Coalitions in Motion

How participation can reshape a close election

SS24.USG.7a "Explain how increases and shifts in political participation by minorities and other voting blocs shape political party coalitions, campaigns, and voter turnout."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two changes in voter participation, circle campaign responses to voting blocs, and number statements that connect participation to coalition strength or turnout.

A Close Race in Georgia

1. In Georgia's 2020 presidential election, a statewide victory depended on bringing together groups that did not vote alike in every place. Black voters, a long-standing part of the Democratic coalition, supported Joe Biden by wide margins. More Black citizens voting could strengthen that coalition without anyone changing parties. Meanwhile, some suburban voters who had previously favored Republicans moved toward Democrats, extending the coalition's reach beyond major cities. Donald Trump still drew strong support from many rural and small-town voters. Biden narrowly won Georgia, the first Democratic presidential nominee to do so since 1992. No single bloc can be credited with the result by itself.

2. Participation can change through turnout or through a shift in party preference, and campaigns respond to both. Community groups encouraged registration and helped voters learn about absentee ballots, early voting, and polling places. Democratic campaigns sought to bring reliable supporters to the polls while also persuading reachable suburban voters. Republican campaigns aimed to protect their rural and small-town base and compete for persuadable voters, including suburban residents. A reminder about voting procedures could help an occasional voter, while a policy argument might sway someone considering another party. Those approaches address different needs within an election's changing coalitions.

3. Georgia recorded a record number of votes in 2020, but high statewide turnout does not mean every group increased participation at the same rate. A campaign can gain votes when previously inactive supporters cast ballots, when voters switch sides, or both. It can also lose ground if its opponents mobilize more successfully. In a close state, changes in participation among Black voters, suburban voters, and other groups can alter the balance between party coalitions and influence where campaigns spend time and money. Turnout figures alone cannot prove which outreach effort changed an individual's vote.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How could higher participation by Black voters strengthen the Democratic coalition without a shift in party preference?

2. How did the suburban shift change the reach of the Democratic coalition in Georgia?

3. Why would a campaign use a voting-procedure reminder for one voter and a policy argument for another?

4. Why does Georgia's record number of votes not prove that every voting bloc became more politically active?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

In a fictional county, more young Latino residents become eligible to vote, while some older suburban voters shift from Party B to Party A. Write five sentences explaining how these changes could affect a party coalition, how each party might campaign, and when turnout would rise.

ANSWER KEY

Coalitions in Motion

GRADE 12 · SS24.USG.7a

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two changes in voter participation, circle campaign responses to voting blocs, and number statements that connect participation to coalition strength or turnout. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How could higher participation by Black voters strengthen the Democratic coalition without a shift in party preference?	**Black voters already supported Biden by wide margins, so more of them casting ballots could add Democratic votes without anyone switching parties.**
2	How did the suburban shift change the reach of the Democratic coalition in Georgia?	**Some suburban voters who had favored Republicans moved toward Democrats, extending the Democratic coalition beyond major cities.**
3	Why would a campaign use a voting-procedure reminder for one voter and a policy argument for another?	**A procedure reminder could help an occasional voter cast a ballot, while a policy argument could persuade a voter considering another party.**
4	Why does Georgia's record number of votes not prove that every voting bloc became more politically active?	**Statewide turnout can rise even when participation changes by different amounts across groups.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

If more eligible young Latino residents vote, whichever party they favor could gain strength even if no voter switches parties. As some older suburban voters shift toward Party A, that party could add them to its existing coalition while Party B loses suburban support. Party A might contact newly eligible voters with clear polling information and discuss issues that matter to suburban voters. Party B might recruit local volunteers to reach new voters and offer policy arguments to win back suburban voters. County turnout would rise only if additional voters cast ballots, not merely because more residents became eligible.

Accept other plausible campaign strategies if students connect each strategy to a specified bloc and distinguish gaining eligible voters from gaining actual votes. The open response should explain that a shift in party preference can change coalition strength without necessarily increasing turnout.