

**Bits and Pieces to Master the Exam  
Random Thoughts, Trivia, and Other Facts  
(that may help you be successful AP EXAM)**

“...but what is government itself but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary...” James Madison- *Federalist No. 51*

Presidential elections have the largest percentage of voters.

It takes two-thirds of BOTH houses of Congress to override a veto.

Minorities, including women, are more likely to vote Democratic.

The Supreme Court controls its own docket, and hears a small percentage of appeals.

The easiest way to lobby the court is through litigation and *amicus curia* briefs.

Congress uses the “Commerce clause” and the “implied powers clause” to expand power...but most often the Commerce clause.

The single-member district and winner-take-all are largely responsible for the lack of success of Third Parties.

The best way a President can extend his legacy is by appointing judges.

The President nominates ALL federal judges...Supreme, Appeals, and District...Most state judges are elected.

The President “hires” his White House staff...these do not need to be confirmed by the Senate.

The Amending Process is an excellent example of the Federal system (division of power).

Division of powers and divided government are NOT the same.

States control elections...time, place, and manner...

States also control redistricting...What about the Voting Rights Act of 1965?

Actions of states, the President, and the Congress are only unconstitutional if the Supreme Court rules so...and the Courts only hears what it wants to hear.

People with a high level of education are more likely to vote, be active in political parties, and join interest groups.

Prayer and Privacy are NOT specifically mentioned in the Constitution.

Even though there are many political parties in the U.S., it is still considered to be a “two party system.”

Federal District Courts are Trial Courts, (lawyers, evidence, jury, witnesses.)

The Solicitor General is the lawyer for the United States before the Supreme Court.

The Attorney General is the head of the Dept. of Justice and is the chief law enforcement officer of the United States.

A President’s popularity is the highest right after the election...and generally declines during the middle of term...this popularity is often called the “honeymoon period.”

A mid-term election is usually a referendum on how well the President is doing. The Senate works more closely with the President...confirming appointment and ratifying treaties.

The Line-item Veto has been declared unconstitutional at the national level...but many state governors have the power.

Entitlement spending is uncontrollable due to laws...mandatory spending lessens discretionary spending.

Congress creates programs and agencies...and funds them.

Oversight function make sure that agencies act within Congressional guidelines.

Discrimination against someone due to race is examined by strict scrutiny of the courts...gender has “intermediate” standard.

A filibuster in unlimited debate in the Senate...the House has the Rules Committee that **limits** debate.

Media is NOT an institution of government...it is a business...and a linkage institution.

There are NO Constitutional requirements to be a federal judge...The Chief Justice position was created by the Judiciary act of 1789.

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) is to Congress as the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) is to the President.

The House is the only chamber that can impeach a federal official...the Senate tries them.

Judges have life terms to protect them from politics and public pressure.

The President does NOT sign a Constitutional Amendment...he only acts on actions of Congress.

The provisions of the 14th Amendment are designed to protect Civil Liberties from the power of the states.

In presidential elections, most people still use the party as a voting cue.

A grand jury does not decide guilt or innocence...it investigates and indicts.

Critical elections occur when groups of voters change their traditional patterns of voting...usually after a disruption in the economy.

Interest groups support candidates...political parties run or campaign candidates.

Contributing money to campaigns is protected by 1st Amendment.

Most criminal cases end with plea bargains...though it is NOT a constitutional right.

Pluralism means diversity...plurality means most of the votes, but NOT a majority.

The House has the Constitutional power to Raise Revenue...through the Ways and Means Committee.

Pork barrel legislation is usually in the form of riders, is essential to constituency service and re-election...earmarks are funds set aside for favor groups or programs.

Last year's fiscal budget is the best way to predict this year's budget...incrementalism adds a little bit to the previous years' budget.

Eminent Domain deals with property and property rights.

A caucus is NOT an election...it is a group sharing an interest or characteristic.

A continuing resolution is used when the President and Congress can not agree on a budget.

Even though the President is Commander in Chief...he can't declare war.

The Senate Judiciary Committee holds hearings on the President's nominees to the court...if they approve...the nominee then goes to the full Senate for a vote.

The Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act banned soft money in the national level and increased the amount of legal hard money...527's are used to bypass provisions of the BCRA.

Furthermore, Citizens United, a nonprofit corporation and conservative advocacy group, successfully sued the Federal Election Commission in 2008 claiming its campaign finance rules represented unconstitutional restrictions on the First Amendment guarantee of freedom of speech.

The U.S. Supreme Court's landmark decision ruled that the federal government cannot limit corporations - or, for that matter, unions, associations or individuals - from spending money to influence the outcome of elections. The ruling led to the creation of super PACs.

Interest groups will lobby members of Congress to advise them and educate them on the issues.

The majority leader in the Senate has the most political power in the Senate.

A presidential candidate runs in primaries in order to win delegates...delegates attend the National Convention in order to nominate a candidate for the general election.

Everybody benefits from a court decision on due process...a decision based on equal protection usually is aimed at a specific social class.

Only members of Congress run in a mid-term election.

The Freedom of Information Acts gives citizens information from the Executive Branch.

Standing Committees are permanent committees...members of these committees are able to gain expertise in the subject matter of the committees.

Interest groups focus on narrow and specific issues...political parties have a larger range of issues.

Reapportionment and Redistricting are terms that relate to the House of Representatives only.

Incumbency is strong, very difficult to defeat...media, name recognition and franking privilege.

The Civil Rights Act was passed to enforce the provisions of the 14th Amendment...the Voting Rights Act was passed to enforce the provisions of the 15th Amendment.

Incumbency is still the best method to predict the outcome of a presidential election and of congressional elections.

The Federal Reserve Board influences monetary policy...like controlling interest rates...it does NOT print money.

Gerrymandering is a slang term for malapportionment.

Generally minorities vote less.

The President has a great deal of leverage on creating policy because he can control the media.

The term “solid south” referred to the south when they voted almost always Democrat...reactions to Affirmative Action and Civil Rights policy has changed this...

Most cases reach the Supreme Court through appeal... or appellate jurisdiction.

The Supreme Court can only make decisions...it must depend on the Executive Branch, the Congress, and even the states to implement the decisions.

Senatorial Courtesy deals more with the nomination of a federal district judge, than the nomination of a Supreme Court judge.

The National Convention meets every four years...nominates a candidate for President and set the party platform.

The Contract for America was a Republican platform in 1994.

A state has the same number of Electoral votes as it has Representatives and Senators.

An Executive Agreement is the SAME as a Treaty...but it is passed by Congress...a treaty has to be ratified by the Senate.

An Executive Order can be used to bypass legislative action.

The House of Representatives depends more on the Committee system than does the Senate...because of its size.

Elections today are more candidate centered on issue centered than party centered.

The War Powers Act was passed to limit the war making powers of the President...this was a reaction to the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution.

Gubernatorial means Governor...the Governor is the Chief Executive of the State.

Once Congress creates an agency, it allows the agency discretion on how to carry out the program.

Appropriations means “to spend”...apportionment deals with redistricting in the House.

Defense spending is still discretionary spending.

Block grants have replaced categorical grants...this creates devolution...giving power back to the states...

The State of the Union is a Constitutional mandate to the President.

The media has a huge impact on the nomination of the President.

The Bill of Rights was based on sentiments of the Anti-Federalists.

Electors “elect” the President...delegates “nominate” the candidate for President.

Almost any action of conscience can be protected as Free Speech.

Independent Regulatory Agencies help protect the Consumer from businesses and industry.

Electors are under NO legal requirement to vote for the choice of their party...

Because of issue-centered and candidate-centered campaigns...coattails are less important.

Third parties very seldom win elections, but they may impact the party platforms of the other two parties.

There are more PACS from businesses than any other source.

The House deals more with domestic issues...the Senate with foreign policy.

Congress can create, alter, move, or almost anything to agencies they create.

The Speaker of the House will almost always be elected from the majority party.

A campaign encompasses all of the “linkage mechanisms”...interest groups support candidates, the media follows candidates, political parties nominate and run candidate, and elections finalize the campaign.

In a presidential election...candidates run in primaries and caucuses to be “nominated”...after the National Convention the candidates from each party run against each other in the General election.

There are NO term limits for members of Congress...the best limitation is elections.

The name “527” comes from part of the tax code that protects issue advocacy.

Evidence seized illegally cannot be used against someone...this is the “exclusionary rule.”

An individual's freedoms stop when they infringe on the freedom of others.

A Supreme Court is a “hearing” not a trial.

Ticket splitting occurs when a voter votes for candidates from both parties on the same ballot...it is easy to do in a general election...in most states impossible to do in the primary.

The Congressional Research Service is non-partisan and assists members of Congress in researching bills.

It will take a constitutional amendment to change or alter the Electoral College, however, the states still control how electoral votes are allocated.

Gentlemen's agreement...in the Senate, the Majority Leader and Minority leader decide how to handle legislation.

Bills do NOT die in the Rules Committee.

The General Accountability Office helps Congress perform its oversight functions.

Fiscal policy is referred to as “tax and spend.”

Gubernatorial means “governor.”

Litigation means “the act or process of bringing or contesting a legal action in court”

Public opinion is often measured by random sampling polls...the media predicts election winners using “exit polls.”

Social Security comes from a payroll tax, it is distributive policy, it is social insurance not social welfare...social welfare policy is redistributive policy.

If there is a tie in the Supreme Court, the decision in the last court becomes the ruling.

Political parties is STILL the BEST indicator of how people will vote...this includes members of Congress and voting for the President.

States are free from lawsuits...unless the state gives permission to sue...all states are sovereign...it is called sovereign immunity.

A first time voter will normally vote the way that the parents vote.

Only the Democrats use “superdelegates”....these are used to make sure that the most “electable” candidate gets the nomination.

In the Electoral College, all states use a “winner-take-all” format except Maine and Nebraska.

An earmark is money set aside for a specific district or constituency.

We have to be careful when discussing the framers' desire for slow, deliberate change and the filibuster, which is not in the Constitution and was not even intended when the Senate began the tradition of unlimited debate (in other words it was not intended to give a minority the power to stop the majority from taking action). The term "filibuster" did not exist until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and Rule 22 which provides for cloture did not exist until the 20th century, and was first used during the debate on the Treaty of Versailles.

So if asked to describe Constitutional provisions that demonstrates the framers' desire for slow, deliberate change, it would not be correct to cite the filibuster as an example.

Remember that the test writers often ask for either formal or informal provisions used by the Congress or the Executive. Formal means the item is found in the Constitution.

Informal actions or provisions have developed outside the Constitution, often by custom.

Examples:

requirements to hold office for House of Representatives

Constitutional: 25 years old, 7 years a citizen and an inhabitant of the state from which elected (resident)

Informal: WASP (White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant), male, lawyer, college-educated