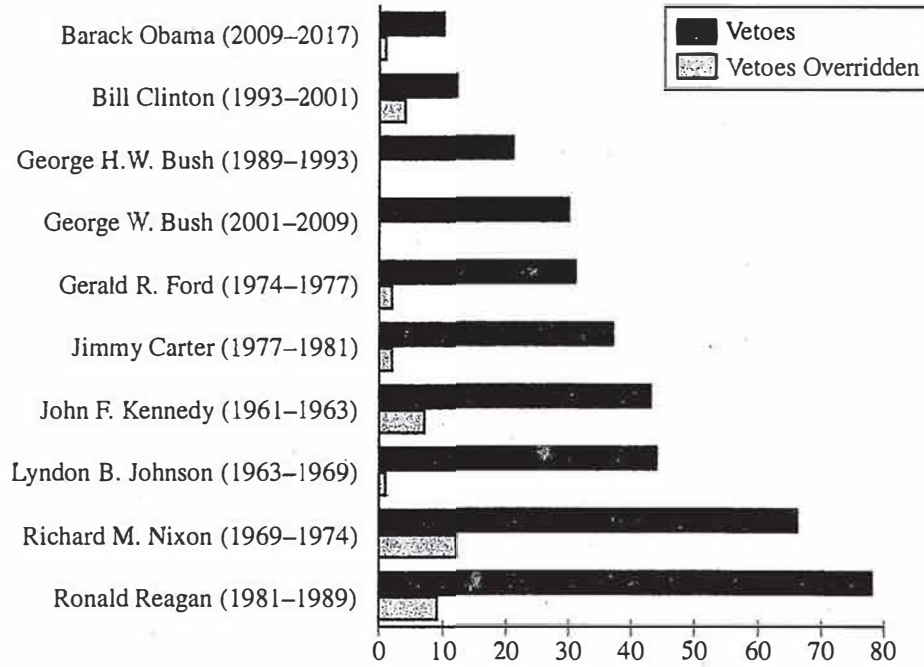
can usually stop the proposition of a bill with the mere threat of a veto.

(c.) The data in the chart shows a general trend that the more bills the president vetoes, the more congressional overrides tend to happen.

d.) The most vetoes, according to the graph, happened during the Cold War. Because of this evidence, Congress should not stress out the president by proposing bills while he's busy about an invasion from Russia.

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301



Source: United States House of Representatives

3. The United States Constitution gave Congress and the president specific legislative powers. As a result, the interactions between the two are dynamic and complex.
- (a) Describe the constitutional principle of checks and balances.
  - (b) Describe EACH of the following presidential powers in the legislative process:
    - Veto
    - State of the Union address
  - (c) Using the data in the chart, describe the relationship between the number of presidential vetoes and the number of congressional overrides.
  - (d) Explain how Congress can reduce the likelihood of a presidential veto.

a) President can veto, Congress and have veto only specific with X vote.

b veto, S.O.U.A (State of Union address)

c) Presidential vetos → Congress may  
d) less bills

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## ADDITIONAL ANSWER PAGE FOR QUESTION 3

A) Constitutional Powers of Checks and balances allow the President to veto congress bills whereas to override a Presidential veto congress must have a 2/3 vote. B) The Presidential veto Power only goes so far because it can be overruled. The President's State of the Union address Power allows him or her to say what they please and Powers are less limited to them compared to others. C) According to the results from the chart, Congressional veto overrides haven't happened as much as Presidents have vetoed Congressional bills. E. Congress can reduce the amount of Presidential vetoes by knowing what the President accepts and not bring bills to the table that they know will fail drastically. Congress can also override more vetos.

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## 2018 SCORING COMMENTARY

### Question 3

#### Overview

This question examined the relationship between Congress and the president, and the legislative powers of each. Part (a) asked students to describe the constitutional principle of checks and balances. Part (b) asked students to describe two presidential powers in the legislative process: the veto and the State of the Union address. Part (c) asked students to describe the relationship between the number of presidential vetoes and the number of congressional overrides based on the data presented in a chart. Finally, part (d) asked students to explain how Congress can reduce the likelihood of a presidential veto.

#### Sample: 3A

##### Score: 5

Part (a) – (1 point): The response earned 1 point for describing the constitutional principle of checks and balances, by stating that “checks and balances is to ensure that one branch does not have alot [sic] more power than another branch.”

Part (b) – (2 points): The response earned 1 point for describing the veto power in the legislative process by stating, “The veto allows the president to reject legislation that he/she does not approve of.” The response earned the second point for describing the State of the Union in the legislative process by stating, “Here, he/she announces their plan for what legislation they hope to pass during that year.”

Part (c) – (1 point): The response earned 1 point for describing the relationship between the number of presidential vetoes and the number of congressional overrides by stating, “There are very few times that a presidential veto is overridden by Congress.”

Part (d) (1 point): The response earned 1 point for explaining how Congress can reduce the likelihood of a presidential veto by stating, “Therefore, if Congress attempts to write legislation that follows the presidents [sic] agenda, they can avoid the likelihood of a presidential veto.”

#### Sample: 3B

##### Score: 3

Part (a) – (1 point): The response earned 1 point for describing the constitutional principle of checks and balances by stating, “Checks and balances were incorporated in the Constitution in order to prevent one branch of government from becoming too powerful.”

Part (b) – (2 points): The response earned 1 point for describing the veto power in the legislative process by stating, “The president can veto a bill proposed by Congress, and thus the bill will not become a law.” The response did not earn the second point for describing the State of the Union in the legislative process. The response needed to connect the State of the Union speech to Congress and the legislative process.

Part (c) – (1 point): The response earned 1 point for describing the relationship between the number of presidential vetoes and the number of congressional overrides by stating that “the more bills the president vetoes, the more congressional overrides tend to happen.”

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**2018 SCORING COMMENTARY**

**Question 3 (continued)**

Part (d) – (1 point): The response did not earn a point for explaining how Congress can reduce the likelihood of a presidential veto. “Congress should not stress out the president by proposing bills while he’s busy” is incorrect. To have earned the point, the response should have demonstrated a specific way Congress can reduce the likelihood of a presidential veto.

**Sample: 3C**

**Score: 1**

Part (a) – (1 point): The response did not earn a point in part (a) for describing the constitutional principle of checks and balances; “checks and balances allow the President to veto Congress bills” is incorrect. To have earned this point, the response should have described how checks and balances prevent another branch from becoming too powerful.

Part (b) – (2 points): The response did not earn a point for describing the veto power in the legislative process by stating, “The Presidential veto power only goes so far because it can be overruled” because that is incorrect. To have earned this point, the response should have stated that the veto allows the president to refuse a bill passed by Congress. The response did not earn the second point for describing the State of the Union in the legislative process. “The Presidents [*sic*] State of the Union address power allows him or her to say what they please” is insufficient. To have earned this point, the response should have connected the State of the Union speech to Congress and the legislative process.

Part (c) – (1 point): The response earned 1 point for describing the relationship between the number of presidential vetoes and the number of congressional overrides by stating that “congressional veto overrides haven’t happened as much as presidents have vetoed congressional bills.”

Part (d) – (1 point): The response did not earn a point for explaining how Congress can reduce the likelihood of a presidential veto. “Congress can reduce the amount of presidential vetos [*sic*] by knowing what the President excepts [*sic*]” is insufficient. To have earned the point, the response should have demonstrated a specific way that Congress can reduce the likelihood of a presidential veto.