Who Shapes Votes?

Trace how election messages reach voters and shape decisions

9-12.GOV.52 "Analyze the influence of political parties, media coverage, campaign advertising, interest groups, public opinion polls, social media, and digital communications on elections."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each way people or organizations try to shape the election. Circle a nearby effect or limit of each influence you underline.

The Riverton Mayor's Race

1. In the fictional city of Riverton, two candidates are running for mayor in a partisan election. The Forward Party backs Elena Park, while the Civic Party backs Marcus Bell. Each party recruits volunteers, raises money, and shares a voter list with its candidate. These resources help the candidates reach people who might otherwise miss the race. A neighborhood association, an interest group, endorses Park because she supports more frequent buses. Its members knock on doors and explain their position. Unlike a party, the association focuses on one issue, and some of its members support Bell on other issues.

2. A local newspaper investigates both candidates' bus plans and reports that neither has identified a way to pay for every proposed route. That media coverage may lead voters to question promises from both campaigns. Park's campaign then buys an ad that shows crowded bus stops and says her plan will shorten waits, but the ad does not mention its cost. Bell's campaign buys an ad that highlights the newspaper's finding and calls for a smaller pilot program. Because campaigns control their own ads, voters see selective arguments there. The newspaper story offers independently gathered information, though reporters still choose which details to emphasize.

3. Three weeks before voting, a public opinion poll of 600 likely voters shows Park at 48 percent and Bell at 45 percent, with the rest undecided. The poll is a snapshot, not a prediction: sampling error and changing opinions mean either candidate could win. Park posts a short video about bus service on social media. Supporters share it quickly, while a misleading edited clip circulates without the full speech. Both campaigns also send targeted text messages linking to their plans and early voting information. These digital communications reach voters directly, but people must check the source and claims before forwarding them.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How do the parties and the neighborhood association help candidates in different ways?

2. How might the newspaper report and Park's ad lead voters to view her bus plan differently?

3. Why does the poll showing Park at 48 percent and Bell at 45 percent not establish who will win?

4. How could social media posts and campaign text messages influence voters differently? What risk does the passage identify?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a different local election about an issue other than bus service. In five sentences, explain how two different influences from the passage could affect voters, including one limitation or risk for each.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · 9-12.GOV.52

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each way people or organizations try to shape the election. Circle a nearby effect or limit of each influence you underline. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How do the parties and the neighborhood association help candidates in different ways?	**The parties supply broad campaign resources, including volunteers, money, and voter lists. The association focuses on bus service and endorses Park while its members explain their position to voters.**
2	How might the newspaper report and Park's ad lead voters to view her bus plan differently?	**The report may make voters question how Park would pay for her plan. Her ad emphasizes shorter waits without mentioning the cost.**
3	Why does the poll showing Park at 48 percent and Bell at 45 percent not establish who will win?	**The poll is a snapshot. Sampling error, undecided voters, and changing opinions mean either candidate could win.**
4	How could social media posts and campaign text messages influence voters differently? What risk does the passage identify?	**Supporters can spread a social media video quickly, while targeted texts reach voters directly with links to plans and voting information. An edited clip may mislead people who share it without checking.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In a fictional city council race over flood protection, a neighborhood group might endorse a candidate who supports stronger drainage rules. Its endorsement could persuade residents who trust the group, but its focus might leave out the cost to homeowners. A local news report could compare each candidate's estimates with the city budget. That reporting might shift undecided voters toward the more realistic plan, though limited space could leave out important details. I would check the full proposals before deciding.

Accept other accurate distinctions supported by the passage. For Part 3, look for five sentences about a different election issue, with a plausible effect and a limitation or risk for each of two distinct influences.