

2026



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# **AP<sup>®</sup> United States Government and Politics**

## **Free-Response Questions**

**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.

Heading into the 1992 election, voters were watching the state of the economy. A recession in 1991, slow job growth rates, and the national debt contributed to voters' concerns. The major party candidates, Republican incumbent President George H.W. Bush and Democrat Bill Clinton, Governor of Arkansas, addressed these issues in their campaigns.

Spurred by the existing economic conditions, Texas businessman Ross Perot entered the campaign as an independent candidate in February of 1992. Perot organized a large volunteer outreach effort to collect the signatures necessary to be added to the slate of presidential candidates in every state.

Perot advocated for a balanced budget, the creation of more jobs domestically, and the adoption of technology to increase citizen participation in government. Perot used his personal wealth to self-fund his third-party candidacy, and his campaign used his unconventional personality and outsider status to attract media attention.

Perot gained significant attention from the media and led public opinion polls in the summer of 1992. To address the strength of Perot's campaign, Clinton and the Democratic Party decided to incorporate deficit reduction into their messaging and focused more heavily on issues important to the middle class. In addition, Bush and the Republican Party promised to cut up to one-third of the federal budget should he be reelected.

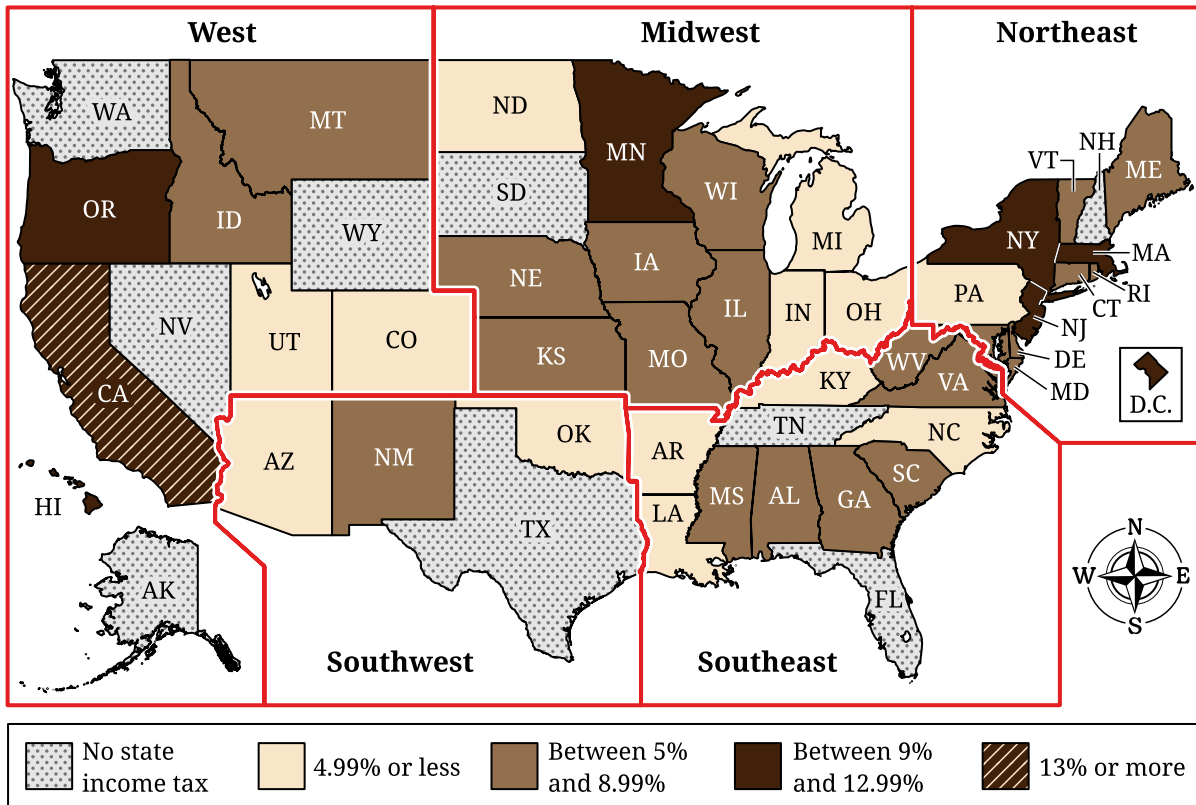
Perot won approximately 19 percent of the popular vote but received no electoral votes. Bush won roughly 37 percent of the popular vote and earned 168 electoral votes. Clinton won the presidential election with 43 percent of the popular vote and 370 electoral votes.

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

- A. Describe an impact the third-party candidate had on the 1992 presidential election as described in the scenario.
- B. Explain how structural barriers limited the impact of the third-party candidate as described in part A.
- C. Explain how a model of voting behavior could be used to explain how citizens vote in presidential elections as described in the scenario.

### State Individual Income Tax Rates, 2023



Source: Tax Foundation, 2023

*Note: “State individual income tax rates” refers to the highest tax rate a portion of an individual’s earnings might be subjected to based on the laws of a given state.*

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

- Identify the state with the highest individual income tax rate.
- Describe a difference in individual income tax rates between the Northeast region and the Southeast region.
- Draw a conclusion about the impact of participatory democracy based on the differences in the data as shown in the map.
- Explain how state income taxes demonstrate the principle of federalism based on the data in the map.

**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.**

*Bonito Boats, Inc. v. Thunder Craft Boats, Inc.* (1989)

Bonito Boats, Inc. was a Florida corporation that developed a hull design for a fiberglass recreational boat in 1976. Bonito Boats' manufacturing process involved creating a hardwood model that was then sprayed with fiberglass to create a mold used to build the finished fiberglass boats. The new boats were quite successful in the marketplace. However, Bonito Boats, Inc. never filed a patent—a license granting them intellectual property rights—for the design of the hulls or the manufacturing process by which the finished boats were built.

In 1983, the Florida Legislature passed a statute that prohibited the duplication of unpatented molding processes, such as the process developed by Bonito. The statute also prohibited the sale by other businesses of hulls and boats built using Bonito's manufacturing process. In 1984, Bonito Boats, Inc. sued Thunder Craft Boats, Inc., a Tennessee corporation that also produced fiberglass recreational boats. Bonito claimed that the boats Thunder Craft was selling were built by copying the design and process created by Bonito. Thunder Craft argued that although the Florida statute was written to protect the process developed by Bonito Boats, the statute was invalid because it conflicted with federal government patent laws. Florida courts agreed with Thunder Craft, but Bonito appealed to the United States Supreme Court.

In a unanimous decision, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor wrote that prior Supreme Court decisions "correctly concluded that the States may not offer patent-like protection to intellectual creations which would otherwise remain unprotected as a matter of federal law."

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

- A.** Identify the constitutional clause common to both *McCulloch v. Maryland* (1819) and *Bonito Boats, Inc. v. Thunder Craft Boats, Inc.* (1989).
- B.** Explain how the facts in *McCulloch* and *Bonito Boats* led to similar holdings.
- C.** Explain how the *Bonito Boats* case illustrates the concept of stare decisis.

4. Since the founding of the United States, access to voting has expanded.

Develop an argument as to whether social movements or congressional actions have done more to expand opportunities for voting.

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

- Article I of the Constitution of the United States
- The First Amendment
- “Letter from a Birmingham Jail”

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**