

# 2023 SAMPLE RESPONSES (SET 1)

## AP® US GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS FREE RESPONSE (FRQ)

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This is a full set of answers I have written for the 2023 AP® US Government and Politics Free Response Questions (FRQs). These answers are reflective of both my own experience teaching the course and additional feedback very generously provided to me by colleagues who read the initial draft. One sample response is provided for each item for Concept Application, Quantitative Analysis, and Supreme Court Comparison, while a full-credit response is given for each side of the Argument Essay prompt.

### 1. NASA ([Direct Link to Question](#))

- (A) The informal power used by President Kennedy in this scenario is the bully pulpit. The president is able to command the attention of the media when making speeches and public pronouncements much more easily than congressional leaders or Supreme Court justices. Presidents have often used the bully pulpit in order to place their priorities at the front of the policy agenda.
- (B) If a popular president effectively uses the bully pulpit, the policy involved – in this case, space exploration – could become so popular with the public that it might be politically counterproductive for Congress to hold hearings and hold the agency accountable. If Republicans had called in NASA officials for hearings in the 1960s and asked tough questions, the public might have had reason to believe that the Republicans did not support the space program and did not care about beating the Soviets to the moon.
- (C) Since NASA was created as an independent agency within the executive branch, the president does not have as much control over it as he has over cabinet-level agencies. The president can fire the Secretary of State immediately, but heads of independent agencies are protected during their fixed terms. If the head of NASA were to decide that they had different priorities than the president, there is nothing that the president could do about it immediately, so this could possibly stall the president's priorities.

### 2. Political Participation of 18-24 Demographic ([Direct Link to Question](#))

- (A) The form of political participation that saw the largest change between 2018 and 2020 with 18-24 year olds was donating money to political campaigns.
- (B) Overall, there was a substantial increase in political participation across all categories of participation from 2018 to 2020. In 2020, more young people tried to convince others to vote, donated money to a campaign, attended a march or demonstration, registered others to vote, and volunteered for a political campaign. There was not a single measurement of political participation that went down from 2018 to 2020.
- (C) The media tends to give a lot more attention to presidential elections than to midterm elections. The increased coverage of the 2020 presidential election could have inspired more young people to participate than had participated in 2018. Interest groups also played a role, as political organizations, such as Black Lives Matter and Turning Point USA, worked hard to recruit young people to vote and engage in other forms of political participation.

- (D) The concept of political efficacy is a measurement of how much a citizen thinks their vote makes a difference. Citizens with a high level of political efficacy believe that their vote counts and their participation makes a difference, so they are more likely to participate in the political process. Those with lower levels of political efficacy will not be as engaged because they do not believe that their participation makes a difference. Based on the data, young people felt higher levels of political efficacy in 2020 than they had in 2018, as demonstrated by the increase in political participation in 2020 by every unit of measurement.

### 3. SCOTUS Comparison: *Cantwell v. Connecticut* ([Direct Link to Question](#))

- (A) The Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment is the clause that is in common to *Wisconsin v. Yoder* and *Cantwell v. Connecticut*.
- (B) The facts of the case in *Wisconsin v. Yoder* led to a similar decision as *Cantwell v. Connecticut* because they both involved issues of religious freedom. In *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, the state of Wisconsin tried to force Amish children to attend high school even though the Amish community only believed in sending their children to school through the eighth grade, which is all the education someone needs to live in an Amish community. The Court ruled that the rights of the Amish to live their way of life in their religious community was essential to their free exercise of religion and outweighed the state's interest in compelling the children to go to high school. Similarly, the plaintiffs in the *Cantwell* case were found to be participating in activities that were protected by the Constitution, since Jehovah's Witnesses are called upon to do evangelism as part of their religion.
- (C) The *Cantwell* decision illustrates the Court's need to balance government power and the rights of citizens because without the courts, a state legislature could make laws that are targeted toward limiting the freedom of religious expression. The law passed by the Connecticut legislature could have made it almost impossible for the Jehovah's Witnesses to tell people about their religion and grow their community. If someone asks the Jehovah's Witnesses to go away, they go away. There is no threat to public safety and no risk of fraud from religious groups seeking to share their faith.

**4. Education: The Federal Government or the States?** ([Direct Link to Question](#))**SAMPLE RESPONSE A: The States**

<i>Education is not a delegated power.</i>	<i>States are better able to meet the differing needs of their own citizens.</i>	<i>Some states are poor and need federal money (rebuttal)</i>
<i>Article I – no mention of power over schools Tenth Amendment – Ergo, this power remains with the states</i>	<i>Brutus No. 1 – Know the minds of constituents Categorical grants – bad idea</i>	<i>Economic inequality between states Federal grants can be inefficient</i>

The states are unquestioningly in a place to be more effective than the federal government in ensuring educational opportunities for all students. The states' reserved power of education is crucial to balancing the powers of the states and the federal government. States are better able to meet the differing needs of their own citizens since the demographics of each state are different.

The states should keep the reserved power of education to prevent overreach by the federal government. The Framers of the United States Constitution did not delegate education to Congress, but reserved it to the states. Article I, Section 8, of the Constitution gives Congress powers to create an army and navy, regulate interstate commerce, and make rules for naturalization of immigrants, but not to control or direct education. In Federalist No. 51, Madison wrote that ambition must counteract ambition, meaning that the states must have some powers in order to prevent a concentration of too much power in the hands of the federal government. Federal control of education undermines the federal character of our Constitution.

From a practical standpoint, states are in the best position to understand and meet the unique needs of their own citizen populations. In Brutus No. 1, the author argues that state representatives know the minds of their constituents better than the members of Congress would understand them. A congressman from California is not likely to understand the needs of students in a state like New Hampshire, which is far away and has a much different demographic profile. It is better for state legislatures, who are close to their own constituents, to be able to listen to these constituents and act on what they need for their children to be educated. The federal government is much more likely to try a one-size-fits-all approach to education through categorical grants, which do not allow a lot of flexibility in how the money is spent. One state might need new school buildings and another might need to increase teacher pay. Categorical grants cannot adjust for these different needs.

Although the states are the better agent for making sure that the children in their states have the best opportunities, supporters of federal control may argue that the federal government can help to make education funding more equal among the states. There are vast differences in per-capita income from one state to another. Virginia and New York have a lot more resources available than Mississippi, for example. Although this is a valid point, federal grants for education are usually offered to states regardless of financial need and – in the case of categorical grants – won't allow the flexibility that states need in order to spend money, which will result in wasteful spending.

The state governments are the best agents for making sure that all students get educational opportunities because the states need to have an effective check on federal power, and state governments are closer to their constituents. Too much federal involvement in education will create inefficiencies that will outweigh the benefits.

**4. Education: The Federal Government or the States?** ([Direct Link to Question](#))**SAMPLE RESPONSE B: The Federal Government**

<i>Some states have a history of discriminating.</i>	<i>Some states are poorer than others and need federal aid.</i>	<i>States are closer to the people (rebuttal)</i>
Fourteenth Amendment Federalist No. 10	Federal Block grants for education	Brutus No. 1 Federalist No. 10

The federal government would be the most effective agent for making sure that there are educational opportunities for all students because some states have a history of discriminating and some states have less money than others and need federal assistance.

Some states have a history of discriminating against minority groups, so the federal government is the best agent to make sure that everyone is treated equally. The Fourteenth Amendment guarantees every American equal protection of laws and says that no state shall deny anyone any basic rights – including the right to an education. In Federalist No. 10, James Madison wrote that large republics are better than small republics because in a large republic, one faction cannot take full control of the government. Most state governments are controlled all the time by either Democrats or Republicans, which does not typically give everyone an opportunity. If the federal government makes rules for education, then it will make sure that citizens in every state have equal rights.

Also, some states have less money than others and will not be able to provide the same quality of education as other states without federal help. A less-affluent state like Arkansas or Mississippi will benefit from federal help. Federal programs like Head Start provide educational opportunities for poor children that they might not have otherwise in terms of getting started learning basic math and reading. The federal government can use block grants to help the states have more money to provide educational opportunities. Some states would have trouble providing a quality education without these grants.

Advocates of the states having complete control of education would argue that state governments are better able to manage education because they are closer to their constituents. This is an argument that comes from Brutus No. 1, who argued that state representatives know their constituents' minds better than a national legislature would. However, state legislatures are typically controlled by one party, so the state legislatures don't really represent everyone in the state, but people who belong to the majority party. Therefore, if the needs of all students are going to be considered, the federal government must intervene on behalf of the minority.

The federal government is the best agent to make sure that all students have educational opportunities because some states have a history of discrimination and some state have less economic resources than others.