
AP[®] United States Government and Politics

Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary Set 2

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Free-Response Question 2

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Question 2: Quantitative Analysis**4 points**

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- A** Identify the percentage of Senate elections won by candidates of the same party as their state’s most recent presidential election winner in 2018, according to the data in the line graph. **1 point**

Acceptable response:

- 76%

Scoring Notes: Identifications between 75% and 80% (inclusive) are also acceptable.

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- B** Describe the overall trend in the data shown in the line graph. **1 point**

Examples of acceptable responses may include the following:

- Overall, the trend of people choosing a Senate and presidential candidate from the same party is increasing.
- From 1980 to 2022, voters have shown they are more willing to choose candidates from the same political party in Senate and presidential elections.
- The percentage of people voting for candidates from different parties has declined.

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- C** Draw a conclusion about the level of partisanship among voters since 1980, using the data shown in the line graph. **1 point**

Examples of acceptable responses may include the following:

- Partisanship has increased since 1980 as demonstrated by an increase in straight ticket voting.
- Voters are more likely to vote for Senate and presidential candidates of the same political party over time, demonstrating an increase in partisanship.
- Voters who identify with one party were more likely to vote for candidates of the opposite party in 1980 than they are today.

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- D** Explain how the overall trend shown in the graph could reflect changes in how people acquire political news. **1 point**

Examples of acceptable responses may include the following:

- Increased demand for ideologically oriented media could have led voters to seek out information reinforcing their political views.
 - The emergence of the internet allowed voters more choices in how they consumed news and made it easier for them to ignore different perspectives, which made them less likely to vote across party lines.
 - Social media allows voters to consume the types of news that they want to see rather than a range of perspectives, potentially leading to biases.
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A. The percentage of Senate elections won by candidates of the same party as their state's most recent presidential election winner in 2018 was about 77% according to the data in the line graph.

B. The overall trend in the data shown in the line graph is that between 1980 and 2022, the percentage of Senate elections won by candidates of the same party as their state's most recent presidential election winner has increased on average over time.

C. The level of partisanship among voters has increased since 1980. Since 1980, an increasing percent of senate elections have been won by candidates of the same party as their state's most recent presidential election winner. In 1980, this value was around 60%, while it is now around 95%. This means that people are more partisan and are more likely to vote only within their preferred party. Their political views have become more partisan, so they have become less willing to vote with the other party, which is why the same parties are winning senate elections in a state as the one who had the most recent presidential election winner.

D. The overall trend shown in the line graph could reflect changes in how people acquire political news because people's views are becoming more partisan and extreme. Senators have become more likely to win elections if they are a part of the same party as the state's most recent presidential election winner. This means that people are voting more and more with the same party. This is because people are watching more polarized news sources, and in recent years haven't been making sure to consume a variety of information with different perspectives. Additionally, the developemnt of social media has also led to political polarization, as people are being fed content that aligns with their beliefs.

A) The percentage of senate elections won by candidates of the same party as their states most recent presidential election winner was about 77%

B) The data is showing us that more and more senate elections are being won if the candidates have the same party as the most recent presidential election winner. The graph starts in 1980 with only about 60% and a small decrease to about 40% in 1986 being in the same party. Then a continual gradual increase until it is just under 100% in 2022.

C) The conclusion that can be drawn about partisanship among voters since 1980 using this graph is that voters have become much more partisan. We can see this as the 1980's show a lower percentage of voters choosing senators of the same party affiliation as the last presidential election at around 40%-65%. As time goes on voters begin consistently picking senators of the same party affiliation as the last presidential election getting as high as 100% in 2016. This shows that more and more voters picked the senators based on the popular party at the time and not based on the senator themselves as previously done in the 1980's.

D) The overall trend seen in the graph could reflect changes in how people acquire their political views by showing that media will now focus more on the party of the president. As seen in the 1980's, voters were voting based on the senator they had similar views with despite what party the president was because media focused less on just the presidents party. Moving more toward the early 2010's to 2022, senators were consistently picked based on their similar party affiliation with the president due to the media focus being on just that party. For example, when Trump won his election, the media focused much more heavily on the republican party and as such more senators from that similar party gained exposure as well.

A) According to the data shown in the line graph the percent of Senate election won by candidates of the same party as their state's most recent presidential election winner in 2018 is about 75%.

B) The overall trend in the data shown in the line graph consists of a short rise and short drop each 4 years in the percentage.

C) Partisanship among voters since 1880 the percent of Senate elections won by candidates of the same party has no dramatic change considering that it stays steady rising and dropping each four years.

D) The overall trend shown in the line graph can reflect the changes on how people acquire political news by influencing the voters to keep their options open as well as their opinions in favor when voting for a new president in their state.

Question 2

Note: Student samples are quoted verbatim and may contain spelling and grammatical errors.

Overview

NEW for 2025: The question overviews can be found in the “*Chief Reader Report on Student Responses*” on [AP Central](#).

Sample: 2A

Score: 4

Part A Score: 1

Part B Score: 1

Part C Score: 1

Part D Score: 1

The response earned 1 point in Part A. The response correctly identifies that “The percentage of Senate elections won by candidates of the same party as their state’s most recent presidential election winner in 2018 was about 77% according to the data in the line graph.”

The response earned 1 point in Part B. The response states “The overall trend in the data shown in the line graph is that between 1980 and 2022, the percentage of Senate elections won by candidates of the same party as their state’s most recent presidential election winner has increased on average over time.” This correctly describes the overall trend shown in the graph.

The response earned 1 point in Part C. The response states “The level of partisanship among voters has increased since 1980...This means that people are more partisan and are more likely to vote only within their preferred party.” The response correctly draws a conclusion about the level of partisanship among voters since 1980.

The response earned 1 point in Part D. The response states “This means that people are voting more and more with the same party. This is because people are watching more polarized news sources, and in recent years haven’t been making sure to consume a variety of information with different perspectives. Additionally, the developemnt of social media has also led to political polarization, as people are being fed content that aligns with their beliefs.” This correctly explains how the overall trend in the graph could reflect changes in how people acquire political news.

Sample: 1B

Score: 3

Part A Score: 1

Part B Score: 1

Part C Score: 1

Part D Score: 0

The response earned 1 point in Part A. The response correctly identifies “the percentage of senate elections won by candidates of the same party as their states most recent precidential election winner was about 77%.”

The response earned 1 point in Part B. The response states “a continual gradual increase until it is just under 100% in 2022.” This correctly describes the overall trend demonstrated in the graph.

Question 2 (continued)

The response earned 1 point in Part C. The response states “The conclusion that can be drawn about partisanship among voters since 1980 using this graph is that voters have become much more partisan” and “As time goes on voters begin consistently picking senators of the same party affiliation as the last presidential election” This correctly draws a conclusion about the increasing level of partisanship illustrated in the graph.

The response earned 0 points in Part D. While the response states “the graph could reflect changes in how people acquire their political views by showing that media will now focus more on the party of the president,” this does not correctly explain the change in how voters acquire their political news.

Sample: 1C**Score: 1****Part A Score: 1****Part B Score: 0****Part C Score: 0****Part D Score: 0**

The response earned 1 point in Part A. The response correctly identifies “...in 2018 is about 75%”

The response earned 0 points in Part B. The response does not correctly describe an accurate overall trend.

The response earned 0 points in Part C. The response “Partisanship among voters since 1880 the percent of Senate elections won by candidates of the same party has no dramatic change considering that it stays steady rising and dropping each four years.” By stating both “no dramatic change” and “stays steady rising,” this response does not provide an accurate conclusion as to the level of partisanship that is supported by data.

The response earned 0 points in Part D. While the response states, “...by influencing the voters to keep their options open as well as their opinions in favor when voting for a new president in their state,” this does not correctly provide an explanation as to how the way in which the people acquire political news has changed.