



AP[®] GO/PO U.S. 2004 Sample Student Responses

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4.

a) Trust and confidence in politicians has declined over the past due to the concept of a divided government, or separation of powers. Divided government is the separation of powers between the 3 branches of government: the legislative, executive, and judicial branches. These branches must work together to accomplish anything, yet that is hardly the case most of the time. Most of the time, all people hear about is bickering and arguing between branches. President vetoed this, Congress didn't confirm or satisfy this, the Supreme Court ruled this unconstitutional, that is all people hear. During campaigns, candidates make all these promises, most of which can't be fulfilled. A presidential candidate claims he/she will introduce a bill, but Congress doesn't like it so he/she can't. This has led to distrust.

b) The increased cost of election campaigning has done two things: contributed to the corruption of politicians and created more campaign advertising, most of it negative. PAC's contribute money, in exchange for something to aid them, which has led to candidates worrying more about pleasing PAC's than their own constituency. Also, most of

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goes towards negative advertisement, which attempts to lower ~~the~~ the candidate's image, which would naturally lower the confidence the people have in him/her also. Between corruption and negative campaigning, ~~it~~ it is a small wonder there is any confidence in the government.

- c) This distrust in politicians has led to the rise of demagogues - leaders who make choices based on the opinion of public, not necessarily ~~the~~ ~~is~~ the correct of action. Politicians will do much to please the rabble, since they are the ones who ultimately have the power.

Negative advertising has now stipulated that any candidate must have a clean history, since the opposition will take any mistake and blow it out of proportion, leading to distrust. In this upcoming election, ~~the~~ Republicans have picked apart ~~John~~ John Kerry for throwing away his medals, while Kerry has been claiming ~~that~~ Bush went AWOL during his tour in the service. With ads like this running, which candidate can the public trust?

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Divided government has caused a loss of trust and confidence in our government in recent years. A divided government is when the President is one party, say Republicans and the Congress is the other, Democrat. People don't trust the divided government because it is so slow. When the Republicans say an issue and legislation is proposed, it is almost guaranteed to take a long time to pass. If one side or the other disagrees, it will try and kill the bill, which means nothing is ever accomplished. To get something done, with a divided government, people must cross party lines and that rarely happens.

Increased campaign costs have also contributed to a decline in trust in our government. With campaign costs so much, candidates must get their funds somewhere. That place is usually interest groups. Once people know that you are financed by an interest group, they know that you are generally a slave to them and don't trust you.

The decline in trust in government has had many consequences. One such consequence is the ^{rise of the} independent candidate. If a candidate can run their campaign off his/her own money, they can claim they are free of interest group influences and will work just for whom they were elected by. Also, the decline of trust has led to people voting across party lines. This is perhaps for the best because people vote for the candidate who is best suited for the job or whose policies they agree with most, not just based on any party lines.

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Divided government is when one party controls the presidency and another party controls one or both houses of Congress. In a divided government the President and Congress are constantly competing to get their bills, policies, and appointments passed. As a result ~~there~~ there is usually a lot of ~~grid~~ legislative gridlock. In order to get around the gridlock and achieve their objectives, each branch tries to ~~overturn~~ ^{overturn} or circumvent the other branch. The president may use several vetoes. In turn the Congress may unite to overturn the president's veto with a 2/3 vote. The president may use executive order or interpret & enforce laws passed by Congress ~~as~~ as he sees fit in order to undermine the powers of Congress. Congress may not pass the president's budget, cut spending for his favorite programs or not confirm his nominees for federal appointments in order to display their power. This struggle for power is responsible ^{a decline in} for a public trust and confidence in the government. When the government is quarrelsome, fighting for power, and undermining the powers of the other branches it appears weak as a whole & public confidence in it decreases.

The increased cost of election campaigns have forced many politicians to abuse the loopholes in campaign finance reforms. Such manipulation of campaign finance regulation makes the candidate & government in general look untrustworthy.

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Other times in order to obtain a sufficient amount of money to run a campaign, a candidate may accept contributions for opposing interest groups. This causes the candidate to look either untrustworthy for receiving support from both sides of an issue or weak because he is indecisive. ^{Since} these are possible ~~the~~ qualities of all candidates, manipulating, untrustworthy, weak, and indecisive, it is understandable there is a decline in trust & confidence in the government. The government is made up of winning candidates, therefore government is likely to reflect those same negative qualities.

The decline in trust and confidence of the government has caused a decrease in voter turnout. People don't want to take part in a system that they don't feel is honest or are confident in to represent & protect them. People aren't interested ⁱⁿ participating in a system they don't have faith in. ~~Another~~ Another consequence of the decline in trust & confidence in government is the increase in independent parties. Many people associate the Democratic & Republican parties with government, the government they no longer trust or have faith in. As a result they distance themselves from the two major parties. Some of these people still have a desire to participate in political system so they join an independent party.