

Wilson - Ch. 8 - Campaigns and Elections

Question 1) Which one of the following statements, A through D, is false?

- A) Level of political participation among U.S. citizens is NOT correlated with their socioeconomic status (SES).

Explanation: No, class or SES does predict levels of political participation. The higher an individual's education (and, to a lesser degree, income), the more likely that individual is to vote, give money to candidates, work in political campaigns, and join interest-group organizations.

- B) Older people are more politically active than younger ones.

Explanation: The relationship between age and voter turnout is curvilinear. Those under 30 years old are least likely to turnout; those between 31 and 64 are most likely to turnout. Those 65 and older are less likely to turnout than the middle-aged but more likely to turnout than the youngest adults.

- C) If you do NOT control for the effects of age and SES, then race, region, and gender predict voter turnout – i.e., whites are more likely to vote than blacks, non-Southerners than Southerners, and males than females.

Explanation: However, if you DO control for the effects of age and SES, then those widely reported turnout differences either disappear or, sometimes, reverse. For example, among people of the same education and income, blacks tend to participate MORE than whites. Hence – blacks, women, and Southerners appear to participate less only because they are more likely to be either poorer and less educated or older or both.

- D) There is a direct correlation between being more politically active and holding more extreme political views.

Explanation: Republican activists are more consistently conservative than the average Republican; Democratic activists are more consistently liberal than the average Democrat.

- E) None of the above statements, A through D, is false.

Question 2) Which one of the following statements, A through D, is false?

- A) From the end of Reconstruction (1876) until the passage of the Voting Rights Act (1965) blacks were systematically denied the right to vote throughout the South.

Explanation: From the end of the Civil War until the end of Reconstruction, blacks in Southern states registered and voted in large numbers. The provisions of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments were strictly enforced by the occupying Union army. Black voters were so numerous that many local, state, and even some congressional elections were won by black candidates in the South. However, with the end of Reconstruction and the withdrawal of Union forces, white supremacy was once again imposed by state law and custom throughout the South. For the next 100 years, few blacks had the opportunity to register and vote in any Southern state. Only after the Voting Rights Act of 1965 suspended the use of literacy tests (which had been used in a blatantly discriminatory fashion) and authorized federal oversight of voter registration (in counties with less than 50% of adults registered) did blacks once again register and vote in numbers comparable to whites in the South.

- B) The ratification of the 19th Amendment, guaranteeing women the right to vote, had an immediate and dramatic impact on elections and public policy.

Explanation: Although the eligible electorate was almost doubled overnight, women were relatively slow to use their newly won right and often voted for the same candidates as their husbands or fathers. However, since the 1960s, gender differences in turnout have disappeared, while (as we saw in Ch. 4) gender differences in issue preferences and vote choice increased.

- C) The ratification of the 26th Amendment, extending the vote to 18-to-20-year-olds, did not prove as helpful as expected to Democratic candidates.

Explanation: Democratic candidates do win greater support among (4-year) college students, but Republican candidates do better among non-college (and 2-year college) youth. The latter still outnumber the former.

- D) The proportion of eligible voters who turnout and vote today is considerably less than in the post-Civil-War era.

Explanation: Part of this is due to Progressive-Era reforms that made it more difficult to register and vote; even for honest voters with less education and those who had recently moved.

- E) None of the above statements, A through D, is false.

Question 3) Which one of the following statements, A through D, -- is false?

A) It is more difficult to register to vote in the U.S. than in any European democracy.

Explanation: In most European democracies, voter registration is done for you by the government; while in most U.S. states (like North Carolina), the citizen has to initiate the process.

B) Politics is not as important to the average U.S. citizen as it is to their counterparts in Europe.

Explanation: That is, in part, because government has less impact on our day-to-day lives here than in Europe where there is more "cradle-to-the-grave" health, housing, and employment assistance.

C) The Republican and Democratic parties in the U.S. do NOT mobilize voters and get them to the polls with the same efficiency as political parties in European democracies.

Explanation: That is, in part, because political parties in Europe are significantly stronger and more hierarchically organized. It is also due to the fact that there are many fewer elections in European democracies for many fewer public offices, so it is easier to motivate and educate voters.

D) The 1993 "motor-voter" act of Congress requires states to allow people to register to vote by mail or when appearing in person at various state offices, such as the driver's license bureau, welfare office, etc.

Explanation: By making it more convenient to register, states have added millions of citizens to their voter-registration lists. Whether these newly registered individuals will turnout in large numbers at election time is still unclear.

E) None of the above statements, A through D, is false.

Question 4) Which one of the following statements, A through D, is false?

A) In a 'closed' primary, the voters receive a ballot listing only those candidates running for office in the party with which the voter is registered. Unaffiliated voters cannot vote.

Explanation: Hence, if you are registered as a Republican, you can only vote in that primary. If you are registered as a Democrat, then you can vote only in that primary.

The number of states that use the closed primary system is steadily declining.

B) In recent years, a number of states that formerly used the closed primary have opened their primary elections to unaffiliated voters, allowing them to vote in either the Republican or Democratic primary (but not both). So far, there is no commonly used name for this system; we'll call it a 'semi-closed' primary system.

Explanation: North Carolina is one of those states.

C) In an 'open' primary, the voters choose which party's ballot they wish to complete and drop in the ballot box.

Explanation: Hence, if you are registered as a Republican, you can choose to "cross over" and vote in the Democratic primary (instead of your own); similarly, if you are registered as a Democrat, you can choose to "cross over" and vote in the Republican primary (instead of your own). Unaffiliated voters (just like affiliated voters) can vote in either party's primary (but not both).

D) A variant of the open primary is the 'blanket' or 'free love' or 'jungle' primary. Voters here receive a ballot listing all candidates running for office, regardless of party affiliation.

Hence, you can vote for a Democratic candidate for one office and a Republican candidate for another office.

Explanation: Two states (Alaska and Washington) currently use the blanket primary. California voters also adopted the 'blanket' primary by initiative and referendum, but both the California Republican and Democratic party organizations objected and the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that a state party organization could force their respective state to stop using the 'blanket' primary because it violated a party's freedom-of-association rights guaranteed by the 1st Amendment.

One state, Louisiana, uses a further variation, the "unitary" or "nonpartisan" primary, in which the voters receive a general-election-style ballot. The difference is that if any candidate receives a majority of the primary votes cast, then that candidate automatically is declared the winner of the general election and does not have to compete in that contest. The Supreme Court upheld this type of primary.

E) None of the above statements, A through D, is false.

Question 5) Which one of the following statements, A through D, is false?

A) Campaigns for public office were once organized by the political parties to support a **unified slate** of candidates; however, since the 1960s, campaigns have been increasingly run as **independent efforts** by individual candidates or party factions and with less control by party leaders and less coordination with the full slate of the party's candidates. Several factors contributed to this change. First, the rise of primary elections has taken the selection of party candidates out of the party leaders' hands. Second, the decline of state and local political machines and the rise of state and federal public welfare programs have taken patronage and rewards out of the hands of party bosses. Third, in the case of presidential elections, public financing of candidates has diminished the importance of party officials in raising and spending campaign funds. Fourth, party organizations have essentially lost their role as the primary communications link between candidates and voters to the mass media – especially television, radio, and now the Internet. And, finally, the decline in party identification among the voters has discouraged candidates (except in heavily Democratic or Republican areas) from linking themselves too closely to either party's label and organization.

Explanation:

B) To win his or her party's nomination to run in the general election, the typical candidate must win that party's caucus or primary by mobilizing a relatively small number of issue activists who hold strong and often rather extreme policy preferences.

Explanation: Turnout in the typical party primary election is only half that of the following general election. Turnout in the typical party caucus is even less. Hence, the more highly motivated and militant issue activists are most likely to show up to vote in these within-party contests.

C) To win the general election, the typical candidate must mobilize a much larger and more diverse coalition of voters, many of whom hold significantly more moderate policy preferences than issue activists.

Explanation: Hence, a candidate who has won a primary campaign by taking strong stands on controversial issues often finds it difficult to move to the political center in the general election campaign.

D) Except for lengthy recessions or a real depression, the state of the domestic economy has little impact on the typical presidential election.

Quite the contrary, the 'pocketbook' vote is important. If the percent change in real per capita disposable income during the election year is less than 2 percent, the voters almost always reject the incumbent president (or candidate of the president's party). When average incomes go up by 2 percent or more, the voters almost always reelect the incumbent president (or give the victory to the candidate of the incumbent president's party).

Explanation:

But, it is not necessarily the voter's own pocketbook that is the key. Many people who are doing well financially will vote against the party in power if the country as a whole is not doing well. Of course, their concern may be less with the country as a whole than with more immediate friends and family. Or, self-interest may still be at work, in the sense that the well-off voters are concerned that they will soon feel the pinch by losing their job or customers.

E) None of the above statements, A through D, is false.

Question 6) Which one of the following statements, A through D, is false?

A) Presidential elections are usually determined by a mix of three variables: the partisan loyalties of the two-thirds of the voters who self-identify as either Republicans or Democrats, the state of the economy, and the voters' assessment of the candidates' character.

Explanation: The two most important aspects of presidential character appear to be trustworthiness and competence. Voters want to know: can you trust this candidate to try to accomplish his or her campaign promises if elected? And, further, when that candidate tries, will he or she have the knowledge and skills to achieve those goals? A candidate, who a voter sees as "acting presidential" or "qualified," is a candidate who that voter believes is reliable and competent.

B) Being a sitting vice-president typically gives that candidate a considerable advantage in running for the presidency. Very rarely. In 1988, Ronald Reagan's vice president, George Bush, was the first sitting vice president to win the presidency since Martin Van Buren (Jackson's VP) in 1836.

Since World War II, three other sitting vice presidents lost their bids to win the presidency: Richard Nixon (1960), Hubert Humphrey (1968), and Albert Gore, Jr. (2000).

Explanation:

If the incumbent president's administration is blessed with both peace and prosperity and not blemished by scandal of some sort, then being a sitting vice-president can be an asset.

However, should there be economic woes (1960), a divisive war (1968), or a messy scandal (2000); then, the vice president will be held to account by many voters.

- C) In presidential elections most voters are 'retrospective' voters, that is they look back at how the party that is in office performed and support it if there is peace and prosperity.

Explanation: Clearly, in Clinton's reelection in 1996, the presence of peace and prosperity was more important than the allegations of scandal swirling around his presidency.

- D) In presidential elections, a smaller number of voters are 'prospective,' in that they look ahead and try to figure out whether future peace and prosperity is more likely with the incumbent or the challenger's victory.

Explanation: Studies of public opinion suggest that the average voter is more likely to engage in 'retrospective' voting, while the issue-activists are more likely to be 'prospective' voters.

- E) None of the above statements, A through D, is false.

Question 7) Which one of the following statements, A through D, is false?

- A) A 'critical' or 'realigning' election is one in which there is a sudden and lasting shift of a large number of voters across party lines that causes an important change in the competitive balance between the two major parties for the next three decades.

Explanation: Most political historians agree that there have been five party realignments so far, each roughly 36 years after the other. After the first one, each new realignment was triggered by the rise of a new set of issues that 'cross-cut' the existing partisan division, producing a new partisan alignment within the electorate.

- B) In the 1860 critical election, the central issue was slavery.

Explanation: A related issue was state's rights; but the key state's right that was in dispute was the right of Southern states to secede from the Union in order to maintain their system of slavery. The outcome was that the Republican party replaced the Whigs as the major party competing with the Democrats. During the Civil War and Reconstruction era, the Republicans were dominant, but after the end of Reconstruction and the re-emergence of the 'solid' South, the Democratic party became once again competitive in presidential elections and achieved parity with the Republicans in congressional seats.

- C) Wilson argues that in the 1896 critical election, the central issues were economic and religious.

The central issues were economic and cultural (the latter including both secular and religious dimensions).

Explanation: The former North/South split was replaced with an urban/rural split. Prairie-state and southern farmers supported the Democrats' campaign for free trade, 'soft' money, and open immigration. The rapidly growing urban industrial-labor voting bloc had been largely unaligned until this election. Then the urban industrial-labor voters swung into the Republicans' coalition because of that party's commitment to protective tariffs, 'hard' money, and immigration restrictions.

The Republican party was dominant in congressional and presidential elections for most of the next 36 years.

- D) In the 1932 critical election, the central issues were federal regulation of business and provision of public welfare as two 'New Deal' responses to the problems created by the Great Depression.

Explanation: In response to FDR's proposals, urban voters defected from the Republican party and joined Southern Democrats in forming a 'New Deal' majority coalition that made the Democratic party dominant in congressional and presidential elections for most of the next 36 years.

- E) None of the above statements, A through D, is false.

Question 8) Which one of the following statements, A through D, is false?

- A) The 'New Deal' Democratic coalition has been weakened by a partisan realignment in the South.

Explanation: White Southern voters have increasingly abandoned their generations-old loyalty to the Democratic party. This revolt began as early as the 1948 'Dixiecrat' or 'State's Rights' party challenge to President Truman's reelection. The revolt continued with George Wallace's 'American Independent' party challenge in 1968. Southern white defections to the Republican party were greatly accelerated by Ronald Reagan's presidential campaigns in 1980 and 1984. The result is that the South is no longer a one-party, solidly Democratic region, but is now a two-party region with the Republican party emerging as the stronger of the two.

- B) With the breakup of the 'New Deal' coalition, there has been an increase in the proportion of people voting a 'split ticket.'

Explanation: This ticket splitting allowed the Democrats to maintain control of Congress between 1952 and 1992, even when they often lost control of the White House (to Eisenhower, Nixon, Reagan, and Bush). Ticket splitting in the 1990s allowed the Republicans to finally take control of Congress even while Clinton won the White House back for the Democrats.

- C) One of the Progressive-Era reforms that discouraged straight-ticket voting was the adoption of the 'party-column' ballot.

It was the adoption of the 'office-bloc' (or Massachusetts) ballot -- not the 'party-column' ballot -- that discouraged straight-ticket voting and hence encouraged split-ticket voting. The office-bloc ballot forces the straight-ticket voter to find the candidate of his or her party in each of the separate office blocs of candidates (with candidate names usually arranged alphabetically).

Explanation:

The party-column (or Indiana) ballot, which lists all candidates in columns under their party label makes it easier to vote a straight ticket for all of the candidates of one party because their names are all aligned vertically in that party's column. Some states (like North Carolina) make it even easier to vote a straight ticket by allowing the voter to just mark one box (or turn one lever).

- D) Only blacks, business people, and Jews usually give two-thirds or more of their votes to one party or the other.

Explanation: Blacks and Jews are the most loyal Democratic voters; business people are the most loyal Republican voters. A second group that is becoming more loyal to the Republican party is composed of white Christian conservatives.

- E) None of the above statements, A through D, is false.

Question 9) Which one of the following statements, A through D, is false?

- A) The widespread use of 'selective attention,' the psychological process in which an individual sees and hears only what he or she wants, is a major reason why so much of the media's coverage of politics tends to reinforce existing beliefs rather than change them.

A related phenomenon is 'mental tune-out,' by which many individuals simply ignore or get irritated by messages that do not match their existing beliefs.

Explanation: In contrast, television greatly influences which potential candidates decide to run. It is NOT the case, as Wilson says, that "to get elected a candidate must look good on television." If that were true, Jesse Helms would not have been a U.S. Senator. The reason Helms won is that he knew better how to use television to articulate his issue appeals than did any of his opponents. It is such media-savvy candidates, not just pretty faces, that win elections in the new age of 'media' politics.

- B) Television news programs give viewers significantly less information about candidates during election campaigns than paid political advertisements.

Explanation: Television coverage tends to focus on 'visuals' that make little impression on the typical viewer, e.g., scenes of crowds cheering or candidates shouting slogans. Paid political ads, especially the shorter 'spots,' often contain a good deal of information about issues and candidate character that is seen, remembered, and evaluated. Of course, it is a problem that much of the information in too many political 'attack' or 'negative' ads is distorted, unreliable, and invalid.

- C) Local newspapers are more likely to endorse Democratic rather than Republican presidential candidates.

Explanation: No, it's just the other way around. The explanation is simple. Most local newspapers are owned by small business persons who tend to be conservative Republicans. Even those local newspapers that are owned by liberal Democrats tend to not endorse Democratic candidates for fear of losing the advertisement revenues provided by the local business community. The single exception across the 20th century was 1964, when the Republican candidate (Barry Goldwater) was widely seen as too radical in both domestic and foreign policy (eliminating the Social Security program and using nuclear weapons to stop communist aggression in wars like Vietnam).

- D) Less visible than television, but perhaps just as important in election campaigns, is direct-mail advertising and fund raising.

Explanation: Whereas television reaches a broad and highly diverse viewer audience, direct mail can be targeted at particular subgroups. Hence, direct-mail messages can be much more extreme, with less risk of offending either voters with opposing views or (more importantly) voters with moderate views -- since the latter are the largest subgroup.

- E) None of the above statements, A through D, is false.

Question 10) Which one of the following statements, A through D, is false?

- A) Since the 1974 Federal Election Campaign Act, candidates for the presidency and Congress have been limited in how much money they can spend in their general-election campaigns.

Explanation: Only presidential candidates are limited and only if they choose to accept public funding. There are no legal limits on how much money congressional candidates can spend, but the 1974 law does require them to keep and make public records of both campaign contributions and campaign spending.

- B) Although there are legal limits and reporting requirements on how much "hard money" an individual or a PAC can give to a candidate running for federal office, there are at least four "soft money" legal loopholes that allow individuals, corporations, unions, PACs, and candidates to get around these limits: 1) personal contributions, 2) bundling contributions, 3) section-527 spending, and 4) independent spending.

1) **PERSONAL CONTRIBUTIONS:** campaign contributions from the candidate or members of their immediate family are exempt from any limits.

2) **BUNDLING CONTRIBUTIONS** from many like-minded individuals by PACs before presenting them to a candidate increases the likelihood that the candidate will be influenced by the contributions.

Explanation: 3) **SECTION-527 SPENDING:** non-profit groups registered with IRS that are free to collect unlimited soft-money contributions from corporations, unions, and individuals and spend it on issue-advocacy ads.

4) **INDEPENDENT SPENDING:** unlimited amounts of money can be spent by individuals, corporations, unions, and PACs to support friendly candidates and oppose opposition candidates, so long as the spending is not coordinated with a candidate or political party. Most of this money is spent on media advertising -- mainly radio and TV. This is by far the biggest loophole driving vastly increased campaign spending in federal elections.

- C) Although PACs have grown in number and have become the target of political criticism, they have never been the main source of political money; most campaign contributions still come from individuals.

Since individuals (other than the candidate) are limited to contributing only \$2000 (inflation adjusted) per candidate per election, candidates have turned first to direct-mail solicitations and more recently to Internet solicitations as the most efficient form of grass-roots fund raising.

Explanation:

Conservatives and Republicans had a technological edge in direct-mail fund raising because they generally have more money to invest in this costly effort. However, liberals and Democrats have recently raised even more campaign contributions through the Internet.

- D) Until passage of the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act in 2002, political parties could spend unlimited amounts of 'soft' money to elect or defeat candidates as long as they acted independently of the candidates.

Prior to the 2002 statute, soft-money spending by the parties was by far the biggest loophole that was used to circumvent the existing federal election campaign regulations. Each party could legally spend unlimited amounts of money attacking the opposition party's candidates or supporting the issue positions of their own party's candidates -- so long as the ads did not endorse their party's own candidates by name.

Explanation:

Such soft-money spending by political parties was prohibited after the November 2002 congressional elections.

However, as you saw above, several other legal loopholes now allow individuals, corporations, unions, and PACs to raise and spend unlimited amounts of money to support "friendly" candidates and to oppose "unfriendly" ones.

- E) None of the above statements, A through D, is false.

Question 11) Which one of the following statements, A through D, is false?

- A) Elections in the U.S. that are not 'critical' elections rarely produce dramatic changes in public policy of the magnitude that commonly occur in unitary and parliamentary democracies like the U.K.

Explanation: The constitutional system of dispersed power and representation found in our federal and presidential system of government was designed by the Framers to moderate the pace of change -- to make it neither easy nor impossible to adopt radical proposals. Our very infrequent 'critical' elections (which cause a sudden, major, and lasting shift in voters' party loyalties) produce the magnitude of policy change that much more frequently follows a British general election.

- B) Although non-critical elections in the U.S. don't often produce major public-policy shifts, some non-critical elections do.

Explanation: For example, the 1964 election gave the Democrats control of both the White House and such a large majority in Congress that President Johnson was able to get a large number of his 'Great Society' programs adopted – e.g., Medicare and Medicaid, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The 1994 congressional elections gave the Republicans majorities in both houses of Congress that forced the Clinton administration to compromise on many important policy decisions – e.g., balancing the federal budget and reforming welfare.

C) Between 'critical' elections, most U.S. presidential elections are not fought over a single dominant issue and the winners are largely determined by retrospective voting.

Explanation: If times are good, incumbents generally win; if times are bad, incumbents may lose even though their opponents have no clearly articulated plans for change.

D) Our electoral system discourages candidates from portraying themselves as independent of party control and outsiders to the system they plan to run.

Explanation: Largely because of the decline of parties in U.S. politics, the process of running for office has become divorced from the process of governing in office. Formerly, party leaders who ran the campaigns of a slate of candidates would take an active part in the government once the slate was elected. And, since they were party leaders, they had to worry about getting their party's office holders reelected.

Unfortunately, the people who run successfully in modern campaigns often do not have the ability to govern effectively once they are elected. The skills necessary to win office are not the skills of bargaining and compromise necessary to make policy in our system of dispersed powers and representation.

E) None of the above statements, A through D, is false.