

Examiners' Report
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GCE Government & Politics 6GP03 3C

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Introduction

US politics is endlessly fascinating and this year's cohort of candidates was fortunate to have been the one in four for whom live coverage of a presidential election forms part of their course. They will have experienced for themselves the forces driving an election campaign and the divisions within, as well as between, the two major parties, on vivid display. They were doubly fortunate in that the availability of US newspapers, television news channels and campaign ads on the internet brings the subject to life in a way which was unimaginable only a few years ago. It was therefore slightly surprising to examiners that in some questions which appeared to be an open invitation to demonstrate knowledge of current events, such as the short answer question on party conventions or the long one on presidential elections, there was often a lack of such detail. Only a minority of candidates for example made reference to Clint Eastwood and his chair, surely one of the more memorable episodes of recent conventions. Such events are the very stuff of the subject, and candidates should be encouraged as much as possible to watch and read about them happening and then use them in their answers.

Question 1

This was a popular question which rewarded candidates who had made even a minimal effort to keep in touch with current events in US politics. A feature of weaker answers was a description of traditional areas of division between the parties, outlining broad differences on affirmative action for example, with little or nothing on how those divisions have been apparent since 2008. Foreign policy was chosen by some candidates and this discussion was particularly prone to generalisation, often amounting to little more than an assertion that Republicans are pro-war and Democrats anti, with significant divisions within both parties on, for example, Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya. It was difficult (although not impossible) to make a strong case here. The strongest answers typically focused on three or four key issues, with detailed reference to legislative acts, votes in Congress or Party or statements by politicians providing the evidence.

The two major parties in American Politics, the Democrats and the Republicans are more deeply divided now than ever in their history. The main issue that divides them since 2008 is the introduction of the new health care package proposed by the Democrats, it is referred to as 'Obama Care' by the Republicans. It is claimed over 150 million people are without health insurance in America, the poor and elderly. The Republicans are fighting this new scheme because a new tax will be brought onto the rich to fund it, the fiscally conservatives of the Republicans are against tax increase. The Republicans have fought this in Supreme Court claiming it to be unconstitutional for the federal government to be getting involved in health care. The Supreme Court ruled in favour of the Democrats and allowed 'Obama Care'. In the vote in Congress, not a single Republican voted in favour of the policy.

You should start the answer to your second question choice on page 6

The issue of Immigration policy has also deeply divided the parties. The Democrats want less strict policies on the way immigration is dealt with however the Republicans want strict immigration laws. The Republican held state of Texas implemented policies that allowed them to stop and ask for citizenship proof from the Hispanic population. Obama took the state to the Supreme Court in 2011 and although winning the case to have the laws revoked many laws still remain in place because it is the states right to choose immigration policy on a state level.

The policy of Affirmative action has once again sparked ~~controversy~~ rivalry between the Parties, the Republicans are calling for its removal under claims it has not helped get minorities into work or higher workplace positions.

The Democrats want it to remain are using figures from the US Labour Department in 2007 to show that 500 million ethnic minorities have gained employment through this policy.

A battle in Supreme Court over its constitutional place will give its verdict in July of this year. Chief judge Roberts a Republican judge in the court has claimed "the only way to end discrimination is to end

You should start the answer to your second question choice on page 6

discriminating^{five} policies. It has been argued that this policy discriminates against white people.

In conclusion the parties now more bi-partisan than ever and many moderates have left the Republican Party since its move further right and this has left Obama and the Democrats unable to gain any support from them.



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Examiner Comments

This is a fairly typical top Level 2 response to this question. There are three points made: the first two are developed with reference to events since 2008, albeit with inaccuracies, but the third is less well-developed and doesn't make specific reference to anything said or done by a party politician. If the third point had been stronger the answer would have made it into the bottom of Level 3, but as it stands it is worth 10 marks.



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Examiner Tip

This answer has a good structure for a short answer question - three distinct points are made in separate paragraphs. If you can make your points as clearly as this, it reassures the examiner that you know what you are doing and are in control of your material. Some candidates manage four points which, if done well, will push the answer well into Level 3.

Question 2

Most answers showed an awareness of some of the formal and informal functions of conventions, usually arguing that the former had become largely redundant. The weakness in a good number of responses was the lack of detailed evidence, with knowledge from 2012 particularly, missing. It was common for candidates to be able to cite Hillary Clinton's support for Barack Obama in 2008 but little or nothing else. There were a number of recurring misconceptions, with some candidates arguing that frontloading has led to a decline in the importance of conventions, or that super delegates played a crucial role in the Democratic convention of 2008. Stronger responses showed firstly that conventions had lost their traditional functions and then evaluated the significance of the informal ones, such as party unity, enthusing the party faithful and gaining positive publicity. One stronger answer interestingly argued that the stage-managed nature of modern conventions is indicative both of their importance and their lack of it.

Although the national party conventions are important for the parties themselves they fail to hold the key functions that they used to. Traditionally, the party convention is the a key stage in the presidential elections where ~~the~~ both the party presidential candidate ~~is~~ and the vice-presidential candidate is chosen. This function although still formally present is effectively not ~~present~~ used as the presidential candidate is ~~announced~~ decided by the primaries held from January to June. The vice-presidential candidate is also chosen by the ~~president,~~ presidential candidate rather than the party itself. For example, in 2008 Obama announced Joe Biden as his running mate over one month before the August National Party Convention. Hillary Clinton, a close rival for the presidential ~~for~~ Democratic candidate in 2008, announced her support for Barack Obama at the convention demonstrating the convention's new role of portraying the party as a united force. Indeed, heated debates are normally avoided at conventions so the party does not look ideologically split and therefore weak. ~~So then~~

~~Parties~~ ~~the~~ So, party conventions ~~are~~ no longer have a meaningful role in actually choosing the president, they do have a role in presenting the party as a strong and united force.

The role of television, ~~in the~~ most particularly in the last 40 years or so has increased the importance of conventions. The party can address the public through the ~~press~~ convention. It is also the only time that the whole national party meets together for another few years and so the image of the party + its message are highly important. The presidential candidate's speech is the first real opportunity for candidate to make a good impression ~~of~~ on the whole country and ~~is that~~ it is therefore key for them to outline ~~their~~ the main message of their campaign. For example, George Bush's 'war on terror' policy and policies on Iraq were addressed in his 2004 speech while Obama's whole 2008 campaign ran on his principles of 'hope' and 'change' outlined in his speech. So while, the party no longer agrees on its party platform, the presidential candidate is able to ~~with~~ give an impression of his policies on key areas.



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Examiner Comments

This is another top Level 2 response which was awarded 10 marks. It is reasonably comprehensive and uses evidence from three recent conventions to support its points, but it could be improved in two important respects. Firstly, the most recent evidence is always the strongest, and it is surprising that no reference is made to either of the 2012 conventions, as there was certainly a lot to comment on. Secondly, there is little attempt to evaluate the significance of the points made; the opportunity for the candidates to address a national audience is referred to, for example, but no indication is given of its likely effectiveness. Some candidates made the point that the intensity of the modern media campaign is such that it is unlikely the candidate will have much new to say by the time the convention comes around.



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Examiner Tip

Try to keep up with what is going on in American politics - the use of a recent example immediately lifts the quality of your answer, and as you will have seen or read about it yourself, you can comment on its significance with much more confidence and authority.

Question 3

Some of the answers to this question were strangely one-sided. Many candidates were hazy about the powers of the Senate, but there were also a good number of answers which focused just on those powers and neglected pressure group methods almost entirely. Consequently there were a lot of answers placed in mid-Level 2, either focusing on how or why, while the strongest answers of course had a balance of both. Many covered the ratification of treaties, the ratification of appointments, as well as the Senate's legislative function and the use of the filibuster. Some of the most effective answers were able to link the filibuster with specific pressure groups, explaining how it could be currently used by conservative pressure groups seeking to limit Obama's agenda, and many used the filibuster of the Dream Act to make this point. AIPAC were sometimes cited in relation to the Senate's power to ratify treaties but very few linked this with an actual treaty, and little credit could be given to the often made claim that senators were easier to influence because there are only 100 of them.

The Senate is made up of 100 Senators. Every Senator has the power to filibuster legislation and a super-majority is ~~recog~~ required to ~~break this~~ pass a bill in spite of this. Furthermore, treaties have to be ratified by the Senate, as do Gov. appointments.

The first and most obvious method of influencing the Senate is money. Senate campaigns, due to their state wide nature, are extremely expensive to run and so Senators enormous donations to be able to campaign. For example, American Crossroads (a conservative pressure group) gave £300 million to 30 candidates in the 2012 election cycle. The hope is that Senators will then vote and speak in favour of the donors in the Senate.

You should start the answer to your third question choice on page 9

Another way of influencing the Senate is through the so called "revolving door" of lobbyists, usually ex-senators. ~~These tend to be ex-co~~ These people then try and convince Senators to vote in their favour of their special interests. The revolving door can also be offered

The revolving door can also be offered to senators for a career after congress to influence their choices while in it. For example Billy Tauzin, head of the committee that put through ~~the~~ Medicare Part D, that banned the Federal Gov from negotiating prices of drugs, left congress to a \$12m a year job at PhRMA, soon after.

(a pressure group)

There are three main reasons that a pressure group would want to influence the Senate:

1) Groups opposed to the current administration; due to the filibuster only one senator needed to defeat leg., which makes senate easiest access point to block eg Rep. and DREAM Act.

2) Groups interested in foreign policy. As the senate must ratify all treaties and there are several committees with influence over foreign policy

You should start the answer to your third question choice on page 9

Pressure groups such as AIPAC, the pro-Israel Group will have a particular interest in the Senate.

3) Lastly, groups that are interested in blocking Gov. appointments as they have to be ratified by the Senate. For example, AIPAC successfully prevented Susan Rice becoming Secretary of State. Liberal pressure groups also attempted to prevent Robert Berk's appointment to the SC by spending over \$15m.



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Examiner Comments

This answer has a sufficient range and detail to get into the bottom of Level 3 and it was awarded 12 marks. There are three reasons given why pressure groups should wish to influence the Senate and two methods cited which they might use. All are developed and supported with evidence; the reference to the expense of state-wide elections and the involvement of American Crossroads in 2012 is a nice touch, although it would have been better still if the group's lack of success had been acknowledged. A couple of points aren't completely convincing; Billy Tauzin was a member of the House of Representatives rather than a senator before becoming a lobbyist, and there is nothing on record to suggest that AIPAC campaigned against Susan Rice's nomination. Nevertheless, this is a good answer.

Question 4

While this was the least popular question, virtually every answer demonstrated an understanding of social conservatism in the US and could show evidence both for and against its success. Some candidates covered policies which are not clearly related to social conservatism such as the economy and the Affordable Care Act, while others focused on factions within the parties, looking at the rise of The Tea Party and the decline of Blue Dog Democrats, often leading to a lack of focus on social conservative *aims*. Answers reaching Level 3 typically took three or four aims of social conservatives and provided evidence and analysis both for and against the success of each aim. Stronger candidates could give several pieces of evidence on each side using contemporary examples - for example, on abortion, many cited *Roe v Wade* on the one hand, and the Partial Birth legislation, state restrictions and the Obama executive order on the Stupak amendment, on the other.

This response was awarded 11 marks.

The social conservatives are a faction of the Republican party that hold strongly conservative views on social issues such as abortion, gay rights and marriage and gun-control. Their aims are to restore the US to the conservative model that it used to be and try and prevent liberal movements. They are strong believers of the right to life which may be partly due to the strong religious beliefs a lot of the social conservatives hold. One of their aims is to make abortion illegal. They have not achieved this nationally and it is unlikely that they will with opposition from pro-choice groups, however they have made some difference at state level, particularly in predominantly republican states. In some states the social conservatives

You should start the answer to your third question choice on page 9

have managed to ban abortion, or if not ban it, at least make it alot harder for a women to get an abortion. For example in some states, women are made to have an ultra-sound and listen to their babies heart beat before they can have an abortion.

Another area of concern for the social conservatives is gun control. The social conservatives are very anti-gun control as they believe in the 5th Amendment 'the right to bear arms'. An example of a social conservative is Sarah Palin who is a keen activist against gun-control. social cons not only believe in the right to bear arms, but the right to use them also. In this sense they have been successful with laws such as the 'stand your ground' law, which allows gun owners to shoot someone on their property if they feel in danger.

Another key issue for the social cons is gay marriage in which they are strongly against. Again this is not an

You should start the answer to your third question choice on page 9

issue they have been successful with nationally, however in many republican states they have had some success. For example in California, strongly conservative pressure groups got a ballot initiative in the election where members of the state of California voted in favour of proposition 8 and the banning of gay marriage, so in some areas they have been successful.



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Examiner Comments

There are three points made which are well explained and supported in each case by relevant examples. To get higher marks, it needs just a bit more detail and precision; a reference to *Roe v Wade* for example would have been highly relevant in the paragraph on abortion.



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Examiner Tip

One of the best features of this answer is the use of current examples, such as 'Stand Your Ground' and proposition 8, and it again emphasises the need to keep up-to-date with the politics news.

Question 5

This was the most popular short answer question with most candidates being able to outline at least three reasons for the loyalty of black voters to the Democrats. The commonest factors cited were Democratic support for the civil rights movement and affirmative action, economic and welfare policy favouring the less well-off and the selection of Barack Obama as a presidential candidate. A significant number of candidates wrote an introductory paragraph, explaining the extent of loyalty by giving recent voting figures, but without any link to *why* black voters are so loyal. A small number of candidates still believe that the Democrats ended slavery, and rather more discussed immigration policy, citing for example President Obama's support for the Dream Act, which was at best only marginally rewardable.

The majority of candidates focused more on the 'pull' factors than the 'push' away from the Republicans, where there is plenty of contemporary evidence to discuss, such as recent attempts in some Republican-controlled states to strengthen voting ID requirements.

Black voters are loyal to the Democratic party and have been since the mid 1960's. This is due to the part the party played in advancing the civil rights movement by the Democratic party. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 gave black people, African Americans, equal status across the US. Black voters have tended to continue this support. The Democrats usually register around 90%+ of the Black vote.

The Democrats have also supported more supportive of black Americans, the first Presidential nominee, and indeed the first President of the United States, is a Democrat, Barack Obama. The continued commitment to the elevation of black people is a reason for the continued support shown to the Democrats.

The Democratic Party has also always been an advocate of affirmative action. Affirmative action is legislation and guarantees which require the hiring

You should start the answer to Section B on page 13

of black workers and the admission of black students into colleges and schools. Black people will continue to vote for a party which supports their socio-economic elevation within society. Bill Clinton, during his presidency had issues with affirmative action but was still a supporter of the program, commenting that it should 'be mended not ended'.

Finally black voters tend to be lower income households, with the average salary of a black man in America ^{around} \$32,000. Lower income families will support the democratic recent legislation such as the 2007 fair minimum wage act, raising minimum wage per \$5.15 to \$7.25 and the 2010 Democrat Healthcare Act, or Obama care. These policies largely favor low income families and as black people fall into this category it could be a reason for their continued support.



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Examiner Comments

There are four points made here, all rewardable, and sufficient to place this answer at the top of Level 2, but again just lacking the detail and precision to go any higher. There are obvious details which could be added to the first two points and, while expression might not be perfect in the rush of an exam, the reference to the 'issues' President Clinton had with affirmative action could be put more precisely. It is impressive though that the figures from the Minimum Wage Act of 2007 are remembered correctly. 10 marks were awarded for this response.

Question 6

All centres will by now be aware of the inclusion of issues important to Latinos in the US in the 'Racial and Ethnic Politics' section of the specification, and a short answer on immigration reform appeared in the June 2012 paper. This long answer question proved to be very much a specialist interest, and by some way the least popular of the three such questions on the paper, but there were nevertheless some impressive answers. Given the gap between the president's promises as a candidate and his achievement in office, the challenge for candidates was to mount a credible defence to the quotation in the question. However, stronger candidates were able to discuss the attempts to push the Dream Act through Congress and subsequent executive action to implement it in practice without congressional approval. Weaker candidates had often heard of the Dream Act but little else, and even then sometimes mixed it up with the Texas Dream Act and its role in the 2012 Republican primary.

When Barack Obama was running for President initially in 2008 he made a set of campaign pledges concerning immigration; namely to bring about reform that would bring 11.2m illegal immigrants 'out of the shadows' and put them on the course to full citizenship. However, when running for re-election in 2012, Obama said failure to ~~do~~ properly do anything with immigration was his biggest 'regret'. Thus, due to this seeming lack of action, some observers and Latinos have suggested his administration has 'a record of total failure on immigration reform'. The following essay shall analyse the arguments for and against this notion, concluding to what extent it is ultimately true.

Firstly, the Obama administration could be seen to have a 'record of total failure' on immigration when one considers that no comprehensive reform has been legislated upon. Indeed, no immigration bill has properly gone through congress since 2009 and ~~the~~ nothing has been done to address the 'illegal' status of the 11.2m illegal migrants. Although Obama did give his support to the

DREAM Act, a proposed bill that would allow illegal migrants who entered the US as children and graduated from a US high school the chance to become full citizens, it ~~was~~ was only put before congress in a lame-duck session. Moreover, it was only seen as half-hearted as liberals criticised it for being too partial, and ^{the} Conservatives for supposedly awarding unwarranted amnesties. Thus, the Obama administration's record on immigration can be seen as a failure to a large extent as it has done nothing to properly address immigration in a legislative sense despite promising to do so.

However, the Obama administration has not left the issue of immigration completely untouched between 2009-2013. Indeed, it seems to have made other attempts to address ~~the complications concerning~~ immigration and to appease the heavily migrant-based Latino community. For instance, it took legal action against individual state's anti-immigration bills, ie. Alabama's H56 and Arizona's SB1070, the latter of which made it an offence for non-citizens not to carry immigration papers. Furthermore, the deportation of 300,000 'low priority' illegals was suspended. This series of conciliatory gestures made by the Obama administration shows it perhaps doesn't have a record of "total failure".

on immigration reform, as it ^{still} has tried to tackle the complications, problems and tensions surrounding immigration in the US in other ways outside of legislating in Congress.

Despite this, the ways in which the Obama administration has taken a hardline on border security suggest it has failed with regards to immigration reform. In 2009/2010, spending on border security rose by \$2bn, and the number of deportations rose by 34,000 between 2008 and 2010, all of which indicates that Obama has taken a tougher approach to securing America's borders. Whilst this in itself is not necessarily a criticism of Obama's immigration policy, the fact that similarly drastic action has not been taken in terms of actually reforming the issue and dealing with the status of many 'illegals' shows the current administration is acting in a way which is unbalanced and counter-productive to what Obama promised in 2008. In turn, ~~this~~ Obama's record on immigration reform can be seen as a ^{total} failure to a great extent due to its imbalances.

Following on from this though, it may be overly harsh to judge the Obama administration's record on immigration reform as a 'total failure' when looking

at the Republican Congress it has had to work alongside. After the 2010 mid-term elections, the Republicans regained control of the House of Representatives, buoyed by the influence and politics of the ultra right-wing Tea Party movement. Many Republican politicians have subsequently been very obstructionist to what they perceive as Obama's liberal agenda. Indeed, one of the many issues they have been hostile towards is immigration reform, i.e. ~~some~~ many have backed the idea of 'self-deportation' as espoused by Mitt Romney in the 2012 Republican primaries. As a result, it is not hard to see why ~~the~~ Obama has done little on immigration as it is likely any proposal he put forward would have simply been voted down by Republicans, thus suggesting his administration's record cannot be seen as a 'total failure' as it has been prevented from taking meaningful action.

Having said this, it was still possible for Obama to have legislated over immigration in the first two-years of his term when his party, the Democrats, had control over both houses of Congress. Instead, Obama chose to spend his political capital elsewhere, namely on reforming healthcare via the Affordable Care and Patient Protection Act (2010). Whilst this wasn't necessarily a bad thing for the administration to do in a general political

sense, the fact ~~it~~ it didn't act meaningfully on immigration reform when it had its best opportunity too suggests Obama thought it was an issue worth neglecting. Consequently, his record on immigration can be seen as largely a failure due to such a 'wasted' chance.

However, since Obama has won a second term, to call his record on immigration reform a "total failure" may be an overly harsh, premature judgement. Indeed, following his landslide electoral college victory (332 votes to 206), it seems Obama has the ~~majority~~ confidence of the American people, and with no third election to contest, he has much less to lose politically over immigration. Indeed, the White House has suggested ~~it~~ Obama will put before congress a comprehensive reform package within the next few months of his second term. Moreover, Republicans in Congress seem to be ^{increasingly} more lenient to the idea of reform as well, i.e. ²⁰¹⁶ Republican presidential front-runners Marco Rubio and Paul Ryan have both tentatively supported reform, lending support to the proposed 'Achieve Act' put forward by now retired senators John Kyl and Kay Bailey Hutchinson. This shows Obama still has reformist intentions and is still seemingly committed to dealing with immigration within a legislative setting in the next 4 years.

and as a result his record cannot be simply dismissed as a ~~failure~~ "total failure"

In conclusion however, it seems that the Obama administration's record on immigration reform is ultimately a failure to a large extent, because it has done very little to address the issue in a way which is balanced and legislatively productive. However, this record, although primarily a failure, cannot be characterised as a "total" one, as Obama's semblance of at least some conciliatory action, and in the light of tough political circumstances too, shows ~~the~~^{his} administration has ~~not~~^{still} sought ^{in part} on the behalf of immigration reform.



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Examiner Comments

This is one of the better answers to this question and it was awarded 37 marks. Among its strengths are the security of its knowledge and the sense it conveys of an intelligent engagement with the question; in a sentence such as the one that appears in the middle of the third side beginning 'Whilst this in itself is not necessarily a criticism of Obama's immigration policy' the reader has the feeling of a mind at work, which is a sure sign of a good essay.



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Examiner Tip

Make sure the reader knows where your argument is going - this answer is very good at signalling its direction through the use of key words at the beginning of each paragraph, e.g. 'Firstly', 'However', 'Despite this' and 'Following on from this'. They give a clear indication of the connection between different points and give a strongly structured feel to the whole essay.

Question 7

Pressure group questions are always popular with candidates at both AS and A2 and this was by a long way the most popular long response question. Many who did attempt it though struggled to come to grips with the terms of the question, and there was a persistent sense in lots of answers that candidates wanted to answer a slightly different one. Many focused on the methods of pressure groups but were unable to make clear or develop connections with their *influence*. This often led to imbalanced answers, with candidates showing an awareness of the ways in which pressure groups could exert influence but little of their limitations. Others drifted into the desirability of pressure group influence, often discussing democracy and elitism, again leading to a loss of focus on the key terms. Some candidates discussed the influence of pressure groups in very general and theoretical terms and made only limited connections to the distinctive features of the US political system, such as federalism and propositions, the separation of powers and issues of party renewal. Iron triangles and revolving doors were, as ever, extensively referred to but there were often no instances cited of influence actually being exerted, and the fact of their existence was taken as proof that they were influential. Every topic has its share of recurring misconceptions and one of the more persistent ones concerning pressure groups is that the NRA were instrumental in the progress of *DC v Heller*, when in fact there was too much concern about the decision going the wrong way for the group to support it, except when it finally reached the Supreme Court.

Despite the intentions of the founding fathers to limit the ~~impact~~ ^{any} ~~representative~~ ^{complex} role of one group dominating the political process, the system of checks and balances they created has ironically led to more access points for pressure groups, particularly ~~those with~~ wealthy groups. Although attempts have been made to limit the effect of ^{rich} groups through legislation such as the Bipartisanship Campaign Reform Act of 2002 groups have managed to circumvent ^{rich} measures leading to a high level of influence. However, the fragmented ^{a US political system} favours blocking any proposals rather than ^{a positive approach of} legislating. The strong tradition of the separation of ^{alongside the federal system} powers in the US provides ample opportunity for groups of all sizes and financial resources. The ability of the Supreme Court to strike down legislation as unconstitutional, has led to pressure groups preparing Amicus Briefs, for example civil rights groups provided ~~some~~ ^{hundreds} of such brief in the *Citizens v Bellingje* case on affirmative action. However, the effect of this method is limited as judges can choose whether

or not to take these cases into consideration. The main method of influence on the Supreme Court is the funding of cases which might not otherwise be heard. For example,

Citizens United brought a case against the FEC. In addition the growth of the professional lobbying in Washington DC has caused particular concern. When PHARMA, a group representing the pharmaceutical industry, donated over 20% of the campaign funds for Max Baucus, he later refused to discuss healthcare reform in 2009. Although it is argued by some that 'people groups' create a pluralist system, with groups ^{power} countervailing each other, therefore cancelling out some of their influence it is clear that wealthier groups ^{generally dominate} such as the NRA compared to anti-gun lobbyists. Even in the wake of the Newtown massacre the NRA still has a strong hold on US politics, as supporters live disproportionately in 15 key states and 40 key congressional districts. Democrats in particular ^{as the minutes in congress} are scared of losing their support for fear of electoral damage. The election of Heidi Heitkamp in North Dakota, demonstrates that an 'A story' from the NRA is significant in winning traditionally Republican seats.

The rising costs of running election campaigns has also been a factor in the increasing influence of people groups, with the 2012 presidential election being the most expensive of all time. In party primaries, the candidate with the highest level of funding before the Iowa Caucus generally goes on to win leading to candidates changing their ^{platform} position to garner support from wealthy groups, such as the Christian right within the Republican party. Attempts to limit the influence of groups have been largely

documented, and the Supreme Court decision in Citizens United has ~~been~~ ^{been} ~~done~~ ^{done} ~~to~~ ^{to} ~~lift~~ ^{lifted} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~limits~~ ^{limits} on campaign funding on the basis of protecting first amendment rights. In 2008, over 4000 super PACs were set up using relaxed legislation to collect unlimited soft money. Similarly, so-called S27s used the changes to rules on advertising to run television ads supporting or attacking candidates. For example, ^{in 2006 a prime time slot was able to fund} the group ~~that~~ ^{had} ran an ad attacking John Kerry for his 'false testimony' on his involvement in the Vietnam war.

The use of ballot initiatives in many states, again a means to promote democracy and ^{the} participation of individuals in the political process has been used by pressure groups to affect ~~the~~ ^{the} government on a state level. Large groups are able to ~~often~~ ^{often} get questions onto the ballot for presidential or midterm elections. For example, Stand up For Marriage Maine were able to collect 100,000 signatures double the amount needed to get 'Question 1' opposing the state regulation for same-sex marriage onto the ballot and were able to hire a PR firm to further their cause.

~~Personal~~ ^{Personal} Pressure group involvement was also influential in ^{the passing of} the California Proposition 8 banning same-sex marriage. The Utah-based Mormon Church flooded the states providing 80-90% of volunteers and funding over \$20 million.

The reason that some groups are so influential is that they are able to create mutually beneficial relationships between themselves, federal departments and congressional committees.

which provide money or electoral influence in return for furthering the interests of pressure groups. These relationships are known as iron triangles, and it becomes difficult for small groups to gain access to decision making, or ~~are seen~~ reducing the ~~no~~ variety but not amount of pressure group influence. The most high-profile and arguably influential is the relationship between the weapons manufacturers and the relevant congressional committee and government department which has kept defense funding astronomically high despite the need for reduction in federal spending. Representatives from districts with a high level of interest employment related to defense contracts or the military have an invested interest in keeping defense spending high. This system, known as the Military Industrial Complex ~~as well~~ has a high impact on the US economy.

~~Among~~ Other pressure group activities, particularly grassroots activities are seen as much less influential. The last resort for groups not able to finance electoral campaigns or affect government at a national level. However, groups such as AARP are able to exert influence without funding from campaigns due to the large ^{electoral} impact of their votes (AARP with 37 million members). For this reason Medicare programs for the elderly have not been affected as dramatically as Medicaid programs for the poor.

To conclude, pressure groups have a varying level of influence ~~of~~ depending on their resources and a variety of external factors, but however the trend has been for an

increase in pressure group power particularly among wealthy groups
such as the NCA.



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Examiner Comments

This is a not untypical answer to this question, in that it is structured around different methods and access points pressure groups might use, and comments as it proceeds on the level of influence they might have. It does so with more detail - the reference to Heidi Heitkamp's election in North Dakota is a nice touch for example - and more subtlety than some, and does enough to be awarded 31 marks.



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Examiner Tip

Introductions are important in essays and essentially need to do two things - explain the nature of the debate the question raises and signal the line of argument you propose to advance. This introduction makes some attempt at the first but none at the second, and the essay would have benefited if it had - it helps both you and the reader if you know where you are going.

Question 8

Election essay questions are usually popular and, given that the latest presidential election was only two months before the exam, it was surprising that more candidates didn't attempt this one. It offered more opportunities for candidates to use their own knowledge than the much more popular pressure group question. A common weakness was a failure to distinguish between an incumbent president's record and the general advantages of *being* an incumbent, while some candidates brought in knowledge of congressional elections in general and midterm elections in particular, to zero rewardable effect. One difficulty with the question was the extent to which incumbents' records can be accurately characterised, so that while some argued that Presidents George W. Bush and Obama had strong first terms, others described them as disasters. Understandably most answers focused on 2012, but to achieve Level 3, there needed to be reference to more than one election, and a good number showed a sometimes quite impressive historical knowledge, going back at least into the 1970s.

Plan

<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u> of advantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Obama Benghazi & Sandy◦ Bush economy Iraq◦ Bush Sr - Gulf War 19928% Economy 60%	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ organisation◦ demographics◦ mistakes & charisma

A Gaerner advisor told CNN that "if there's an incumbent that no one wants to vote for and a challenger that no one wants to vote for people will vote for the incumbent." whilst Simon Tisdall of the Guardian put it that the American people had 'reverted their faith in a man who said "the best is yet to come"'. This evidently shows how incumbency does play a role as despite the grim economic picture Obama still managed to secure a second term. As history has dictated only 3- three candidates have not succeeded in securing one second term as they wished + Carter and 4 Bush Sr therefore in unique cases it has not

played a role which begs to question how important it can be.

Firstly, it was arguably the largest factor in ensuring Obama's victory. Unemployment was above 8% for over 2 years yet this record didn't taint Obama's image to the extent that he couldn't win.

Incompetency allowed him to appear presidential whilst Romney appeared peripheral. Not only could he take advantage and boast - which he was done by Clinton in a series of ads - for his role in the killing of Osama Bin Laden but he also was able to appear presidential and competent when Hurricane Sandy hit.

Chris Christie a Republican governor actually praised Obama for his handling of the crisis. By doing so incompetency enabled him to appear bi-partisan just as Romney was accusing him of being partisan and petty.

Therefore concerning Obama's re-election it can be argued that incompetency was significant to his image in securing victory. His positive areas in defence can overshadowed his areas of marginal action and gave

him ahead. But

In addition to this money had an important role in the outcome and this links strongly to incumbency. Romney spent \$40 million in the primaries according to the Washington Post. As put in a Channel 4 documentary ~~entitled~~ money is the mother's milk of politics and this was certainly true in 2008 particularly due to the creation of Super PACs in the 2010 Citizens United ruling. By a lack of opposition to his Democrat candidacy due to the advantage of incumbents Obama was able to put all his time and money into the general election campaign whilst Romney was concerned with bitter internal divisions elections. By being the incumbent Obama was more able to appear united with his party particularly seen in Clinton's taking responsibility for events in Benghazi. Arguably the united face was only possible due to Obama's position as an incumbent and Romney failed to overcome division.

Moreover, the negative record of the incumbent was still played a particularly significant role in 2008. Although of course McCain

was not an incumbent he was taunted with his party title and one record of George Bush. He failed to alienate himself from that administration and did little to push himself as the 'anti-Bush candidate'. This role was taken over by Obama and he successfully associated McCain as a continuation of Bush. Bush has been titled the "most unpopular second term president since Nixon" and McCain's association with the president that took them in Iraq and the largest economic crisis since the wall st. crash did him too favours.

However, prior to his Bush's successful first two years in his second term with support for Iraq and unity over 9/11

at
However
in 1992 membership one record of Bush Sr. ^{did little to help} also hindered his campaign. He failed to address economic issues that Clinton pushed which didn't sit well with the American people. Although he ~~brag~~ boasted about his successful Gulf War only 8% of people were concerned with American foreign

policy and his record ~~at~~ gained him little support. 80% of people preferred Clinton's policies on the economy, education and taxes and his new young fresh demeanor overcame the advantage of incumbency.

Further incumbency was not the only factor in insuring Obama's ~~the~~ victory. As Anatole Kerensky noted of the time noted he did particularly well with women, the young, African American and Hispanic. Many political commentators have accounted his victory more to this than any other factor. This policy on women's rights ~~and~~ ^{with} planned parenthood and pro-choice and his views on amnesty and the dream act particularly enabled him to win over key areas. Although the significance of demographics should not be overstated as their influence. For example with Hispanics is only 17% of the electorate, it still played a large role in securing his victory as Hispanics make up 25% of the population in key swing states like California. Therefore their influence is magnified. As put by a Republican governor 'we're not generating enough angry white guys to stay

in business for one long term" evidently demographic saw key to Democratic success as well as incumbency.

In addition to this, it has been argued that Romney's mistakes played a large role in Obama's victory which magnified his ^{advantage} as an incumbent. Romney appeared wooden and uncharismatic. He alienated 47% of the American people and failed to step up to the momentum of the first debate. This allowed Obama to come back and win the American people in the second debate where he highlighted the mistakes of Romney in key policy areas such as defence - therefore Romney's failings also played a significant role.



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Examiner Comments

As noted before, a common failing in answers to this question was not to distinguish sharply enough between the role of an incumbent's record in the election outcome, and the role of the benefits of incumbency, and this answer is not immune to criticism in this respect. Nevertheless, it is a clearly structured answer and shows a detailed knowledge of three different elections; as such, it was awarded 36 marks.



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Examiner Tip

Conclusions are as important as introductions in long answers, and in this answer the conclusion does a good job of summing up the preceding argument and delivering the final verdict. Don't worry if your conclusion sounds like it is just repeating what's gone before - that's its job, and you definitely don't want to start introducing new material or ideas at this stage in an answer.

Paper Summary

Some key points for candidates to remember:

- Keep up-to-date with US politics and use recent examples in your answers.
- Answer the question on the paper and not the one you wish was there.
- In short answers aim for three or four well-developed and clearly separated paragraphs.
- Remember the importance of introductions and conclusions in long answers.
- Make the direction of your argument clear to the reader in the first words of each paragraph.

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