

**AP<sup>®</sup> UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS  
2009 SCORING GUIDELINES**

**Question 4**

**6 points**

**Part (a): 1 point**

One point is earned for a correct definition of policy agenda. A correct definition must include each of the following:

- A policy agenda is a set of issues, problems, or subjects
- that gets the attention of/is viewed as important by
- people involved in policymaking (e.g., government officials, government decision-makers).

**Part (b): 1 point**

One point is earned for a correct explanation of how the national news media engage in agenda setting. A correct explanation must include each of the following:

- Raise awareness, provide information, draw attention, demonstrate the importance or consequences of the problem, or get the public's attention.
- Get the attention of government/policymakers.

**Part (c): 1 point**

One point is earned for an explanation of the primary reason the president has an advantage over Congress in gaining media attention. A correct response must include the following:

- An explanation that the president is one person, while Congress is composed of many members.
- An explanation of how that fact gives the president an advantage over Congress in gaining media attention.

Possible explanations might include:

- The president speaks with a single voice, while Congress has many voices.
- The president represents the nation; members of Congress represent states/districts.
- The president is the national leader/leader of the country.
- The president is more powerful than any single member of Congress.
- The president has constitutional powers that Congress does not have.

**Part (d): 2 points**

One point is earned for each of two responses: one explaining the difference in viewing patterns of older and younger age-groups, and one explaining the change in viewing habits from 1974 to 2002 for all age-groups:

- Young people view less TV news than older people./Older people view more TV news than younger people.
- People in all age categories viewed less TV news in 2002 than they did in 1974.

**AP<sup>®</sup> UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS  
2009 SCORING GUIDELINES**

**Question 4 (continued)**

**Part (e): 1 point**

One point is earned for describing one implication for presidents in their use of the media to promote their objectives to the public. The answer must state at least one of the following:

- Presidents must rely on alternative media to gain the attention of the public.
- Presidents purposely target older viewers through the use of nightly news programs.
- The nightly news is not as effective in promoting the president's agenda as it used to be.

A score of zero (0) is assigned to an attempted answer that earns no points.

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

A policy agenda is a set of important issues that the national government intends to focus on. The policy agenda is greatly influenced by the news media. ~~The~~ By choosing what issues to cover, the news media affects which issues the voters think are important, which in turn influences policy agenda. For instance, the media's heavy coverage of the current economic crisis has caused the economy to be one of the top priorities on the government's policy agenda.

The President is often able to gain media attention to promote his agenda because he is the national figurehead & a well-known, popular figure. Because there are so many members of Congress, few are well-known enough to gain substantial media attention.

The table above displays that younger people (under 30) are less likely to frequently watch the nightly news than are older people. In general, the older people are, the more likely it is that they will view

4A<sub>2</sub>  
of 2

4

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

the nightly news. From 1974 to 2002, the ~~overall~~ percentage of viewers that watched frequently decreased, & the percentage of viewers that watched rarely increased for all age groups. Because of this trend, presidents may choose to diversify the types of media that they use to promote their agenda. Specifically, many citizens now use the Internet to gain political knowledge, & it would be advantageous for the president to use that medium.

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

4B  
lot 2

The policy agenda is very important to politics and it can be influenced by many factors, a large one being ~~the~~ the news media. (a) Policy agenda is the order of importance of all of the different issues on the table. (b) The national news media engages in agenda setting by bringing certain issues to the forefront of people's minds. When all the news talks about is one issue, that issue becomes important to the people, so ~~the government~~ politicians are forced to move it up on their unofficial policy agenda.

The president has quite a large impact on the policy agenda because of his or her access to the media. (c) The people of the United States like to know what their president is up to, so he appears in the news a lot more frequently than individual members of Congress.

(d) The table presented gives some insight into the viewing of, and potential impact of the nightly news. It can be seen that the older age groups are a lot more in tune with the news ~~that~~ than the younger age groups. It can also be seen that from 1974 to 2002 the viewing from all age

4.

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

4B  
2 of 2

groups has decreased. The president could use this information to better decide how they want to use their media access. (e) One implication for the president would be they <sup>would</sup> want to target the older age groups when in contact with the media. He or she knows that older age groups watch the nightly news more, so they should address them more through the media.

a) Policy agenda - what you want to accomplish or say in the policy.

b) The media can bring up an agenda of what they think the American people will care about even if it's not on their minds. As soon as the media says this is important people start demanding for it to be put on the agenda. It gives the issue just enough publicity to get on the agenda and the president usually does put it on the agenda.

c) The citizens of the U.S. usually look up to the president for guidance rather than looking at Congress. ~~the~~ American people have this perception that he makes all the major decisions and he represents us so we should listen to him and what he proposes.

d) The older you are the more likely you are to view the news nightly. The younger you are the less likely you are to view nightly news.

- In 1974 you had there was a clear consensus if you would watch the nightly news. Now in 2018 there is not a clear answer and it's about a lesser amount of people.

->

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

4C  
2012

e) If the president makes a nightly news appearance to talk about his policy objectives he of course will not be as ~~the~~ watched as in the 1970s but he will have the majority of people watching. More people will be commenting on his views and listening to his views so it would be a good decision for him to do that.



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

## 2009 SCORING COMMENTARY

### Question 4

#### Overview

This question was designed to evaluate several aspects of students' performance: their ability to read a table and apply information from a table in a meaningful way to a substantive question; their understanding of the policy agenda and of the national media and its role in the agenda-setting process; and their knowledge of how presidents and the Congress use the media. The question asked students (1) to define the policy agenda; (2) to explain how the national news media engage in agenda setting; (3) to explain the primary reason the president tends to have an advantage over Congress in gaining media attention; (4) to describe the difference in nightly news viewing patterns of older and younger age-groups and the change from 1974 to 2002 in viewing habits that exists for all age categories; and (5) to describe one implication for presidents in their use of the media to promote their political and policy objectives to the American public.

#### Sample: 4A

##### Score: 5

In part (a) the response earned 1 point for defining policy agenda: "a set of important issues that the national government intends to focus on."

In part (b) the response earned 1 point for explaining how the national news media engage in agenda setting: "the news media affects which issues the voters think are important, which in turn influences . . . the government's policy agenda."

In part (c) the response does not include a correct primary reason or explanation why the president tends to have an advantage over Congress in gaining media attention. The term "figurehead" is too vague to serve as an explanation.

In part (d) the response earned 1 point for describing the difference in viewing patterns of older and younger age-groups: "younger people (under 30) are less likely to frequently watch the nightly news than are older people." The response earned 1 point for describing the change from 1974 to 2002 in viewing habits that exists for all age categories: "From 1974 to 2002, the percentage of viewers that watched frequently decreased."

In part (e) the response earned a point for describing one implication for presidents in their use of the media to promote their political and policy objectives to the American public: "presidents may choose to diversify the types of media that they use to promote their agenda."

#### Sample: 4B

##### Score: 4

In part (a) the response offers an incorrect definition of policy agenda and earned no point.

In part (b) the response earned 1 point for explaining how the national news media engage in agenda setting: "by bringing certain issues to the forefront of people's minds . . . that issue becomes important to the people, so politicians are forced to move it up on their unofficial policy agenda."

In part (c) the response does not include the correct primary reason or explanation why the president tends to have an advantage over Congress in gaining media attention and thus earned no point.

**AP<sup>®</sup> UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS  
2009 SCORING COMMENTARY**

**Question 4 (continued)**

In part (d) the response earned 1 point for describing the difference in viewing patterns of older and younger age-groups: “older age groups are a lot more in tune with the news than the younger age groups.” The response earned 1 point for describing the change from 1974 to 2002 in viewing habits that exists for all age categories: “from 1974 to 2002 the viewing from all age groups has decreased.”

In part (e) the response earned 1 point for describing one implication for presidents in their use of the media to promote their political and policy objectives to the American public: “they would want to target the older age groups. . . . He or she knows that older age groups watch the nightly news more.”

**Sample: 4C**

**Score: 2**

In part (a) the response does not include a correct definition of policy agenda and so earned no point.

In part (b) the response earned 1 point for explaining how the national news media engage in agenda setting: they “bring up an agenda of what . . . the American people will care about. . . . [P]eople start demanding for it to be put on the agenda . . . and the president usually does put it on the agenda.”

In part (c) the response does not include a correct primary reason or explanation why the president tends to have an advantage over Congress in gaining media attention and so earned no point.

In part (d) the response earned 1 point for describing the difference in viewing patterns of older and younger age-groups: “The older you are the more likely you are to view the news nightly.” The response does not include a description of the change from 1974 to 2002 in viewing habits that exists for all age categories, and thus it failed to earn a point.

In part (e) the response does not include a correct implication for presidents in their use of the media to promote their political and policy objectives to the American public, and therefore it did not earn a point.