

**AP[®] UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS
2011 SCORING GUIDELINES**

Question 2

6 points

Part (a): 2 points

One point is earned for each correct identification of a characteristic of a valid, scientific public opinion poll. Acceptable characteristics may include the following:

- Randomized sample
- Representative sample
- Question wording (unbiased, unambiguous)
- Large sample size/low margin of error

Part (b): 2 points

One point is earned for a correct explanation of why each of the following enhances the influence of public opinion on the voting decisions of members of Congress.

- Strong public opinion as expressed in polling results
 - Because of the desire to get reelected/electoral ambition
 - Because of the perceived obligation/duty to represent their constituents
- Competitive reelections
 - Because of the desire to get reelected

Part (c): 2 points

One point is earned for a correct explanation of why each of the following limits the influence of public opinion on the voting decisions of members of Congress.

- Legislators' voting records
 - To avoid being perceived as indecisive by voters/supporters
- Party leadership:
 - To avoid the risk of losing party support
 - To gain party support

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

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

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

- a) A valid public opinion poll requires a simple random sample of population and non-biased questioning so ~~as to~~ not to influence the questionee to answer in a particular fashion i.e., lying or untruthful, how they think you want them to answer.
- b) A stronger public opinion expressed in polling results influence the voting decisions of members of congress because they are elected to represent the people, and if they want to keep their positions they will accurately represent the people.
- Akin to influence of polling results ^{due to} the competitive re-election ~~process~~ members of congress, the power of re-election lies in the hands of the people, to do their job as representatives they must represent the people, and if they do not, the people will elect someone who will.
- c) To maintain integrity as a member of congress, they must maintain consistency in their voting record, because if they don't, and their votes constantly vary and waver on each matter, as the public's opinion might, they will be replaced with a more consistent and reliable congressman who understands thoroughly his position and how it pertains to government and the people they represent.
- Party leadership limits the influence of public opinion by delegating party whips to instill party loyalty despite

2A

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

2A

2012

the matter of public opinion, because the party is more knowledgeable and understanding of legislators and how it will affect the people in short & long term affects, whereas the people do not always have that perspective or understanding.

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2B

An important means for members of Congress to understand the views of their constituents is to conduct public opinion polls. One characteristic of a valid, scientific, public opinion poll is to make sure the ^{random} sample size of the poll is large enough to represent the true views of their constituents. It is difficult to conduct a poll that will reach every single ~~one~~ one of a member of Congress' constituents, so as long as the sample size is large enough the poll will be a valid, scientific, public opinion poll that will help link the public with elected officials. Another characteristic of a valid, scientific, public opinion poll, is to make sure the questions asked do not push the ~~idea~~ ^{constituents} ~~idea~~ ^{to} a certain ~~direction~~ answer. If the wording of the question includes bias swaying the constituents to answer in a certain way the poll will not be a valid, scientific, public opinion poll that represents the views of the members of Congress' constituents.

Strong public opinion as expressed in polling results ^{enhances the} influences of public opinion on voting decisions of members of Congress because

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members of Congress are supposed to represent their constituents views, so in order to win re-election it is imperative to listen to the strong public opinion of a member's constituents. ~~Strong~~ Since members of Congress are there to vote on decisions their constituents support, very strong public opinion expressed in polling results will convince members of Congress to vote in a way that will satisfy the want expressed by his or her constituents. Competitive re-elections also enhance the influence of public opinion on the voting decisions of members of Congress because ^{one of} members of Congress' main goal is to win re-election and if members of Congress do not pay close attention to public opinion of their constituents, they will not win re-election. Competitive re-elections thus show the importance of members of Congress paying close attention to their constituents' ~~public~~ public opinion.

There are also many obstacles that limit the influence of public opinion on the voting decisions of members of Congress. For example, one limit is a legislator's voting records. ~~A legislator's~~

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2 B

~~During recess~~ Often if Legislators' voting records have been the same for several years, regardless of ~~the~~ public opinion members of Congress will continue to vote the same way. ~~because~~.

Party leadership also limits the influence of public opinion on the voting decisions of members of Congress because members of Congress may vote in ~~favor~~^{favor} of the views the leader of the party has regardless of public opinion.

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(2 C)

2.

A. Two characteristics of a valid, scientific, public opinion poll could be:

1. Political ideology
2. Views on a certain issue

B. • Strong public opinion would influence the voting decisions of the members of congress because they want to please the people.

If they know the public felt strongly about a vote congress would try to vote with the people to improve their approval rate.

• Competitive re-elections could influence the voting of congress because they would want to please the people so they could make it back to office. They would want the people to want them back in congress.

C. • Legislators' voting records would influence public opinion on voting decisions because the public could see how that certain legislator voted in the past, to see if they are for or against your views. You want to make sure you know what kind of views your legislator has.

• Party leadership could influence public opinion on voting decisions to make sure you have the same views as your legislator. If your views differ from the legislator

2012

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running for office you may not want
to vote for them. The party leadership
plays a big role in voting.

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2011 SCORING COMMENTARY

Question 2

Overview

The intent of this question was to examine students' knowledge of scientific public opinion polling, how public opinion influences voting decisions of members of Congress, and how other political factors minimize the influence of public opinion on congressional decision making. The question asked students to (a) identify two characteristics of a valid, scientific public opinion poll; (b) explain why strong public opinion as expressed in polls and competitive reelections enhances the influence of public opinion on the voting decisions of members of Congress; and (c) explain why a legislator's voting record and party leadership limit the influence of public opinion on the voting decisions of members of Congress. This question required students to demonstrate a familiarity with scientific public opinion polls and the interconnection between public opinion, as measured by those polls, and voting decisions by members of Congress.

Sample: 2A

Score: 6

In part (a) the response earned 1 point for identifying "random sample" as a characteristic of a scientific public opinion poll. The response also earned 1 point for identifying "non-biased questioning" as another characteristic of a scientific public opinion poll.

In part (b) the response earned 1 point for correctly explaining why strong public opinion enhances the influence of public opinion on the voting decisions of members of Congress by stating that "if they want to keep their positions they will accurately represent the people." The response earned 1 point for explaining why competitive reelections enhance the influence of public opinion on the voting decisions of members of Congress: "[T]hey must represent the people, and if they do not, the people will elect someone who will."

In part (c) the response earned 1 point for explaining why a legislator's voting record limits the influence of public opinion on the voting decision of members of Congress: Legislators "must maintain consistency in their voting record" or they "will be replaced with a more consistent and reliable congressman." Here the student correctly recognizes that the member of Congress will lose the support of voters. The response earned 1 point for correctly explaining why party leadership limits the influence of public opinion: "[P]arty whips . . . instill party loyalty despite the matter of public opinion."

Sample: 2B

Score: 4

In part (a) the response earned 1 point for correctly identifying "random sample" as a characteristic of a scientific public opinion poll and 1 point for also identifying "large" as a characteristic of such a poll.

In part (b) the response earned 1 point for explaining why strong public opinion enhances the influence of public opinion on the voting decisions of members of Congress: "[I]n order to win re-election it is imperative to listen to the strong public opinion of a members [sic] constituents." The response earned 1 point for explaining why competitive reelections enhance the influence of public opinion on the voting decisions of members of Congress: "[O]ne of members of Congress' main goal [sic] is to win re-election and if members of Congress do not pay close attention to public opinion of their constiteonts [sic], they will not win re-election."

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Question 2 (continued)

In part (c) the response did not earn any points because it does not adequately explain why a legislator's voting record limits the influence of public opinion on the voting decision of members of Congress and why party leadership limits the influence of public opinion.

**Sample: 2C
Score: 1**

In part (a) the response does not identify two characteristics of a scientific public opinion poll and therefore earned no points.

In part (b) the response does not link improving the "approval rate" of members of Congress to reelection so did not earn a point for explaining why strong public opinion enhances the influence of public opinion on the voting decisions of members. However, the response earned 1 point for explaining that competitive reelections enhance the influence of public opinion on the voting decisions of members of Congress by making legislators "want to please the people so they could make it back to office."

In part (c) the response incorrectly explains why a legislator's voting record limits the influence of public opinion on the voting decision of members of Congress and therefore did not earn a point. Similarly, the response does not correctly explain why party leadership limits the influence of public opinion and thus earned no point.