

Examiners' Report  
June 2014

GCE Government and Politics 6GP03 3C

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## Introduction

Overall, the impression of examiners was that this was an inviting paper in which the reasonably well prepared candidate, i.e. the great majority, could find plenty of openings to demonstrate their knowledge.

It is striking how year after year certain topics remain more popular than others. The political parties are usually the least popular, although there was an interesting pattern this year with the parties questions, in that the 15 mark question was the most popular of the five and the 45 mark question the least. It may be that candidates were deterred by the angle of the 45 mark question although, given that we are into the sixth year of a Democratic presidency, it is hard to think of two more central topics than traditional Democratic values and policies, and those of the current president. In any event, as seems to be the case every year, the select minority who chose the 45 mark parties question produced the best answers examiners saw. Race remains a very popular topic, although candidates should remember that there are race questions other than the justifications and criticisms of affirmative action, and not resort to writing about them even in the absence of a relevant question. Thankfully, there was a little less of this syndrome in this series.

Time management is obviously a vital skill and the relative lengths of many 15 and 45 mark answers led some examiners to wonder how effectively candidates are managing their time. Many 45 mark answers in this series were only about double the short answer length, if that, and it was unusual to see an answer that went much beyond four sides. It is always much easier to gain the first few marks on an answer than the last few, and candidates should try and be disciplined about stopping their short answers on the stroke of 15 minutes.

## **Question 1**

This question will have looked unfamiliar to candidates, and perhaps this explains why it was by some way the least popular of the short answers. It was a good test, in that it required candidates to pull together different strands of their knowledge, mainly from the racial and ethnic politics section, but also from the parties section of the specification. Many were able to identify at least one issue of shared concern for minorities, such as health care, and one where different groups have different priorities, such as affirmative action for African American voters and immigration for Latino voters. Knowledge of the recent debate over immigration was clearly relevant here, and candidates rewardably referred to the 2012 presidential campaign and Mitt Romney's promise of 'self-deportation'. Stronger answers argued that it was often misleading to see one group of minority voters as a homogenous bloc and that, for example, Latinos of Central American descent and Latinos of Cuban descent might have quite different concerns. Some candidates were evidently hoping for a question on why different groups vote for a particular party, and so based their answer to this question around party affiliation. This approach produced some rewardable points along the way, but a clear focus on the wording of the question would obviously have been better. It will have been evident to candidates from the choice of other short answers available that this question was from the racial and ethnic politics section, but those who interpreted it to include such groups as gay voters could be rewarded. No reward could be given though for discussion of groups which are either not minorities, such as women, or those which could not be plausibly termed 'minority voters', such as the young.

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If you change your mind, put a line through the box   
and then indicate your new question with a cross .

Chosen Question Number:

Jews, Hispanics, Blacks.

Question 1

Question 2

Question 3

Question 4

Question 5

~~The minority groups~~

The idea that minority <sup>votes</sup> ~~groups~~ are all concerned with the same political issue is not demonstrated through the fact that both the Hispanic vote and the Jewish vote went to the Democrats for alternate reasons. It can be seen that the minority voting group who are Jewish that make up 2.9% of the population are concerned with issues particular to their religion. This is demonstrated in the ~~fact~~ Jewish dip in support for the Democrat party in the 2012 presidential elections; Obama did not explicitly outline his view on the situation on Israel whereas in 2008 he made it clear that the USA supported Israel with his 'foreign defence plan'. This was reflected in the dip for 2008 when 86% of Jews voted for Obama to the 67% vote in 2012. This issue in no way affected any other minority.

You should start the answer to Section B on page 13



vote and as such was particular to the Jewish community. This clearly demonstrates that not all minority votes are concerned with the same issues.

The Hispanic minority vote unlike the Jewish minority vote is not as concerned with foreign policy when compared to immigration. It can be argued that the greatest concern to a Hispanic voter is a loose immigration policy since the majority hold their origins as Mexican immigrants. This can be demonstrated in the Hispanic support of the Democrat party who take a liberal approach to border control when in comparison to the Republicans. The Democrat DREAM Act allowed immigrants to apply for citizenship faster and easier resulting in a 15% point boost for Obama in the 2008 elections. This issue much like foreign policy in Israel was very concerned with the Hispanic vote and was particular to them. Hillary Clinton even stated that Obama's victory may well have resulted from "democratic immigrant policy". This demonstrates that to no extent are all minority votes concerned with the same policies.

Despite this it can be seen that the majority of minority votes are ~~are~~ in fact concerned

You should start the answer to Section B on page 13



with the same issue that of social welfare. The majority of minorities such as African Americans and Hispanics are from less wealthy backgrounds than majority white voters. This can be seen in the fact that 64% of African Americans earn \$10,000-\$25,000 ~~or higher~~ whereas only 40% of white families earn this little. This displays the idea that for minority voters the single most important policy issue is welfare. Liberal journalist ~~for~~ for the Washington Post stated that "the overriding policy for ~~the~~ Hispanics, African Americans... is the pursuit of welfare". By this it can be seen that the majority of minority voters are concerned with similar policies but they differ on particular specific issues that solely affect them.



## ResultsPlus

### Examiner Comments

One of the strengths of this answer is the clarity of its structure. The candidate has chosen three policy issues to discuss and deals with them in three clearly separated paragraphs. S/he answers the question fully by looking at two issues of concern to specific groups in the first two and then in a third paragraph considers an issue common to several. It is certainly possible to imagine this question being answered quite a lot better - there is important detail missing in this answer, and the reader would not know from the middle paragraph, for examples, that the DREAM Act has not actually been passed - but nevertheless it does enough to get into the bottom of Level 3.



## ResultsPlus

### Examiner Tip

Structure - the three paragraph structure of this answer is a model for answers to 15 mark questions. Three paragraphs strikes pretty much the right balance between the breadth you need to answer the question and the detail you need to include to develop your points sufficiently. For some questions, four paragraphs may work as well, and if you don't know enough detail you may as well demonstrate breadth, but any more than four and the answer starts to read like a list.

## **Question 2**

Lobbyists and their role are a central part of the pressure group section, and this straightforward question was evidently welcomed by a lot of candidates. The main weakness of their answers was that many seemed hazy, if not completely unaware, of the distinction between lobbyists and the clients they represent, and frequently wrote as if they are one and the same. Pressure questions often invite a generic response which is produced no matter what the specific wording of the question is, and elements of this were seen here; the revolving door syndrome featured in almost every answer, obviously relevantly, as did iron triangles, usually somewhat less relevantly. The problem with the iron triangles discussion was that, firstly, such examples as are available are often very dated and, secondly, most candidates were unable to convincingly describe the exact part played by lobbyists in either their creation or maintenance. The distinguishing characteristic of stronger answers, as is always true for every question, was the use of specific and detailed evidence, and candidates who knew of the dealings of Jack Abramoff, or could discuss the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act, were well rewarded. As ever, candidates needed to pay attention to the precise wording of the question; the term 'controversial' in the question is more or less synonymous with 'criticised', and discussion of what were claimed to be the positive aspects of lobbyists' role could not be rewarded.



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If you change your mind, put a line through the box   
and then indicate your new question with a cross .

Chosen Question Number:

Question 1

Question 2

Question 3

Question 4

Question 5

~~Professional lobbyists controversial  
Gift giving  
Iron triangles - pressure groups  
Revolving door - insider access~~

Professional lobbyists are often linked with pressure groups, and can also be associated with the development of 'iron triangles'. They often have insider access to Washington and are controversial in their ability to influence presidential policies and legislation passing through Congress by fundraising, endorsing key candidates and participating in corrupt activities, for example, giving persuasive gifts.

As they have access to many points in government, professional ~~are~~ lobbyists can be considered controversial when they are hired by pressure groups to run campaigns. During the passage of the recent healthcare ~~test~~ through Congress, it is reported that over 1750 businesses and organisations hired over

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



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Turn over ►

4500 lobbyists and consequently spent \$3.3 billion on supporting or opposing Obama's flag ship reform.

Surely this unrivalled ability to influence not only members of government but also members of the electorate, is undemocratic as it pressures elected representatives to take a certain stance, possibly on occasion limiting a representative's ability to act in the electorate's interests.

It can also be argued professional lobbyists have a controversial role when they are granted insider access, having a close relationship with members of the federal bureaucracy or members of the executive, through an 'iron triangle' or otherwise. As some are able to achieve insider status over others, surely this points to an undemocratic and elitist political system, advantaging the wealthy. The wealthiest pressure groups, for instance, will be able to afford the best lobbyists, resulting in undemocratic structures such as the MIC iron triangle that ~~has~~ has a ~~strong hold~~ strong hold on any 'defense' legislation. ~~As the~~ As the average Washington lobbyist is paid over \$100,000 a year, it suggests that those able to pay will have an unfair advantage in swaying government opinion.

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Professional lobbyists are also controversial as their growth in numbers coincides with the electorate, & in the years 2000-2009 Federal expenditure doubled, and with that so did the number of registered lobbyists. This suggests that public discontent is mirrored through an increase of lobbyists ~~and~~ due to wider apathy with government and the main parties - does this show Washington as weak and divided?

Furthermore, not only does the issue of money allow wealthier groups to afford better lobbyists, but there has been much documented financial corruption associated with the lobbyists themselves. For example, the 1997 Lobbying Disclosure Act ~~stopped~~ stopped lobbyists from being able to give gifts or money to representatives to 'buy' their opinion. As the Open and Honest Government Act followed in 2007, it shows 'gift-giving' to persuade is still an issue, whilst also introducing a 'cooling off' period to those ~~the~~ insiders to congress who utilised the 'revolving door' to straight away become powerful lobbyists, for example, Ashcroft who went onto found 'The Ashcroft Group'. The passage of these acts clearly highlights financial corruption as a controversial issue surrounding professional lobbyists.

(Total for Question = 15 marks)



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## ResultsPlus

### Examiner Comments

It is hard not to be impressed by the sheer number of words this candidate has managed to put down on paper in just 15 minutes. It does emphasise that this exam, like many others, is a test of speed writing, and as word processed work becomes the norm, it is a reminder to candidates and centres that the ability to write fast by hand remains an important skill. There are two features of this answer worth highlighting, one to be emulated, the other not: the candidate keeps using the key term of the 'controversial' and this ensures they keep everything they are writing relevant. However, short answers do not need an introduction, and the candidate wastes time by outlining the points they go on to make in the paragraphs which follow. Although there is an occasional loss of clarity - the point on the top of the third side isn't immediately apparent on first reading - overall this is a full and detailed answer which is securely into Level 3.



## ResultsPlus

### Examiner Tip

Introductions - short answers do not need an introduction. They are not like an essay which is an argument, and where an introduction explains the nature of the debate the question is based on and the direction the writer is going to take, but are simply a series of separate points. You cannot be rewarded for the same material twice, so just get straight into your first point.

### **Question 3**

This was a broad question, inviting discussion of both the positive and negative contributions of initiatives and propositions to democracy, and well prepared candidates had plenty to say. As is always the case for questions which overlap with AS, some relied either largely or wholly on their AS knowledge and, while this was to some degree rewardable, it also exposed confusion when some discussed, for example, the problems associated with *federal* referendums. Most answers had at least a couple of points on either side of the argument, although some looked at just one side, and these remained in Level 2 at best. Despite being almost six years old now, California Proposition 8 was by some way the best known single example, although nearly all the discussion on it focused on the funding of the campaign; little was apparently known of its subsequent judicial history, which candidates might have made something of. The Colorado and Washington marijuana initiatives were also quite widely known. The two undemocratic aspects of initiatives and propositions most often seen were the undue influence of pressure groups and the tendency to promote a tyranny of the majority through the denial of minority rights, both of which Proposition 8 illustrates. The numbers attached to initiatives and propositions can sometimes be hard to remember, so that even better answers referred to the Arizona initiative SB 1070. A claim frequently made was that initiatives and propositions are democratic because they hold politicians to account, but it is hard to see in what sense this can be true; they are more plausibly seen as a means of circumventing politicians who are unable or unwilling to act.

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and then indicate your new question with a cross .

Chosen Question Number:

Question 1       Question 2       Question 3   
Question 4       Question 5

Proposition are use in 26 states in America, it is a form of direct democracy as it allows for the citizens to influence state legislative act through petitions.

Proposition is a direct form of democracy and is therefore the purest form of democracy. It is the people governing themselves. For example, 2008 Proposition 8 in California banning gay marriage and Proposition 11 attempted to legalise marijuana. In addition, it allows for the electorate to be educated and become less apathetic about politics. In ~~Florida~~ <sup>Mass</sup> 25,000 signatures were gathered in attempt to get increase the protection of women rights. Furthermore, it make it difficult for politicians to ~~even~~ ignore the electorate's demands. Fundamentally, it is legitimate as it is the people's will and it ~~may solve~~ <sup>may solve</sup> ~~being~~ <sup>increase</sup> the rapidly falling rate of turnout in elections.

However, it could be argued that this undermines the principle of direct democracy. Thus, by allowing the citizens

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

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to create their own policies increases the possibility of majority dictatorship, where the minority's rights are hindered. It could be argued that the gay's right is being hindered in California due to the petition. These petitions are often dominated by pressure groups which allows for elitism. For example, \$85 million was spent on by pressure group on Proposition 8 on Gay marriage; around 20 million came from the Mormon church. Thus, this allows the wealthy elite to hold the ~~own~~ effectively legislate in certain matters. However, it could be argued that the only reason these groups could spend this large amount of money on this bill is because there is widespread support and donations. For example, in Ohio the attempt to ban abortion failed despite the fact that those supporting the policy spent 1.8 million more. Thus, evidently shows that money does not dominate politics.

The ~~is~~ A people may vote for self gains rather than the long term benefit of the state. For example, in California a petition was pass that stop the increase of property tax. This meant that the govt found it difficult to track the budget deficit. In addition, it gave too much power to the media as they ~~they~~ electorate is easily influence as they have little knowledge. For example, Fox News is very right wing and views are very polarise and The Today Show is very liberal.

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Proposition is a good form of direct democracy especially when there is a strong judiciary to protect minority. However, too much direct democracy ~~could~~ undermine representative democracy.



**ResultsPlus**

**Examiner Comments**

This is another solid Level 3 answer and it adopts the same structure as the answer to question 1, namely three clearly separated and developed paragraphs. It is possible to read this answer and not be entirely convinced the candidate knows what propositions and initiatives actually are, but s/he says enough that is rewardable to give them the benefit of the doubt. One area where this answer could be improved is in its use of examples; the reference to the ban on property tax increases in California would have read more convincingly if the candidate had specified Proposition 13 passed in 1978, and the references to initiatives in Maine and Ohio are similarly vague. Examiners do check these references and will give them very little credit if they cannot be verified.



**ResultsPlus**

**Examiner Tip**

Examples - examples are a really important part of any answer as they provide the evidence to support the points you are making, but you need to give as much detail and make them as precise as you can. The vaguer they are, the less support they provide.



## **Question 4**

Examiners reported that this was the best answered 15 mark question, as well as being the most popular, and most candidates could at least name three or four policies or values associated with the Republican Party. It was rare to see a Level 1 answer. The question invited two different approaches, both equally rewardable: candidates could either identify a value, such as social conservatism, and then discuss some of the policies associated with it, or alternatively devote a whole paragraph to a single policy such as 'pro-life'. The first was probably the easier option, insofar as it required less detailed knowledge to sustain a paragraph. Many candidates were able to refer to recent examples of policies to support their points, but only the stronger answers were able to show how the values and policies of the party are fluid and have changed significantly in only a few years. Some candidates knew the history of immigration and were able to point out that the approach of Ronald Reagan, who in many other ways set the party on its current conservative course, has been completely reversed. Others contrasted the George W. Bush era, less than six years past, with the current orthodoxy; 'compassionate conservatism' has been completely repudiated, and the preoccupation with same sex marriage considerably reduced.

A small quibble: a good number of candidates referred to 'right-winged' policies and values, which is an odd image, if it means anything at all.

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and then indicate your new question with a cross .

Chosen Question Number:

Question 1       Question 2       Question 3   
Question 4       Question 5

The Republican Party platform is made up of many different ideologies, including neoconservatism in foreign policy, libertarianism on economic policy and ~~religious~~ traditional conservatism on social policy. ~~It~~ It is important to remember that there is no one 'Republican ideology' as the party is made up of several factions, including the very conservative Tea Party movement, which is represented by people such as Rep. Michelle Bachmann (R-MN), Rep. Ted Yoho (R-FL) and led by people like Sen. Ted Cruz (R-TX). Other factions include libertarian Republicans like the now-retired ~~Rep. Ron Paul~~ Rep. Ron Paul (R-TX) and his son Sen. Rand Paul (R-KY), and the moderate conservative faction which includes Gov. Chris Christie (R-NJ), Sen. Marco Rubio (R-FL) and Sen. John McCain (R-AZ). Overall, however, there are many ideas and policies which are ~~also~~ supported broadly throughout the Republican Party. Among these are gun rights and support for the 2<sup>nd</sup> amendment, a hawkish stance ~~on~~ on foreign policy and U.S. unilateral world leadership & support for lower taxes and less regulation in fiscal policy.

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

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and support for "family values and the family unit" in social policy, which includes a broad opposition to same-sex marriage and abortion. There is also a general support for strict adherence to the constitution and increased federalism, with more decisions made at state and local levels. Essentially today's main Republican policies stem from those of President Ronald Reagan, whose conservative, small-government ideology inspires most Republicans today.

Support for the 2<sup>nd</sup> amendment is almost universal in the GOP. Even moderate Republican Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-Ky) walked out to the stage at CPAC 2014 holding a shotgun in the air to land applause from the conservative crowd. Almost every Republican in Congress has a National Rifle Association (NRA) rating of about 70%, and 140 Republican congressmen are members of the NRA themselves. Their support for gun rights and the 2<sup>nd</sup> amendment is married to their overall strict constructionist view of the Constitution. They believe that the Constitution should not be adapted or modernized beyond small interpretation changes, and that no laws should be made that seriously challenge it.

However, this principle often clashes with another, the GOP's support for a hawkish foreign policy in which the United States unilaterally acts to spread democracy and "liberate" nations. It also takes an incredibly harsh stance on America's enemies, supporting both the use of enhanced interrogation at Guantanamo Bay and drone

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



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collection mandated in the USA PATRIOT Act. This, however, clashes with their views ~~of~~ on constitutionalism; the PATRIOT Act has been accused of violating the 4<sup>th</sup> amendment (which protects against unreasonable searches and seizures), while Guantanamo violates the 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> amendments guaranteeing due process, speedy trials and preventing cruel and unusual punishment. This has divided the party, as constitutional conservatives like ~~Rep~~ Sen. Rand Paul (R-KY) support closing the facility, while hawkish foreign policy neoconservatives like <sup>former</sup> Rep Allen West (R-FL) demand that it stay open. It's important to note that no Supreme Court jurisprudence can be given on Guantanamo because of its extraterritoriality on a military base in Cuba.

Lower taxes and less regulation has been a Republican policy since Eisenhower, who lowered taxes after Truman. Nixon and Ford both lowered taxes, and Reagan lowered them 24 times. The Bush tax cuts are still in effect today.

Support for "family values," underlined by an opposition to gay marriage and abortion, is a general policy of the GOP. Supported by ~~many Republican Congressmen~~ ~~except Rep. Justin Amash (R-MI)~~ most Republicans in Congress, notable supporters of gay marriage within the GOP include ~~Sen~~ Sen. Rob Portman (R-OH), Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and Rep. Justin Amash (R-MI).

To conclude, the Republican Party is very factionalized but its broad platform supports a hawkish foreign policy, ~~economic~~ laissez-faire economics, support for the 2<sup>nd</sup> amendment and constitutionalism and family values.

(Total for Question = 15 marks)





## ResultsPlus

### Examiner Comments

This is a very broad question and allows for a variety of approaches. While this is in no sense a 'perfect' answer, it is impossible not to be impressed by the breadth of knowledge and the enthusiasm for the subject this answer conveys. One of its strengths is the recognition that, despite increasing ideological unity in recent years, the parties remain coalitions and there are still significant divisions within them. It is as good an answer as could be reasonably expected from an 18 year old in 15 minutes in an exam, and it was awarded full marks.



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### Examiner Tip

'Sophistication' -this is a quality highly valued by examiners and one way to demonstrate it is through an awareness that very little in life or politics is black or white, and that there are always qualifications and fine judgments to be made. This candidate shows it by arguing there is no one set of Republican values and policies but rather variations on a theme.

## **Question 5**

This proved to be a more demanding question than might have been expected. Examiners' impression was that, for a good number of the candidates who answered it, it was the third of their three 15 mark answers, and they struggled to come up with any plausible factors which would lead to congressional elections being uncompetitive. A few candidates even seemed to be unsure exactly what 'congressional elections' were and brought in discussion of presidential elections. Low turn-out and the presence and/or absence of a presidential 'coat-tails' effect were frequently cited but rarely convincingly explained. The weakness of many answers was that, although candidates were aware of the significance of incumbency, they offered little or no further development beyond quoting some statistics. Some candidates seized on the two and six year election cycle of the House and Senate as a significant factor, but then came to the erroneous conclusion that incumbents were more under threat in the House than the Senate. Stronger answers were able to identify three or four of the factors which make incumbency so potent, and there was certainly a lot to say about gerrymandering and campaign finance; a few who had been following the 2014 primary season made the point that the effect of gerrymandering is that, for many members of Congress, the only real threat to their seat is from members of their own party in the primary election.

Indicate your first question choice on this page.  
You will be asked to indicate your second question choice on page 6.

Put a cross in the box  indicating the first question that you have chosen.  
If you change your mind, put a line through the box   
and then indicate your new question with a cross .

Chosen Question Number:

Question 1

Question 2

Question 3

Question 4

Question 5

Congressional elections take place to elect a body to a position in Congress, be it in the House or the Senate. The elections for the House take place every two years. The ones for the Senate take place every six years and only a third is elected each time.

These congressional elections are known to be uncompetitive for a number of reasons. Within the past twenty years, over 90% of incumbents have been reelected. Between 2008 and 2012, fewer than 10 incumbent Senators lost their position when facing reelection. It can therefore be seen that incumbents enjoy <sup>number of</sup> advantages over challengers, meaning these elections are rarely competitive.

In congressional elections, it is very

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



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important that money is raised for the candidate's campaign. To make a name for oneself, money must be spent on advertising and travelling. Incumbent candidates find it easier to raise money due to the reputation they have already made for themselves. Incumbents have already been elected previously, hence they are more likely to be able to win contributors. I want to back strong ~~and~~ candidates, so financing a challenger can be seen as riskier, so incumbents generally get more donations. They can finance better campaigns, so incumbents can win again and again.

Another reason why these elections are uncompetitive is due to the resources available to incumbents <sup>which are</sup> not available to challengers. They ~~so~~ can take advantage of 'franking' privilege, where a congress member has their mail sent for free. Furthermore, incumbents enjoy the use of their congressional staff which a challenger must do without.

Gerrymandering of districts is done so that voters that support one party can all be within the same area, so the seat can be considered 'safe'. It means

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





in a Republican-majority district, for example, a Democrat stands a smaller chance because most voters are Republican. The prevalence of safe seats makes ~~most~~<sup>many</sup> congressional elections predictable.  
~~Nevertheless, there are times when~~



## ResultsPlus

### Examiner Comments

This answer begins with a different sort of introduction from the the answer to question 2, but it is still a waste of time. If the intervals between congressional elections are relevant to the question then they need to be incorporated into a point but, as presented here, they are redundant 'background'.

The answer has the three paragraph structure already seen in earlier answers; some of the points could be made with more sophistication (it has a rather simple view of gerrymandering, for example) but overall it just does enough to get into the bottom of Level 3.



## ResultsPlus

### Examiner Tip

Keep focused on the question from start to finish - this question asks 'why' so the opening sentence of the answer should read 'The first reason...'. This answer does eventually get round to some reasons, but it takes too long to get going.

## Question 6

This question offered candidates the broadest canvas of the three 45 mark questions but also examiners felt was the most challenging. Pressure groups and political parties are very familiar topics but having to compare their influence seemed to disorientate many candidates. Most seemed more at ease with the pressure group side of the argument, with many ultimately agreeing with the quotation in the question. In some cases only belatedly, some candidates realised that a lot of the material they had prepared for a party decline essay could be made relevant to this question. Weaker answers tended to

merely describe the functions of pressure groups, and ignore the word 'now' in the question altogether, while other answers failed to move beyond the undeniable but basic point that, because parties occupy seats of government, then they are obviously more powerful. As last year's report pointed out, *Brown v Topeka Board* tends to be overused as an example, and it did not make for the most compelling evidence for the contemporary role of pressure groups. Campaign finance was an obvious area for arguments on the increased importance of pressure groups to focus on, and a good number of candidates were aware of the impact of the *Citizens United* and *Speechnow* cases, and the subsequent rise of 'super PACs'; some referred to *McCutcheon* but were often less aware that it can be seen as partly reasserting the equality of parties against pressure groups.

Put a cross in the box  indicating the question that you have chosen.  
If you change your mind, put a line through the box   
and then indicate your new question with a cross .

Chosen Question Number:

Question 6

Question 7

Question 8

The importance of pressure groups over parties in the US is a keenly debated issue. Whilst it could be argued that the interest group impact on legislators' voting and their greater representation of individual issues makes these groups greater than parties, this can be countered by the fact that parties seem to be playing an increased role in government affairs and are now widely identified with large parts of the electorate.

Firstly it could be argued that interest groups in the US are now more important in the US than parties due to their control over the votes of legislators. This was most clear at the federal level with the defeat of the Marchin - Toomey bill in 2013 which was largely considered to be down to the opposition of the NRA. The fact that many democrats opposed this bill despite the fact that in his state of the Union President Obama supported increased background checks suggests that ~~pressure~~<sup>interest</sup> groups may have greater control of voting than parties. However this can be countered not only by arguing that in many cases clearly powerful



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interest groups have been defeated by the mainstream party, ~~consensus~~ consensus was in 2012 when despite AIPAC's opposition it was voted to send \$50 million in military aid to the Gulf states, but also agreed that on key votes party affiliation had a clear impact on voting as in 2010 when no single Republican voted for Obamacare due to party opposition and personal ideology. This suggests that parties may have just as powerful or greater hold on legislators ~~as~~ especially as parties are now ideologically homogeneous however this does not factor in the federalist nature of the US. This was seen in 2011 when groups such as the US Tolling Coalition organised their ~~mass~~ state of Massachusetts to oppose new tolling, ~~conclude~~ implying that at state level interest groups are better able to ~~have~~ wield influence unlike parties that are ideologically split amongst themselves. This therefore shows that whilst parties do play an important role in deciding ~~numerous~~ ~~major~~ interest groups can play an equally powerful role ~~as~~ especially at state level.

Another argument that interest groups in the US have become more ~~as~~ important than parties is that they are better able to address specific issues than the two major parties that are by nature broad coalitions. The fact that large groups have huge membership, such as the AARP that has an estimated 40 million members, already



implies that they are a more effective tool for parties of expressing particular concerns in the case of key issues, but interest groups have also proved themselves more active on specific issues. This was clear in the 2014 case *Schwartz v Coalition* to defend affirmative action where an interest group was able to bring a key issue to the Supreme Court independently of parties, which suggests that on these issues interest groups have supplanted parties in importance. Although it could be argued that parties still provide for the addressal of specific issues such as when Elizabeth Warren in 2014 started encouraging a movement to invest in education, and national congressional campaigns like the 6 for DB have partly reversed this trend, however these key issues were still determined by party bases where an interest group provide the public with the ability to choose their key issues, as in 2012 when the establishment of *More Demand Action* allowed a particular group of society, rallied to come together in favour of gun regulation, this therefore suggests that despite some efforts to increase focus on specific issues from parties, interest groups are now more important than them in addressing them especially when they are able to make use of the court system.

However although interest groups are clearly important in US politics it could be countered that parties still dominate government, particularly in Congress,



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uch were the men. For example the fact that in the  
117th Congress <sup>only</sup> around 52 legislators voted with  
their party, less than 90% of the time suggests  
that a rise in partisanship in Congress that has  
increased the importance of the party in voting.  
Moreover although interest groups clearly play a  
major role in elections with them being largely responsible  
for the \$2.6 billion spent on the 2012 presidential  
election, the fact that Obama noticeably refused funds,  
from big PACs and lobbying groups in 2008 attributed  
to party organization and to some extent funds, such as  
the \$297 million it spent in 2012 suggests that  
interest groups do still not dominate elections and  
therefore are less influential in policy making, and  
lawmaking than previously believed, and in many regards  
the party is still more important. This therefore shows that  
to a significant extent it is the party, and not interest  
groups that are more important in legislatures and  
elections suggesting interest groups are not so important.

A final argument that parties are still  
be seen as more important than interest groups is  
due to parties being relatively unified whereas  
interest groups are often opposed to each other.  
~~This was demonstrated~~ The unity of parties was  
was demonstrated in the October 2013 government  
shutdown where the Democrats and Republicans



Remained in Act (especially Camps can not be said to be matched by issue groups such as in 2013 the 2010 passage of Obamacare where health providers such as the AMA and insurance providers clashed with more conservative groups over its passage. This suggests that the fractured nature of the US' interest groups is often a major limiting factor on the importance of interest groups that is not matched by parties which tend to present a unified front on key issues such as the fact that no Republican voted for the Affordable Care Act and that party led over 11 attempts to filibuster it in the Senate. Whilst it could be countered that some powerful interest groups like the NRA do not have a countervailing force, with their main opposition the Brady Campaign having at most 400 000 members. This largely makes them the exception to the rule that limits most pressure groups. Although parties do as well have divisions such as the Blue Dog Democrats who closely had to give concessions to the party. The Affordable Care Act itself has largely overcome and suggest that due to their unified nature parties are still not effective and important in driving political action and legislation than interest groups.

Overall it therefore seems that although interest groups do have a significant impact on parties,



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They do on the whole appear slightly less important than parties. This is because in most cases in federal government it is parties that control and drive legislation through whereas interest groups can only (rarely) influence votes in very specific situations like Marjorie Toomey or if they ally themselves with Congressional parties. Such as in the 2014 farm bill that appropriated over \$80 billion in food stamps to win Democrat votes for the agriculture lobby. That despite this influence of parties the ability of interest groups to influence decisions in courts and at state level due to the hyperpluralism of the US does give them more wide-ranging influence than parties that means that whilst not they are not important enough to override party control they have enough power and influence to be a key factor in US politics alongside parties.



### ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

This is in many ways a model 45 mark answer. There is an introduction and a conclusion; the candidate looks at two arguments on either side of the debate, and uses a quite impressive range of relevant detail to support and evaluate them. Even if some of the arguments are less than watertight, there is a real sense of engagement with the question and, for an exam answer put together in 45 minutes, to a question the candidate had probably not considered before, it is an excellent answer, and towards the top of Level 3.



### ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

Introductions - whereas introductions are unnecessary in a short answer, they are an important part of an essay. The purpose of an introduction is to explain the nature of the debate the question is based on, in this case the relative significance of parties and pressure groups, and to indicate the direction of the argument the writer intends to take; this candidate makes a reasonable go at one, although their introduction would be improved by reference to a recent development, such as the emergence of 'super PACs', which has made the debate especially relevant.



## **Question 7**

Race is always a popular topic with candidates, and most now seem able to curb their desire to always discuss the pros and cons of affirmative action, when such discussions used to be a feature of race answers irrespective of the wording of the question. As is still customary, a battery of statistics were unleashed on both sides of the argument; some figures, such as the number of black congressmen and women are easily verifiable, but the claim, for example, that '30% of African-Americans are still in poverty', without a date or source, is as good as meaningless. Candidates would be better off using approximations such as doubled and trebled, which would at least avoid the implausible precision of a percentage. Many candidates pointed to the election of President Obama as evidence that race is no longer an issue, when 60 years ago Washington DC was itself still segregated. Of course, affirmative action could be rewardably referred to, but its political impact was more relevant than the arguments for and against it. Interestingly, recent Supreme Court cases and state referendums were used on both sides of the argument: some candidates argued that the limitations which both are placing on the use of affirmative action programmes show that they are less needed, whereas others saw these as continuing evidence of a white backlash, and race to be as salient as ever.

Put a cross in the box  indicating the question that you have chosen.  
 If you change your mind, put a line through the box   
 and then indicate your new question with a cross .

Chosen Question Number:

Question 6

Question 7

Question 8

Race has ceased to be a significant issue in US politics.

Intro - At first we were yes ~~probably no.~~

For

Against

- \* 2 term black president
- \* 43 black in House 9.8%
- \* SC - Clarence & Sotomayor
- \* Cabinet Holder & Castro

- \* 7 black senator - 8 black senators ever & 9 Latinos
- \* Commercials district
- ↳ earmuff illusion

Even - even empowerment  
 since a black president  
 ↳ more respect for blacks.

- \* Other rules are more
- \* More racism since a black president - more violence
- Even - wealth gap between white fam & Black fam <sup>from 1989</sup>  
 85,000 to 236,000 in 2009  
 ↳ US census

Conclusion - seems like it - but it isn't

- \* Judicial - Martin Luther King Case
- \* Immigration - big <sup>to Obama</sup> issue



It can be argued that at first rule was ~~here there has been~~ that rule has ceased to be a significant issue in US politics as the USA for the first time in history has seen a black President serve two terms, a view supported by many Conservative Commentators. Nonetheless many Liberals claim that rule still plays a major role as the Senate in particular is very unrepresentative and the issue of rule affects the judicial system and the issue of immigration is constant in US politics.

It can be argued that rule has almost been eliminated as an issue in US politics due to the fact of the election of a two term black President. ~~and by the fact the political system has become more representative~~ Many Conservatives feel that the two term election of Barack Obama ~~shows~~ <sup>shows</sup> that America has moved on & that rule is no longer a prominent issue as blacks & minorities cannot the US have advantaged from this. This can be seen by the fact ~~there have been more~~ that since Obama took office 61% of black ~~people~~ have been a 61% of black people owning ~~property~~ businesses in the USA & <sup>minorities</sup> ~~people~~ students of history has vastly improved due



to the election of a black president. Therefore it can be argued that the race has ceased to be a significant factor in US politics due to the effects of Barack Obama as a two term president.

In addition the ~~the~~ representation of minorities has vastly increased in the political system. ~~There are 44 out of 433~~ 9.8% of the House of Representatives is made up of black candidates, which is the most representative of black it has ever been. The Obama Cabinet is made up of minorities, Attorney General Eric Holder and newly appointed Julian Castro <sup>(HND)</sup> are minorities in Obama's Cabinet, which is said to most represent the USA ethnically and so can be argued that race has ceased to be a significant factor in US politics. ~~Not only this~~ The Supreme Court has two minorities present ~~for the group~~ is made up of two minorities Clarence Thomas and Sonia Sotomayor and so can be said that even the unelected body is truly representative of the nation. ~~but~~ Therefore this evidence ~~clearly~~ explicitly suggests that ~~the~~ <sup>race</sup> has ceased to be a significant



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<sup>issue</sup>  
~~fact~~ in US politics as ~~many~~ the majority  
of the 3 branches of government is  
representative of the ~~majority~~ as a  
whole. minorities in the USA.

In addition issues such as affirmative  
action rarely come up in the US  
political system due to the economic  
and social advancements of the minorities.  
According to Selig Centre for Economic  
growth both black and Latino income  
has increased by 2580 to \$32,500 for  
blacks & by 2200 to \$38,000 for  
Latinos. This clearly shows that affirmative  
action is not an issue as blacks and Latinos  
have a higher national income rate  
then ever before ~~and if it was an issue~~  
~~the~~ furthermore the US ~~Gov~~ Department for  
Education said that minorities were  
graduating at record levels. ~~As of~~  
~~at~~ 93.7% of Asians graduated for Uni, 87%  
of Latinos and 66% of Blacks graduated for  
Uni. ~~As~~ This clearly shows that affirmative  
action cases do not come up much due  
to the fact that minorities have economic  
& social equalities to whites and if they  
doubt there could be more



affirmative action cases, which would clearly suggest  
This clearly suggests that race is not a  
significant issue in US politics.

Nevertheless the liberal argue that race still  
plays a significant issue in US politics as  
the rules aren't represented well in the  
political scene (ie in Congress). This  
view can be supported by the fact that  
there is only 1 black senator in the  
Senate, Tim Scott SC, and by the  
fact that there are only 43 out of 535  
members of Congress black. This clearly shows  
that race is a significant factor in US  
politics as the majority of politicians are  
white & this shows that the white population  
(which is on the decline) still has a significant  
role in the political process. In addition  
there is the issue of gerrymandering districts,  
which refers to clumping minorities in to  
one district. This is clearly undermines the  
democratic process and shows that race still  
plays a key role as both the parties want  
to reduce the impact of minorities in the  
electoral system, a good example can be  
seen with the 'crumff' district in Illinois.  
Collectively these issues still show that



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race is still a significant issue in US politics

~~It can be seen~~ Furthermore it can be argued that the judicial system is bias against the minorities and this shows that race is still a factor in US politics. This is due to the fact that both the State and Federal level minorities face a certain disadvantage, ~~to~~ whether that is in the crimes they committed or the sentences they face. For example this can be evidently shown by the ~~amount~~ rate of incarceration rate between whites and minorities. <sup>According to an ACLU report</sup> Incarceration for ~~the~~ whites stands at 1 in every 106 people, whereas Latinos is 1 in ~~every~~ 36 to black in 15. This evidently shows that ~~blacks or the judicial~~ minorities have a greater chance of going to jail & so therefore is a disadvantage to them. In addition to Trayvon Martin case shows ~~that~~ <sup>how some</sup> state governments are bias in favor of whites. Martin was killed by a white man (due to racial profiling) and Zimmerman failed to get sentenced for it. This clearly shows how there is a bias against minorities in the political justice system & suggests that race is still an important ~~factor~~ <sup>issue</sup> in the US politics.



Finally Immigration is still an important issue in US politics. Immigration reform is a constant argument between the Republicans who favor stricter measures such as AZ SB1070, whereas the Democrats want measures such as the DREAM Act passed as they believe illegal immigrants are the future of the US economic success.

Immigration is an extremely influential measure as the Republicans want to stop the influx of migrants as they feel they are a burden to the state ~~as well~~ The Republicans even rejected the recent bipartisan attempt at immigration reform where illegal would be able to spend 60 years in the USA if

they paid a penalty fee of \$500 on top of taxes. Immigration is always going to be an influential issue in US politics as

the Republicans want to stop these liberal people coming in and voting for the Democrats at election time. <sup>perhaps</sup> if the Republicans want to win an election they should relax their measures on immigration to attract

Latino support. Therefore it can be said that immigration is a significant factor in US politics.



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In Conclusion, despite the ~~key~~ ~~improvements~~ in the rule has ceased to become an issue in US politics as the election of Obama has meant race relations has improved throughout the US & the 3 branches of government have become more representative. However it has to be said that race still plays a major role in US politics today as immigration reform is constantly on the two parties minds, minorities are ~~extremely~~ not very well off and they need help. But still the main reason is due to the fact that the 3 branches as a whole are not very representative of the US as a whole. -Perhaps ~~there~~ <sup>there</sup> needs to be a Latino president after Barack Obama, but again would this help minorities. Therefore race is still an extremely influential issue in US politics.



### ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

This is a very solid Level 3 answer, the strength of which is undoubtedly the range of knowledge it demonstrates. One obvious way it could be improved would be if it conveyed more of a sense of arguing towards a definite answer to the question. Of course, it will never be the case that the answer will be an unambiguous 'yes' or 'no', but equally it will never be the case that the debate is balanced exactly 50:50. Even in his conclusion, this candidate is still sitting on the fence, only coming down on one side in the final sentence.



### ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

The first page of this answer is instructive. You really do not need, as this candidate does, to write out the question at the top of the page - if you want to remind yourself of the key terms of the question, underline or highlight them on the question paper. A plan though is essential, just a word or two for the key idea of each paragraph works well, as seen here.

## **Question 8**

As usual, the parties question was the best done of the three 45 mark questions but the candidates who attempted it, only just over 10% of the entry, were for the most part a self-selecting elite. Why parties is a recurringly unpopular topic continues to be a mystery, when it offers candidates the opportunity to use far more contemporary knowledge than, for example, a pressure group question, and as a consequence they produce better answers.

Democratic and Republican politicians and their policies are in the press daily, when candidates will be waiting a long time to read of the latest iron triangle. The definition of 'traditional Democratic values and policies' was for the most part unproblematic, although there was some interesting discussion of what really represented the Democratic foreign policy tradition, given the record of Truman and Johnson. The very best answers – and a number were awarded full marks – showed an impressively detailed knowledge of the administration's record, and ways it might or might not be considered to be in accord with the traditions of the Democratic Party. Some candidates mixed up the repeal of 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' with President Obama's more recent expression of support for same sex marriage, while the attempts of House Republicans to defund the Affordable Care Act, and Senator Cruz's quixotic filibuster to the same end, evidently led some candidates to believe that the act has yet to be implemented.

Put a cross in the box  indicating the question that you have chosen.  
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and then indicate your new question with a cross .

Chosen Question Number:

Question 6

Question 7

Question 8

The traditional values of the Democratic party centre around increased taxation and redistribution of wealth from the rich to the poor; a liberal stance on social issues; a 'dovish' approach to foreign policy and a fairly relaxed approach to immigration.

Under Clinton the Democrat party was shifted towards the centre due to his conservative stance on social issues such as support of the death penalty, however it is clear that ~~Obama~~ the Obama administration has moved the party back to its traditional values and policies.

The most clear example of Obama's devotion to traditional Democrat ideals is seen in his continuance and expansion of the healthcare system. Under previous Democrat government 'medicare' (healthcare provision for those over 65) and 'medicaid' (for the extremely poor) were set up and ~~Obama~~ the Obama administration has expanded



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\* To further the Democrats' <sup>tradition</sup> support for the working classes, Obama focused his 2013 State of Union Address on raising the minimum wage and had initiated legislation that would raise the minimum wage to \$10.10, showing a devotion to traditional Democrat values.

The Democrats have traditionally been united behind measures to increase gun control. This was especially prominent following the Sandy Hook massacre in Newtown, Connecticut in 2012. Obama had called for tougher legislation on gun ownership. The Obama administration introduced legislation into Congress in 2013 that aimed to introduce mandatory firearm background checks on those purchasing firearms. Although this was filibustered and killed by Republicans in the Senate, Obama had issued 23 executive orders concerning gun control, one of which allowed the use of medical records in justification for seizing a firearm.

Finally, Obama stuck to traditional Democrat values of promoting



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However, there are arguments that might suggest Obama has departed from traditional Democrat policies and values.

In foreign policy for example, Obama has shown signs of 'hawkish' behaviour and despite promising to remove troops from Iraq and Afghanistan has since doubled the number of troops serving in Iraq. Further he has deployed troops to Libya and seemed eager to go in to Syria had he not asked for Congressional permission. The assassination of Osama Bin Laden orchestrated by the Obama ~~the~~ administration poses Obama as a foreign policy hawk, far from the traditional Democrat values, as has his failure to close Guantanamo Bay. However this is a failing argument as Obama didn't result in deploying troops to Syria and negotiates with Iran over their nuclear weapon programme and more recent negotiations with the Taliban to release the only American prisoner of war, pose Obama as more 'dovish' than at he, at first, appears and has therefore remained true to traditional Democrat policies and ideas on defence.

Additionally, whilst the Democrat Party have previously had a relaxed stance



on immigration, Obama's failure to ~~reform~~ pass immigration reform points his values as detached from typical Democrats however Obama issued a 'presidential memorandum' allowing the US Border Patrol to allow 800,000 illegal immigrant children to remain in the US. This hints at an administration ~~aligning~~ aligning themselves to more traditional Democrat values sympathetic with those crossing the border, and also hints at their ~~more accessible~~ increased accessibility to minority voters.

Further to this Obama's choice of Hispanic ~~to~~ Sonia Sotomayor as a Supreme Court Justice is reflective of past Democrat administrations such as Clinton who wished to have racial minorities represented in government and the courts. Additionally Obama has appointed Clinton's ideal of a 'cabinet that looks like America' by appointing the most diverse cabinet to date, with Italian-Americans, Asian-Americans, an African-American, Lebanese-Americans and Hispanic members.

On the whole, whilst some decisions such as foreign policy have moved Obama and his administration away from traditional Democrat values, his



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his increasingly liberal stance on social issues and devotion to ~~making~~ the working classes with a commitment to social welfare programmes such as 'Obamacare', along with the ~~opponent~~ increased liberal high tier ~~politici~~ Democrats such as ~~speaker~~ ~~House~~ Nancy Pelosi and Secretary of State John Kerry has seen a revival of traditional Democrat policies and ideas within the Obama administration.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

This is another example of a very good Level 3 answer. It shows a detailed knowledge of the subject and conveys a sense of confident control over its material. If there is an area where the Obama administration could be argued to have departed from traditional Democratic values, it is probably foreign policy, and the extent to which this is the case and the reasons for it might have been evaluated with more subtlety. Nevertheless, a very good answer.

## **Paper Summary**

Some key points for next year's candidates to bear in mind:

- three or four well developed points are the right balance between range and depth in 15 mark answers
- try to make your examples as precise as you can
- short answers don't need an introduction
- introductions to 45 mark answers should explain the nature of the debate and indicate the direction the argument is going to go in



## **Grade Boundaries**

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

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