POL.USC10-10min US Political Parties, Pressure Groups and Campaign Finance: 10-minute Pack

Total Marks

EDEXCEL 9PL0 · about 10 minutes

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Short answer questions may be answered in note form unless a full sentence is requested. For levels-marked questions, write a well-structured, developed response using accurate political knowledge, named examples and precise terminology. Time guidance: 75 minutes for the whole pack.

1 State the principal legal distinction between a Super PAC and a traditional PAC in US campaign finance law.

(Total for Question 1 is 2 marks)

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2 Explain how increasing party polarisation in the US Congress can affect the ability of interest groups to build coalitions, giving two effects and brief examples.

(Total for Question 2 is 6 marks)

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Mark scheme · POL.USC10-10min US Political Parties, Pressure Groups and Campaign Finance: 10-minute Pack

Question 1

identifies that Super PACs may accept unlimited contributions	**B1**
identifies that Super PACs are prohibited from coordinating directly with candidates, unlike some PACs which can donate directly subject to limits	**B1**

Answer: Super PACs can accept unlimited contributions and spend independently to advocate for or against candidates, but they are not allowed to coordinate directly with candidates or parties; traditional PACs accept limited contributions and may make direct contributions to candidates within legal limits.

Question 2

identifies effect 1, e.g. ideological sorting makes bipartisan coalitions harder to form	**B1**
develops effect 1 with mechanism or example, e.g. members are less willing to cross party lines even for narrow issues	**B1**
identifies effect 2, e.g. interest groups may shift to targeting party base and primary electorates	**B1**
develops effect 2 with mechanism or example, e.g. groups support more polarised candidates via Super PAC spending and endorsements	**B1**
identifies a further consequence, e.g. increased use of procedural tools and gridlock reduces policy wins for groups that rely on compromise	**B1**
brief development of this consequence, e.g. filibusters or party-line votes can block negotiated outcomes	**B1**

Answer: Polarisation means ideological sorting and party discipline make bipartisan coalitions harder to form, since members are less willing to cross party lines even on narrow policy issues, which reduces the pool of potential allies for interest groups. As a result, interest groups may shift tactics to target the party base and primary electorates, using endorsements and Super PAC spending to back more polarised candidates. A further consequence is increased procedural gridlock, for example widespread use of filibusters or strict party-line votes in the Senate, which reduces the likelihood of negotiated policy wins that interest groups often rely on.

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