1. The most noticeable obstacle I overcame was allowing both single and double digit vote numbers to pass hasCorrectSyntax. I finally overcame this article by making a while loop that checked to see if the 4th char was a number. If it was, it would check if the 5th was a letter. If the 4th char was a letter, then it would check to see if the next two chars made up a state code. In hindsight, I should have made this its own method since I ended up writing very similar code multiple times throughout the project.   
   Another issue I had was counting the number of predicted votes. I spent several minutes wondering why none of my test cases would work only to realize it was because I forgot to allow both lowercase and uppercase letters for party.
2. My code works as following:

Check to see syntax is correct by Repeatedly:

Make sure the poll Data is either 4 or 5 chars long

Change first two chars to uppercase

Check if those chars match a state code

Check to see it a 1- or 2-digit number follows the state code

Check if last char is a letter

If everything is fine

Check the next 4 to 5 chars

Once Done with that

Check if any of the numbers was a 0

Check if the party inputted is not a letter

If everything is good Count votes by Repeatedly:

if the correct party is represented

add the number to a total int.