

2025



AP[®] United States Government and Politics

Free-Response Questions Set 2

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

SECTION II

TIME – 1 HOUR AND 40 MINUTES

Directions:

Section II has 4 questions and lasts 1 hour and 40 minutes.

Respond to all parts of all 4 questions. In your response, use substantive examples where appropriate.

You may pace yourself as you answer the questions in this section, or you may use these optional timing recommendations:

It is suggested that you spend about 20 minutes each on questions 1, 2, and 3 and about 40 minutes on question 4.

You may use scratch paper for notes and planning, but credit will only be given for responses entered in this application. Text you enter as an annotation will **not** be included as part of your answer. You can go back and forth between questions in this section until time expires. The clock will turn red when 5 minutes remain—**the proctor will not give you any time updates or warnings.**

Note: This exam was originally administered digitally. It is presented here in a format optimized for teacher and student use in the classroom.

In recent years, energy producers have been at odds with activists who oppose the construction of new pipelines that could transport liquefied natural gas (LNG) to markets in the United States and abroad. Coalitions of citizens' groups have voiced their concerns about the potential threat that new pipelines might pose to the environment and public safety.

As a result, energy producers and the government have sought alternative ways to transport LNG within the confines of current law. In 2015 the United States Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) issued the first permit for transporting LNG by rail. This bureaucratic agency, which is part of the Department of Transportation, expanded the practice in 2017.

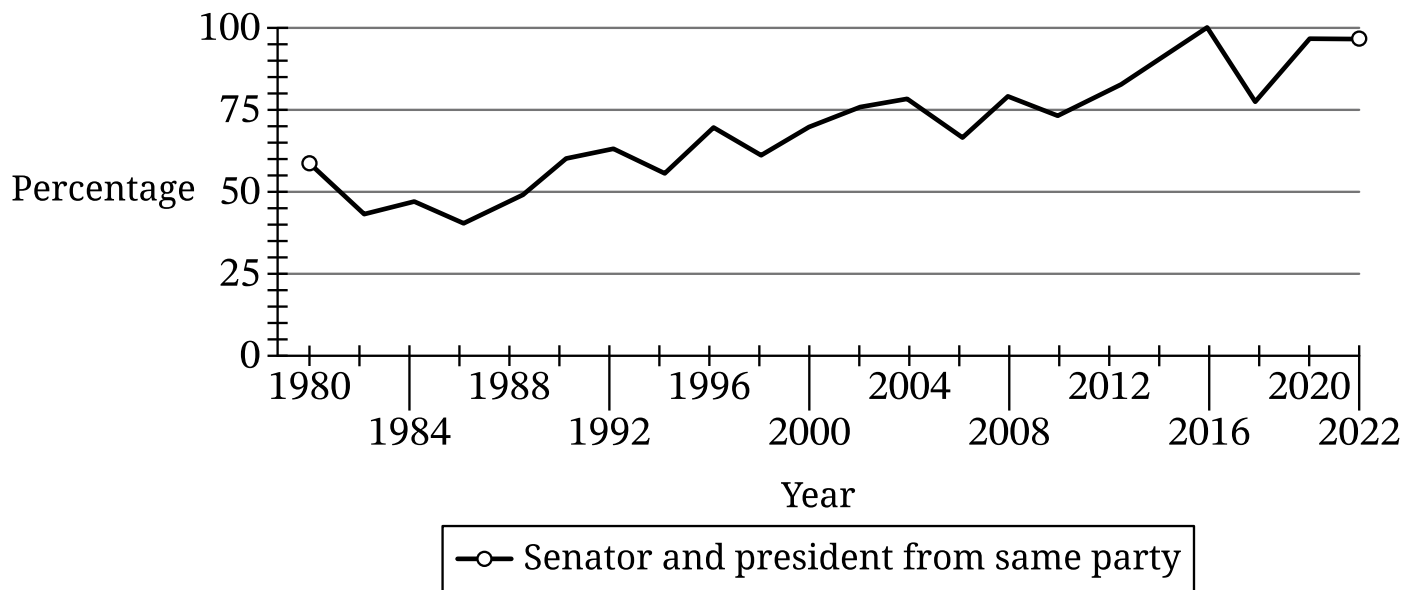
Citizens' groups voiced similar concerns about the transportation of LNG by rail but could not muster enough support in Congress for a new law. The presidential administration at the time responded to pressure from industry groups by supporting the expansion of permits, setting new rules and regulations to make it easier to transport LNG by rail. In 2019, without further direction from Congress, the PHMSA established new safety requirements and expanded the number of permits available.

1. Respond to parts A, B, and C.

- A.** Describe the power the bureaucratic agency used in the scenario.
- B.** Explain how Congress could counteract the use of the power described in part A.
- C.** Explain how the citizens' groups in the scenario illustrate the concept of pluralist democracy.

State Elections for Senator and President, 1980 to 2022

Percentage of Senate elections won by candidates of the same party as their state's most recent presidential election winner



Source: Pew Research Center, 2022

2. Respond to parts A, B, C, and D.

- 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.
- B. Describe the overall trend in the data shown in the line graph.
- C. Draw a conclusion about the level of partisanship among voters since 1980, using the data shown in the line graph.
- D. Explain how the overall trend shown in the line graph could reflect changes in how people acquire political news.

This question requires you to compare a Supreme Court case you studied in class with one you have not studied in class. A summary of the Supreme Court case you did not study in class is presented and provides all of the information you need to know about this case to answer the prompts.

Bush v. Vera (1996)

As a result of the 1990 census, Texas was given three additional congressional districts. In the redistricting process that followed, the Texas state legislature redrew the borders of its current districts to make room for the three new ones. Texas voter Al Vera sued the state of Texas for creating gerrymandered districts. In response, the state of Texas cited compliance with federal regulation of federal elections, as well as seeking to reduce the incumbency advantage. Supporters of the plan claimed that the districts establish minority-majority districts that would ensure minority representation in Congress. The Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit struck parts of the plan, and the state of Texas appealed to the Supreme Court.

In *Bush v. Vera*, the Court held in favor of Vera and struck down the redistricting plan. Justice Sandra Day O'Connor reasoned that race was the primary factor used to redraw the districts and that other, race-neutral factors were given less consideration. The Court used the highest standard of review to determine the constitutionality of the government discrimination on the basis of race.

3. Respond to parts A, B, and C.

- A.** Identify the constitutional clause that is the basis for the decisions in both *Shaw v. Reno* (1993) and *Bush v. Vera* (1996).
- B.** Explain how the facts in *Shaw v. Reno* and *Bush v. Vera* led to similar holdings.
- C.** Explain how the decision in *Bush v. Vera* relates to the democratic ideal of republicanism.

4. There is continued debate over how to best preserve the democratic ideal of limited government.

Develop an argument as to whether an elected legislature or an independent judiciary is more effective in preserving limited government.

Use at least one piece of evidence from one of the following foundational documents:

- *Federalist* No. 51
- *Federalist* No. 78
- Article I of the Constitution of the United States

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a defensible claim or thesis that establishes a line of reasoning.
- Support your claim with at least TWO pieces of specific and relevant evidence.
 - One piece of evidence must come from one of the foundational documents listed.
 - A second piece of evidence can come from any other foundational document not used as your first piece of evidence or it may be from your knowledge of course concepts.
- Use reasoning to explain why your evidence supports your claim or thesis.
- Respond to an opposing or alternate perspective using rebuttal or refutation.

STOP
END OF EXAM