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# AP United States Government and Politics

## Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary

### **Inside:**

#### **Free Response Question 4**

- Scoring Guideline**
- Student Samples**
- Scoring Commentary**

# AP<sup>®</sup> UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

## 2018 SCORING GUIDELINES

### Question 4

**5 points**

**Part (a): 1 point**

One point is earned for an explanation of how interest groups reduce the influence of public opinion on policy.

Interest groups use tactics (lobbying, providing information, campaign contributions) to affect policy change by institutions or individuals, regardless of public opinion on the policy.

**Part (b): 2 points**

One point is earned for an explanation of how a newly elected president increases the likelihood of policy change.

- Presidents claim an electoral mandate that allows them to pressure Congress into adopting their agenda.
- Presidents have more political capital during their honeymoon period, which allows them to set the legislative agenda.
- New presidents can issue executive orders or make appointments that may influence public policy.
- The new president's party is more likely to have gained seats in Congress during the presidential election, which makes it easier to pass legislation.

One point is earned for an explanation of how a national crisis increases the likelihood of policy change.

- Focuses the attention of policy makers, which can lead to policy change.
- Unifies and mobilizes the public, which can lead to policy change.

**Part (c): 2 points**

One point is earned for a description of the role of the courts in the policy process.

Court decisions can create, block, or guide public policy (judicial review, overturn, precedent).

One point is earned for a description of the role of the media in the policy process.

- The media can set the policy agenda.
- They can choose which issues to cover and how to frame them.
- They inform the public on public policy issues.

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.

4. In a democracy, what the majority wants should influence public policy. The opinion of the majority is sometimes, but not always, reflected in policy change.

- (a) Explain how interest groups reduce the influence of public opinion on policy. 1
- (b) Explain how EACH of the following increases the likelihood of policy change. 1 1
- ✓ Newly elected president
  - ✓ National crisis
- (c) Describe the role of EACH of the following institutions in the policy process. 1 1
- ✓ The courts
  - ✓ The media

**A** Interest groups reduce the influence of public opinion on policy either by lobbying or by contributing funds to the campaigns that most reflects their interests. In the second, this works because candidates feel pressured to represent the interests of groups that contribute funds, rather than representing the constituents. This causes ~~the~~ the elected to vote for ~~something~~ legislation in the best interests and wishes of the interest groups that financed their campaign, rather than in the best interests and wishes of the people the representative should be representing.

**B** The ~~newly~~ newly elected president is in a prime spot for enacting policy change, as he has high public support (typically) just after he is elected. This "prime spot" for policy change is known as the honeymoon period, and this time is also the most likely time for him to also have party control in Congress. With public support and party control over Congress, the likelihood of the President's agenda getting pushed through is very high. National crisis, either domestic-natural disaster or foreign-influenced, has a similar effect as a fresh election. Public support is increased as the President attempts to create a sense of ~~national~~ <sup>national</sup> unity and healing, and so his agenda is more likely to ~~be~~ be pushed through. Examples

of this can be seen post-9-11, as Bush's barrage of surveillance and anti-terrorist had lots of public support at the time and his success with those also got him reelected.

The media influences the policy process by being a gatekeeper, which means they control what issues the public sees. This is important because it can either cause widespread support or anger over issues that then are ~~created~~ turned into policy. The elected officials then are likely to vote based on the support or non-support of their constituents, which ultimately decides if the ~~policy~~ legislation passes. The courts also play a large role in policy, as they review the ~~the~~ construction and constitutional validity of a controversial or problematic policy as it is brought to them ~~with~~ by cases. This means that the court ~~can~~ can decide whether or not a policy is constitutionally valid and demand that Congress either repeal or rewrite it, depending on how problematic the legislation is.

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE.



4. In a democracy, what the majority wants should influence public policy. The opinion of the majority is sometimes, but not always, reflected in policy change.

(a) Explain how interest groups reduce the influence of public opinion on policy. -1

(b) Explain how EACH of the following increases the likelihood of policy change.

- Newly elected president -1
- National crisis -1

(c) Describe the role of EACH of the following institutions in the policy process.

- The courts -1
- The media -1

Interest groups reduce the influence of public policy by electing officials into office to get their own ~~policy~~ ~~idea~~ ideas into policy. They make deals with candidates in which when their elected make the interest groups policy a priority before public policy.

A newly elected ~~policy~~ president can influence policy change because of ideology. If the last president in office was Republican, and in the next term a Democratic president came into office, they may change policies that don't reflect their ideology. When there is a ~~war~~ national crisis and the ~~na~~ nation is in danger, policy limiting people rights may be implemented. For example in Korematsu v. U.S. the president limited the rights of the Japanese even though none of them were reported to be spies.

The courts play a role in the policy

4B2

making process in an indirect way. When the court makes precedents they indirectly say what is and what isn't allowed. The media plays a role by informing the public. If the media gives biased information it could lead to the public changing their opinion on certain topics.

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE.

4. In a democracy, what the majority wants should influence public policy. The opinion of the majority is sometimes, but not always, reflected in policy change.

(a) Explain how interest groups reduce the influence of public opinion on policy. ✓

(b) Explain how EACH of the following increases the likelihood of policy change.

- Newly elected president ✓
- National crisis ✓

(c) Describe the role of EACH of the following institutions in the policy process.

- The courts ✓
- The media

a) Some interest groups can reduce influence of public opinion on policy by gathering information, facts, + charts showing actual evidence. They can also reduce it by staying true to their beliefs and standing strong in their large group of people that have the same opinion.

b) A newly elected ~~president~~ president can affect policy because of the new point of view that is now head of the country and also what they campaigned with, like "I'm gonna change the money crisis" or something similar can influence policy making majority. A national crisis can also influence policy on a major scale, because if something could have been done to prevent it, or something implement that policy as soon as possible in order to fix and prevent future national crisis' if possible.

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GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE.

C) During the policy process, the courts play a huge role in deciding policy making. The courts influence the president by having annual court meetings with the supreme court justices and they vote on future policies. The media also plays a major role, because it shows us what is happening in the capital and how the policy is doing, while also spreading information that could affect the policy, in good or bad times.

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE.



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## 2018 SCORING COMMENTARY

### Question 4

#### Overview

The question examined public policy in the United States. Part (a) asked students to explain how interest groups reduce the influence of public opinion on policy. Part (b) asked students to explain how a newly elected president and a national crisis increase the likelihood of policy change. Finally, part (c) asked students to describe the role of the courts and the media in the policy process.

#### Sample: 4A

**Score: 5**

Part (a) – (1 point): The response earned 1 point for explaining how interest groups reduce the influence of public opinion on policy by correctly linking a technique used by interest groups to a targeted policymaking institution and explaining that this action results in policy being made that favors minority opinion over majority opinion. “Interest groups reduce the influence of public opinion on policy either by lobbying or by contributing funds to the campaign that most reflects their interests. In the second, this works because candidates feel pressured to represent the interests of groups that contribute funds, rather than representing the constituents. This causes the elected to vote for legislation in the best interests and wishes of the interest groups that financed their campaign, rather than in the best interests and wishes of the people the representative should be representing.”

Part (b) – (2 points): The response earned 1 point for explaining how a newly elected president increases the likelihood of policy change. “The newly elected president is in a prime spot for enacting policy change, as he has high public support (typically) just after he is elected. This ‘prime spot’ for policy change is known as the honeymoon period, and this time is also the most likely time for him to also have party control in Congress. With public support and party control over Congress, the likelihood of the President’s agenda getting pushed through is very high.” The response earned a second point for explaining how a national crisis increases the likelihood of policy change. “National crisis ... has a similar effect as a fresh election. Public support is increased as the President attempts to create a sense of national unity and healing, and so his agenda is more likely to be pushed through.”

Part (c) – (2 points): The response earned 1 point for a correct description of the role of the courts in the policy process. “The courts also play a large role in policy, as they review the construction and constitutional validity of a controversial or problematic policy as it is brought to them by cases. This means that the court can decide whether or not a policy is constitutionally valid.” The response earned a second point for correctly describing a role of the media in the policy process. “The media influences the policy process by being a gatekeeper, which means they control what issues the public sees. This is important because it can either cause widespread support or anger over issues that then are turned into policy.” The response earned a second point for correctly describing a role of the media in the policy process.

#### Sample: 4B

**Score: 3**

Part (a) – (1 point): The response did not earn a point for explaining how interest groups reduce the influence of public opinion on policy. “Intrest [*sic*] groups reduce the influence of public policy by electing officials into office to get thier [*sic*] own ideas into policy. They make deals with candidates in which when thier [*sic*] elected [officials] make the intrest groups policy [*sic*] a priority before public policy” is insufficient. To have earned this point, the response should have explained how interest groups reduce the influence of public opinion on policy. The response should have linked a plausible technique used by interest groups to a targeted policymaking institution or actor, and it should have explained that this action results in policy being made that favors the interest group over public opinion.

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## 2018 SCORING COMMENTARY

### Question 4 (continued)

Part (b) – (2 points): The response did not earn a point for explaining how newly elected presidents increase the likelihood of policy change. “If the last president in office was Republican, and in the next term a Democratic president came into office, they may change policies that don’t [sic] reflect their [sic] ideology” is insufficient. To have earned this point, the response would have had to explain that the president would be more likely to pass policy through Congress or use a tool at his disposal. The response earned 1 point for a correct explanation of how a national crisis increases the likelihood of policy change. “When there is a national crisis and the nation is in danger, policy limiting people [sic] rights may be implemented. For example in *Korematsu v US*, the president limited the rights of the Japanese [sic] even though none of them were reported to be spies.”

Part (c) – (2 points): The response earned 1 point for a correct description of the role of the courts in the policy process. “When the court makes precedents they indirectly [sic] say what is and what isn’t [sic] allowed.” The response earned a second point for a correct description of the role of the media in the policy process. “The media plays a role by informing the public. If the media gives biased information, it could lead to the public changing their [sic] opinion on certain topics.”

**Sample: 4C**

**Score: 1**

Part (a) – (1 point): The response did not earn a point. “Some interest [sic] groups can reduce influence of public opinion on policy by gathering information, facts, + charts showing actual evidence” is insufficient. To have earned this point, the response should have explained how interest groups reduce the influence of public opinion on policy by linking a plausible technique used by interest groups to a targeted policymaking institution or actor, and explaining that this action results in policy being made that favors the interest group over public opinion.

Part (b) – (2 points): The response did not earn a point for explaining how newly elected presidents increase the likelihood of policy change. “A newly elected president can affect policy because of the new point of view that is now head of the country” is insufficient. To have earned this point, the response should have explained that the president would be more likely to pass policy through Congress or use an instrument such as executive orders to change public policy. The response did not earn a point for explaining how a national crisis increases the likelihood of policy change. The response that “if something could have been done to prevent it, or something to stop the national crisis after, they will implement that policy as soon as possible” is insufficient. To have earned this point, the response should have referred to a policymaking institution or an instrument used by a policymaking institution to affect policy change as a result of a national crisis.

Part (c) – (2 points): The response did not earn a point for a description of the role of the courts in the policy process. To have earned this point, the response should have correctly described an action that courts can take to influence the policy process. The response earned 1 point for correctly describing a role of the media in the policy process. “The media also plays a major role, because it shows us what is happening in the capitol and how the policy is doing, while also spreading information that could affect the policy.”