POL.USC10-30min US Political Parties, Pressure Groups and Campaign Finance: 30-minute Pack

EDEXCEL 9PL0 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

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 Evaluate the extent to which money buys success in US elections.

(Total for Question 1 is 30 marks)

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Mark scheme · POL.USC10-30min US Political Parties, Pressure Groups and Campaign Finance: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

Level 1 Basic, general knowledge of campaign finance and candidates with limited or undeveloped analysis. Claims about money and success are asserted without adequate evidence or explanation.	**1-7**
Level 2 Clear and accurate knowledge of campaign finance mechanisms and examples, with some developed analysis of how money can influence electoral success. Evaluation may be one-sided or lack depth in considering countervailing factors.	**8-15**
Level 3 Detailed, accurate knowledge used to construct a sustained analysis that weighs evidence for and against the proposition, using specific examples such as incumbency advantages, Super PAC spending, advertising effects and the role of small donors. Evaluation is balanced and reaches a reasoned judgement.	**16-23**
Level 4 Sophisticated, wide-ranging knowledge and analysis addressing the multiple dimensions of the claim: electoral context, incumbency, candidate quality, media environment, legal constraints, dark money and campaign strategy. Evaluation integrates evidence, addresses counterarguments and reaches a nuanced, well-substantiated judgement on the extent to which money buys success.	**24-30**

Indicative content:

- Arguments that money buys success: greater spending improves name recognition via advertising, funds ground operations and data targeting, allows rapid response to attacks, and can deter credible challengers; empirical studies show spending has a positive impact, especially for challengers seeking to close recognition gaps.
- Incumbency and diminishing returns: incumbents often start with advantages such as name recognition and institutional resources, so additional spending may have diminishing marginal effect; incumbents tend to outspend challengers, but victory is not solely determined by money.
- Role of Super PACs and outside spending: independent expenditure groups can dramatically increase total spending in key races, sometimes changing the information environment and bolstering or attacking candidates in ways correlated with electoral outcomes.
- Countervailing factors limiting the effect of money: candidate quality, scandal, national political tides, party brand, turnout dynamics and the Electoral College in presidential campaigns can all swamp financial advantages in particular elections.
- Dark money and transparency: undisclosed donors allow wealthy interests to influence outcomes without public accountability, which can affect fairness and the effective value of spending, but the causal link to electoral victory can vary by context.
- Small donors and digital fundraising: the growth of small-dollar online donations has allowed some insurgent campaigns to compete successfully against better-funded opponents, altering the simple money-success relationship, as seen in recent primary campaigns.
- Legal and institutional constraints: contribution limits, disclosure rules for many entities and court rulings such as Citizens United shape the landscape and create both avenues for large-scale spending and limits on direct coordination, complicating the causal chain.
- A strong conclusion will judge that while money is a significant factor that increases the probability of electoral success, especially for lesser-known challengers and in expensive media markets, it is not a deterministic guarantee; political context, candidate factors and institutional rules mediate its effect, so money buys advantage but not assured victory.

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