

# AP<sup>®</sup> UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS 2012 SCORING GUIDELINES

## Question 4

**6 points**

**Part (a): 2 points**

One point is earned for each correct description of a technique used by interest groups to influence elections.

Techniques include:

campaign contributions	GOTV efforts
candidate ratings	independent expenditures
endorsements	issue ads
501(c)4	PACs
527	providing information on issue and candidates
funneling volunteers to campaigns	

Notes: Must describe a technique, not merely identify it. No double dipping on PACs and Super PACs.

**Part (b): 2 points**

One point is earned for an acceptable explanation that demonstrates **how** interest groups use issue networks (iron triangles). One point is also earned for an acceptable explanation that demonstrates **how** interest groups use amicus briefs:

- Interest groups participate in issue networks by providing money, information, and resources in hopes of obtaining political support from Congress, the bureaucracy, or the White House.
- Interest groups use amicus briefs to inform the Court in hopes of influencing the acceptance of cases, Court reasoning, or decisions.

**Part (c): 2 points**

One point is earned for a correct explanation of **how** the media acts to limit interest group influence. An additional point is earned for a correct explanation of **how** pluralism acts to limit interest group influence:

- Media can act as a gatekeeper of information or a watchdog of interest group behavior.
- Pluralism limits interest group influence because of the competition among a vast number of groups.

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

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

4. Interest groups seek to influence political processes in ways that benefit their members. In doing so, however, they may not act in the overall public interest.

- (a) Describe two techniques interest groups use to influence elections.  
 lobbying (to gain allies sympathetic), donating \$, public

(b) Explain how interest groups use each of the following to influence government decision making.  
 Amicus curiae briefs to judicial branch/S.C. in court cases w/a special interest

(55) interest group  
 (aging) congress committee  
 bureaucracy (AARP)

Issue networks (also known as iron triangles) influence to pass legislation

- (c) Explain how each of the following serves to limit interest group influence.
- The media portrays lobbying negatively and magnifies + calls public's attention to any bad decisions
  - Pluralism competing interest groups lessen the influence of just 1

Interest groups' main tool is lobbying important people such as Congressmen and supplying them with information. This can gain interest groups people sympathetic to their cause, and in return they donate to officials' campaign funds in order to get them re-elected. Interest groups also inform the public and Congressmen's constituents on issues and who to vote for. Issue networks, or iron triangles, are made up of interest groups, congressional committees, and the bureaucracy. The interest group forms an "alliance" with the other 2 sides of the triangle, which influence Congress and leads to legislation being proposed and passed in the interest group's favor. An example of an iron triangle is a Committee on Aging in Congress, the AARP, and social security beneficiaries working to pass legislation raising social security benefits. Amicus curiae briefs are a kind of "polite lobbying" that takes place in the

Unauthorized copying or reuse of any part of this page is illegal.

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE.

## ADDITIONAL ANSWER PAGE FOR QUESTION 4.

judicial branch. Interest groups with a special interest in the court case file these briefs to the Supreme Court to influence their decision in the case (amicus curiae means "friend of the Court").

The media limits ~~the~~ interest group influence by portraying the act of lobbying negatively. The media also magnifies and calls public attention to any bad decisions on the interest group's part and to an interest group or decision that is unfavorable to the general public. Pluralism also limits their influence because <sup>having</sup> competing interest groups lessens the influence of them individually. The interest groups are too busy competing amongst themselves to grow very powerful.

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE.

4. Interest groups seek to influence political processes in ways that benefit their members. In doing so, however, they may not act in the overall public interest.

- (a) Describe two techniques interest groups use to influence elections.
- (b) Explain how interest groups use each of the following to influence government decision making.

- Issue networks (also known as iron triangles)
- Amicus curiae briefs

(c) Explain how each of the following serves to limit interest group influence.

- The media
- Pluralism

There are several techniques interest groups use to influence elections. One way they try to do so is by providing campaign funds for a candidate to create commercials or other forms of advertising. Another way they influence elections is for only voting for the candidate that backs up their needs. They will endorse the candidate who will do the most to benefit for their interest group. Interest groups try to use all of the available resources to help them with their cause. The ways they use are issue networks and amicus curiae briefs. They try to get the judges on their side by reading their pre-court decisions and lobby with their employees. They also communicate with the committees in Congress as well as the bureaucracy because they control the creation and implementation of laws concerning the interests of the interest groups. They basically try to get all the people that influence or control politics on their side to benefit them. Even though interest groups play a big role in politics they are limited by the effects of pluralism and the media. The media controls what public opinion is for certain topics and controls what everybody sees or hears in the news. If they happen to disagree with an interest groups opinion they can ignore their problem completely by not giving it coverage, or they could give it negative publicity. Also interest groups can conflict with each other causing troubles between them as well as the majority of people in the country because ~~the~~ interest groups will most likely be in the minority.

Unauthorized copying or reuse of any part of this page is illegal.

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE.

4. Interest groups seek to influence political processes in ways that benefit their members. In doing so, however, they may not act in the overall public interest.
- (a) Describe two techniques interest groups use to influence elections.
- (b) Explain how interest groups use each of the following to influence government decision making.
- Issue networks (also known as iron triangles)
  - Amicus curiae briefs
- (c) Explain how each of the following serves to limit interest group influence.
- The media
  - Pluralism

Two techniques that interest groups influence elections are by convincing constituents to vote in their favor and also by giving money to their candidate so that they can get more support. Interest groups give voters what they ask for or what they need (like a job) in exchange for them to vote for a candidate. Interest groups use amicus curiae briefs in order to influence decision making by submitting a brief if there is a court case that they want

## ADDITIONAL ANSWER PAGE FOR QUESTION 4.

to influence. The amicus curiae ~~brief~~ ~~brief~~ brief pretty much tells the court that they want the outcome of the case to turn out a certain way.

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE.

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

## 2012 SCORING COMMENTARY

### Question 4

#### Overview

The intent of this question was to examine students' knowledge of how interest groups influence the political processes in ways that benefit the interest group and to examine techniques that interest groups use to influence elections. The question asked students to (a) describe two techniques interest groups use to influence elections; (b) explain how interest groups use issue networks (also known as iron triangles) and amicus curiae briefs to influence government decision making; and (c) explain how the media and pluralism place limitations on interest group influence.

#### Sample: 4A Score: 5

In part (a) the response earned 1 point for describing that one technique interest groups use to influence elections is to “donate to officials’ campaign funds in order to get them re-elected.” The response also earned 1 point for describing information as an additional technique interest groups use to influence elections by stating that “[i]nterest groups also inform the public and congressmen’s constituents on issues and who to vote for.”

In part (b) the response explains how interest groups use iron triangles to influence government decision making. The response gives an example of an iron triangle as “a Committee on Aging in Congress, the AARP, and social security beneficiaries working to pass legislation raising social security benefits.” The response does not indicate how the AARP provides resources to the committee or how the committee provides favorable outcomes for the AARP and thus did not earn a point. The response received 1 point for correctly explaining how interest groups use amicus curiae briefs to influence government decision making by stating, “Interest groups with a special interest in the court case file these briefs to the Supreme Court to influence their decision.”

In part (c) the response earned 1 point by explaining how the media limits interest group influence as it “magnifies ... any bad decisions on the interest group’s part.” The response earned an additional point by indicating how pluralism limits interest group influence: “Pluralism also limits their influence because having competing interest groups lessens the influence of them individually.”

#### Sample: 4B Score: 3

In part (a) the response earned 1 point for describing one technique interest groups use to influence elections: “providing campaign funds for a candidate to create commercials or other forms of advertising.” The response earned an additional point by stating, “They will endorse the candidate who will do the most to benefit for their interest group.”

In part (b) the response incorrectly explains how an interest group uses amicus curiae to influence government decision by stating, “They try to get the judges on their side by reading their pre-court decisions and lobby with their employees.” The response did not earn a second point as it lacks an explanation of what is exchanged or how the relationship is maintained in issue networks. The response states, “They also Communicate with the committees in Congress as well as the bureaucracy because they control the creation and implementation of laws concerning the interests of the interest groups,” which is insufficient for an explanation.

**AP<sup>®</sup> UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS**  
**2012 SCORING COMMENTARY**

**Question 4 (continued)**

In part (c) the response earned 1 point by explaining how media limits interest group influence: “The media ... controls what everybody sees or hears in the news. If they happen to disagree within interest groups opinion they can ignore their problem completely by not giving it coverage, or they could give it negative publicity.” The response did not earn a second point for explaining how pluralism limits an interest group’s influence by incorrectly stating that “interest groups can conflict with each other causing troubles between them as well as the majority of people in the country because interest groups will most likely be in the minority.”

**Sample: 4C**

**Score: 2**

In part (a) the response received 1 point for correctly describing a technique interest groups use to influence elections: “interest groups influence elections ... by convincing constituents to vote for the candidate that they favor.” The response did not earn a second point because it incorrectly describes a technique interest groups use, stating that they give “people incentives if they vote for the candidate that they want. Interest groups give voters what they ask for or what they need (like a job) in exchange for them to vote for a candidate.”

The response did not earn the first point in part (b) because it does not discuss iron triangles or issue networks. However, the response earned a point by correctly explaining how interest groups use amicus curiae briefs to influence government decision making: “Interest groups use amicus curiae briefs in order to influence decision making by submitting a brief if there is a court case that they want to influence. The amicus curiae brief pretty much tells the court that they want the outcome of the case to turnout [*sic*] a certain way.”

In part (c) the response does not provide explanations of how the media or pluralism serves to limit interest group influence and therefore did not earn any points.