

**2009 AP® UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS
FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS**

Viewers' Ages and Frequency of Viewing of Network Nightly News: 1974 and 2002 Combined		
1974	Frequently (%)	Rarely (%)
18–29	45	13
30–44	50	12
45–64	68	8
65 and older	71	5
2002	Frequently (%)	Rarely (%)
18–29	19	22
30–44	22	17
45–64	40	11
65 and older	53	8

Source: Martin Wattenberg, 2004. "The Changing Presidential Media Environment." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 34(3):557–572. Originally taken from the 1974 National Election Study and the 2002 Pew Center Media Study.

4. One of the most important ways the news media influence politics is through agenda setting.
 - (a) Define policy agenda.
 - (b) Explain how the national news media engage in agenda setting.
 - (c) Explain the primary reason the president tends to have an advantage over Congress in gaining media attention.
 - (d) Consider the table above.
 - Describe the difference in the viewing patterns of older and younger age-groups.
 - Describe the change from 1974 to 2002 in viewing habits that exists for all age categories.
 - (e) Given the information in the table, describe one implication for presidents in their use of the media to promote their political and policy objectives to the American public.

STOP

END OF EXAM

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Question 4

6 points

Part (a): 1 point

One point is earned for a correct definition of policy agenda. A correct definition must include each of the following:

- A policy agenda is a set of issues, problems, or subjects
- that gets the attention of/is viewed as important by
- people involved in policymaking (e.g., government officials, government decision-makers).

Part (b): 1 point

One point is earned for a correct explanation of how the national news media engage in agenda setting. A correct explanation must include each of the following:

- Raise awareness, provide information, draw attention, demonstrate the importance or consequences of the problem, or get the public's attention.
- Get the attention of government/policymakers.

Part (c): 1 point

One point is earned for an explanation of the primary reason the president has an advantage over Congress in gaining media attention. A correct response must include the following:

- An explanation that the president is one person, while Congress is composed of many members.
- An explanation of how that fact gives the president an advantage over Congress in gaining media attention.

Possible explanations might include:

- The president speaks with a single voice, while Congress has many voices.
- The president represents the nation; members of Congress represent states/districts.
- The president is the national leader/leader of the country.
- The president is more powerful than any single member of Congress.
- The president has constitutional powers that Congress does not have.

Part (d): 2 points

One point is earned for each of two responses: one explaining the difference in viewing patterns of older and younger age-groups, and one explaining the change in viewing habits from 1974 to 2002 for all age-groups:

- Young people view less TV news than older people./Older people view more TV news than younger people.
- People in all age categories viewed less TV news in 2002 than they did in 1974.

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Question 4 (continued)

Part (e): 1 point

One point is earned for describing one implication for presidents in their use of the media to promote their objectives to the public. The answer must state at least one of the following:

- Presidents must rely on alternative media to gain the attention of the public.
- Presidents purposely target older viewers through the use of nightly news programs.
- The nightly news is not as effective in promoting the president's agenda as it used to be.

A score of zero (0) is assigned to an attempted answer that earns no points.

A score of dash (—) is assigned to a blank or off-task answer.