What Shapes Elections

Trace how rules, campaigns, and information affect voters.

USG.C.5 "Analyze factors affecting the political process at the local, state, and national levels of government. Analyze how citizens participate in our constitutional republic by voting in public elections and running for public office..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three factors that could affect who votes or who wins, one at each level of government. Number them 1 for local, 2 for state, and 3 for national to compare their effects.

An Election at Three Levels

1. In the fictional city of Harbor Point, a bus route becomes an election issue. A city council candidate promises later service for workers who leave after 9 p.m. Residents can vote for the candidate, volunteer for a campaign, or run for office themselves. But a promise does not guarantee a vote: a worker whose shift ends after the polls close may be unable to cast a ballot unless an available early or mail option fits. A neighborhood group shares polling information in several languages. That effort could increase turnout by helping eligible voters find when and how to vote.

2. At the state level, lawmakers set many election rules, including deadlines for registering and voting by mail. Some states offer same-day registration, while others require registration before Election Day; those rules can affect who manages to vote. States also redraw congressional districts after each census, usually through legislatures or commissions. If mapmakers pack one party's voters into a few districts, that party may win fewer seats than it would under a less biased map. In a presidential race, voters take part in state primaries or caucuses that help determine delegates. The national party convention then formally nominates its candidate and adopts a platform.

3. At the national level, campaigns and parties compete for support through speeches, ads, and digital messages. Parties use their platforms to state policy goals, recruit candidates who share them, and coordinate efforts to pass laws. A super PAC may spend unlimited money independently to support a candidate, but it cannot give that candidate money directly. In Citizens United v. FEC (2010), the Supreme Court ruled that the government generally cannot restrict independent election spending by corporations and unions. Social media can spread voting information quickly, but misleading posts or AI-made audio can confuse voters. Presidential votes select electors, who choose the president through the Electoral College.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How could the worker's schedule and the neighborhood group's effort have opposite effects on turnout?

2. Explain how a state registration rule and a district-map choice could affect different parts of an election.

3. How do a party platform and a super PAC influence elections in different ways?

4. Why might false AI-made audio matter in a presidential election, even though voters select electors rather than the president directly?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A state is considering same-day registration, and false AI-made audio about a presidential candidate is spreading online. Write one paragraph proposing a response by election officials and a response by citizens or a campaign. Explain how each could affect voters, and connect one response to the Electoral College.

ANSWER KEY

What Shapes Elections

HIGH SCHOOL · USG.C.5

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline three factors that could affect who votes or who wins, one at each level of government. Number them 1 for local, 2 for state, and 3 for national to compare their effects. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How could the worker's schedule and the neighborhood group's effort have opposite effects on turnout?	**The late shift could keep the worker from voting if no early or mail option fits. The group's information could help eligible residents find when and how to vote.**
2	Explain how a state registration rule and a district-map choice could affect different parts of an election.	**A registration deadline can affect who is able to vote. Packing one party's voters into a few districts can affect how many congressional seats that party wins.**
3	How do a party platform and a super PAC influence elections in different ways?	**A platform states policy goals and helps a party recruit candidates who share them. A super PAC independently spends money to support a candidate.**
4	Why might false AI-made audio matter in a presidential election, even though voters select electors rather than the president directly?	**False audio could confuse voters and affect which electors they select. Those electors choose the president.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

If lawmakers approve same-day registration, state election officials should train poll workers and publish clear instructions. This could help eligible people who missed the earlier deadline cast ballots. The presidential campaign should release a verified recording and ask local newsrooms to check the false audio before sharing it. Voters could then judge the candidate using reliable evidence. Because presidential ballots select electors, better information could affect which electors the state chooses.

Accept other passage-supported cause-and-effect explanations. For the open task, look for two feasible responses, their likely effects on voters, and an accurate connection to electors.