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Stetson University

President's Weekly Update: 2020 Election, What Happened?

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>> ROELLKE: Good afternoon, Stetson University.

Thank you for joining us today for what I believe is our 17th, perhaps, consecutive week of presidential webinars to try to keep our community informed.

And there could not be better timing for today's panel focusing in on electoral politics and how it impacts our community and so on.

And I really want to think the expert that is are on our panel today.

And I'll introduce them in just a moment.

Because we have a large group of colleagues and friends and scholars with us, I will make my remarks very brief.

And simply to acknowledge this has been quite a ride this semester for all of us, needless to say.

And the last couple of weeks, we have had a significant spike in COVID transmission.

And I can't thank the community enough for your ability to be nimble and move back into tier 1 out an abundance of caution and try to keep our community safe as we move into the Thanksgiving recess and the end of the semester.

That certainly has been coupled over the last several weeks and certainly right in realtime, anxieties around the Presidential Election.

Certainly related to COVID, that's been our ongoing financial challenges.

Lots of urgency over issues of social and racial justice and of course in an academic environment, the typical end of the semester stress that is certainly exacerbated, I assume, by the aforementioned context that we're encountering.

On the upside, we do have homecoming coming up -- virtual homecoming.

And we also have all intentions of having commencements occur to celebrate our wonderful students and the wonderful accomplishments they have, assuming our public health context permits that to happen.

In short, I just want to acknowledge this has been tough.

And I want to thank all of you, each and every one of you, for coming and rallying around, beginning our concepts of kindness and empathy.

I think our nation needs those.

And certainly Stetson University needs those qualities.

So again, a sincere thank you.

On our panel today we have with us Amelia Maulfair, a junior in Philosophy and Political Science and a part of Stetson Votes, an initiative to get students to get out and vote.

Roll to the Polls, SGA presidential debates and weekly Stetson Votes events in June.

Amelia, welcome.

Kevin Winchell is Associate Director of Community Engagement.

He's been recognized at the state and national level for his leadership and innovation in student civic and political participation.

Kevin will be talking about student participation with college vote and future participation.

Ciara Torres-Spelliscy has a focus on constitutional law.

She speaks publicly on campaign finances law and campaign finances reform and is frequently quoted by local and national media for her insight and expertise.

Recently also was a guest on WMFE why election outcomes could, in fact, end up in court.

Today the topic will be elections heading to court and the United States.

David Hill is our Professor and Chair of Political Science in Stetson.

He was recently quoted in the "Independent Florida Alligator" how the movement could affect Florida politics.

Today David will talk to us about the impact on voting turnout and early voting patterns.

Sharmaine Jackson, also a frequent participant in many conversations going on, particularly here at the DeLand Campus.

She's a Director of Sociology and Africana Studies.

Is there anything in this election that indicates support and movement toward social justice?

And finally but not last -- last but not least, Kelly Smith, Assistant Professor of Political Science, interviewed by "Tampa Bay" for coverage of the state election and voting patterns.

Today important topics.

State legislative outcomes, ballot initiatives in the states, voting patterns in Florida.

We look forward to a robust discussion after we have presentations from each.

It's my pleasure to turn the screen over to Amelia.

>> MAULFAIR: Thank you.

So as President Roellke mentioned, I'm the Director of Stetson Votes.

This is really about removing barriers.

Everyone, especially students, meet a lot of barriers when voting in democratic institutions.

So a lot of our focus has been on how can we register students to vote with the most efficiency?

How can we inform them about the issues in the best possible manner.

How can we provide them physical transportation to the polls or enroll them in vote by mail if that's what they may need.

We have events on national voter registration day which was September 22nd when we registered everyone to vote or as many people as we could to vote.

We did a series on Instagram and informing students about the amendments that are going to be on the Florida ballot.

And last week on Wednesday, we did roll to the polls where we drove students to the polls where they could early vote.

And then this past Tuesday, we did roll to the polls again for Election Day voting.

We found in our communications and interactions with students that really this election -- most students are very energized and looking to participate. Most students when it came to early voting and Election Day voting, most students had already voted or had a plan to vote very soon.

And that was really exciting to see.

And as we've seen with some of these early numbers that have come out, this has been an historic election with turnout which is awesome to see.

We did a poll in terms of what students wanted to see in a president -- both the specific candidate and values that they were looking for in the candidates.

And our students elected Joe Biden.

While that didn't reflect Florida's electoral opinion, that is what Stetson would have voted if Stetson was a state or a country.

In terms of the values students are looking for, they want a candidate they can compromise across the aisles.

They want someone morally strong and someone looking for a progressive future.

So that's what we've seen in our interactions with the students.

And we -- with the numbers that we've seen already, this -- we've already broken our record for student turnout at Stetson.

I believe we had 60% of students who were registered on campus vote which is more than we had in the 2016 election.

And Kevin can correct me on that if I'm wrong.

But I'm pretty sure that's the case.

And with that, I have nothing else to add.

>> ROELLKE: Wonderful.

Thank you very much.

Kevin, can you take over from here?

>> WINCHELL: Gladly.

So I'm Kevin Winchell and I work in the Center for Community Engagement.

What we do is overseeing much of the Deland Campus' political engagement efforts.

Amelia is perhaps modest when talking about the efforts she's put together.

They run our campus like it's a voting precinct and like it's a campaign unto itself.

They find the list of all the students who are registered to vote.

They get that list from our Supervisor of Elections Office.

They go through that list and contact every single student.

They are texting students.

They're calling students.

In some cases when it's safe, they're knocking on their doors and canvassing them like a normal campaign would.

And now more and more with social media, Facebook, Instagram -- I've learned that Facebook is pretty obsolete.

It's all on Instagram with them.

We need to hit Facebook, Facebook, Facebook -- no, Kevin.

It's really all Instagram now.

So I'm learning a lot from these two.

But the work that they did to organize our campus, make sure that everybody was getting multiple touches from multiple sources, whether it's social media or in person or texting or things like that so we can meet every student where they are.

Because we know students are not a monolithic demographic either.

Just like any other group, they all have different communication preferences.

They have different values.

They have different ways that they want us to be able to reach out to them.

And we know that there are some students that aren't going to vote no matter what we do.

But we need to know students well and reach them the right way.

One thing that Amelia alluded to was the turnout rate for the 2020 election.

And we'll drop in the chat some reports that we have that provide a little bit of context I want to talk about for just a moment from the National Study of Learning, Voting, and National Engagement.

That's done at Tufts University which have the most comprehensive data base of student participation in the country.

They have more than 400 institutions that have opted into this that have shared data with this institute in exchange for getting aggregate level and demographic level and major-specific turnout data back for the institutions so we can make better informed decisions.

So in the chat you see we have two different reports that we received over the last few years.

One compares the turnout rates during the 2012 and 2016 President presidential election cycles.

And then it compares the 2014 and 2018 turnouts for those mid-term election cycles. it's important to distinguish the two of those because presidential election levels are very different than mid-term, especially the state of Florida.

The mid-term elections, the top of our ticket is usually our governor election, our gubernatorial election.

And that has a different affect on different voters.

So turnout levels are very different as a result of that.

What's really interesting is as you look through these reports, you'll find that in 2012, when this data was just gun to be collected, Stetson University students in that 2012 election voted at a rate that was about 53.6% for our campus.

And when you fast forward them to the next Presidential Election which is the next similar election in 2012, in 2016, that rate went up to 55.3%.

So it's about a point and a half increase over that time from 2012 to 2016.

So that's good that we're increasing over that time.

In the mid-terms, we've seen a major spike.

And this corresponds to what we've seen nationally too.

I'm sure our political science faculty will talk about that.

At Stetson University in 2014, we saw a voting rate of only 25.8% in that mid-term election.

But then when you go to 2018 which was just two years ago, that 25.8% turned into 44.4%.

So again that corresponded a lot to what we saw nationally. But we'd like to think that the work that we did with Stetson Votes organizing our campus in the 2018 cycle shot that up a lot, too.

So we don't know yet what exactly what our turnout rate is for 2020.

But we -- what we do know is basically to calculate the turnout rate, you have to be able to grab the data from all the supervisor election races across the country.

And that's a monumental task to be able to achieve.

But we have the data for those who register on campus.

We can grab that easily from our local elections office.

And of the students registered and active on our campus using the campus address, 165 of those students voted in this election, representing a turnout rate of 60.9%.

And so we're really proud of that.

We really want to get above 60% because the 2016 election we were at 55.3.

So we're really excited about that.

But we want to see what the final numbers are for students for around the rest of the state and the rest of the country, too.

The last thing I really want to mention is to highlight one other item from the NSLVE reports.

And that's one thing that they do that's really interesting for anyone who might be an alum of the university or current student -- including our faculty members, too.

It breaks it down by nature.

Which majors vote more or less than other majors.

And the majors -- the top five majors for turnout in the 2018 election, no surprise for the first one is our College of Law students.

But then English was number two.

Education, number three.

Social Studies, broadly number four.

And History, number five.

Lowest turnout, Sports Management, Business, Communications, and Health Sciences.

We want to give love to those with the lowest turnout rates.

That's where we can have the highest turnout on investment, we believe.

So we'll focus on that the next election cycle.

And I'm wondering about Health Sciences on the list.

I wonder if that will boost up in 2020 because of the pandemic.

I don't know.

We're looking forward to getting half of our students registered on campus for the next election cycle and have plans for that.

Hopefully turn Stetson to its own voting precinct.

We'll check on that.

We want to do more studies, longitudinal, to track student political behaviors cycle over cycle and identify the influence of different variables such as demography and student success and participation in civic and political organizations and events and see if those have any affect on turnout as well.

And then we're really looking forward to permanently funding our Stetson Votes program so that we are able to build on these successes year over year over year.

So that's what I have to share.

And I just am proud of the work that Amelia and all of our students have done.

And please check out the Facebook and Instagram pages and follow them if you haven't already done so because they're posting a lot of great events that they're doing and a lot of great photos from Election Day on Tuesday, too, that will warm your heart at this time right now.

Thanks.

>> ROELLKE: Kevin, thank you so very much.

One of my earlier remarks, I talked about hoping our community would stay safe, stay well.

And I also hoped that they would stay engaged.

And apparently they have.

That's terrific.

That's terrific.

And a little side note.

If you can see the state of Florida behind Kevin, that is a local piece of artwork handmade at a place called Anna Bananas at north Woodland Boulevard.

There it is!

There it is!

Thank you so much, Kevin.

And Professor Spelliscy.

Turning to you now.

>> TORRES-SPELLISCY: I want you to know that the 2020 Presidential Election was the most expensive federal election we've ever had.

Before the election, I talked at a Stetson University webinar and said the estimated cost would be \$11 billion.

But we blew right past that.

Now the estimate is \$14 billion.

There were \$3.6 billion for the presidential race alone.

The House raised 1.4 billion.

The Senate candidates raised 1.3 billion.

And then the remainder was outside spending by persons and groups who were trying to influence your vote.

So before the federal election back in February of 2020 and actually the last symposium that I attended in person, I along with a bipartisan group at U.C. Irvine, we met and talked about how to have an election during a crisis.

And in April of 2020, we put out a report called "Fair Elections During a Crisis."

In that report, we encouraged Congress to better fund security for 2020.

We also encouraged states to do risk-limiting audits before certifying their vote totals.

We also encouraged the states to adapt their election laws to enable to voters and poll workers to be safe during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We encouraged the wider use of vote by mail for states.

And we also encouraged states to open their early vote and vote by mail ballots as soon as possible so that they would avoid what is known as either the blue shift or the red mirage.

Let me explain that.

That may be a new terminology for you.

The blue shift or the red mirage problem is if you have an election where Republicans primarily vote in person, those votes are very quick and easy to tally.

But if Democrats prefer vote by mail, those vote by mail ballots take time to tally because you have to do signature matches.

You have to take them out of the envelopes and then you have to feed those ballots into machines.

And so you can have an early appearance of a Republican candidate winning because their voters voted in a way that was easier to process.

And then when you later process the vote by mail votes which are going to contain a higher percentage of Democratic votes, it can give the misimpression to the public that votes are changing in a weird way.

But all of this was actually predictable which is why we encouraged states to change the date on which they started opening their ballots.

I think a lot of states could learn from Florida.
Florida opens its ballots starting 22 days out from the election.
And that allowed Florida to process all of its ballots whether it was vote by mail, early voting, or in person voting.
And so we had the results of Florida on Election Night.
Unfortunately because states didn't listen to experts, we are in the predicament that we're in right now where states are still processing their hundreds of thousands of mail in ballots.
So I think we'll all have to take time and be patient.
And lawsuits are already being filed.
One thing I will say is that I have seen no evidence of widespread voter fraud.
And I find accusations of widespread voter fraud, especially from federal candidates, to be beyond the pale.
Before the election, there was a lot of litigation over the rules that would apply in this election.
Some of which happened up until Election Eve.
And so we'll just have to be patient to see what arguments courts entertain.
Right now a lot of the arguments that are being made are frivolous.
So I wouldn't be too concerned about a court deciding who won the 2020 Presidential Election.
And I'll stop there.
>> ROELLKE: Ciara, thank you so very much.
So interesting and important.
Thank you so much.
Professor Hill?
>> HILL: Thank you, Professor Roellke.
I am thankful to join this conversation today.
So I was asked to talk about turnout.
And I'm a happy guy today thanks to the efforts of Amelia and Kevin Winchell and people like them all over the country.
We have an early estimate of turnout in the national turnout of 66.7% of eligible voters casting a ballot.
That would be the highest in 120 years.
That's a good thing.
It appears that turnout was up across all groups.
That's a good thing.
Competitive elections create incentives for parties and ally groups and candidates to expend a whole lot of money -- 14 billion -- to mobilize voters.
And they did that.
All of that mobilization, all of that money spent stimulates voters.
And we end up with high turnout.
Now, we're still well below the average number of turnout in established democracies around the world.

But if you take the turnout in this election, combine it with the 49% in 2018 which was really very high for a mid-term election, what we have -- at least to me -- is an electorate that's highly engaged with the political world and two parties that are working very hard to bring those folks out on Election Day or early via the mail now.

This is good stuff.

I don't know any other way to frame it.

And politics is a good thing.

And voting is a good thing.

And we did a good job.

Let's hope the trend is up.

The trend is up since the dip in 2012.

Hopefully we reach those new levels in turnout.

I do want to say a few words about convenience of voting.

We just held an election in the midst of a pandemic.

So as a result, there were huge increases in early voting and mail in voting.

The number of early votes cast in this election was estimated to be about 74% of the entire total vote of 2016.

While we need to wait to get the votes counted, to find out, let the dust settled -- like Dr. Spelliscy noted, there doesn't seem to be any problems with voting in this election.

It's important to note that both Washington state and Oregon have had 100% all mail elections for quite some time now.

In 2018, 26% of all votes cast were by the mail.

If it turns out that in fact there were no systematic problems with mail in voting, my guess is we'll see more states adopt more convenient ways of voting.

Healthy democracies require widespread participation.

I would argue -- and I think most political scientists would agree -- that we should drop registration procedures that make the act of voting as easy as possible.

For as many people as possible while maintaining the integrity of our elections.

And that's an important part.

They're increasing turnout.

So we can thank that high turnout rate -- relatively high turnout rate we had today -- not only on mobilization which is -- that's an awfully good thing but also on -- we're making voting a little more convenient for folks out there.

And again, that's a very positive trend.

I did want to talk -- my initial instinct on all of this is to dig into those exit polls and find out who it was that voted, for whom they voted, and why they voted that way.

I'm not going to do that today.

And I do want to note the reason for that is because of the large number of mail in votes cast, you have to be cautious in using the exit polls.

They did do the best.

They were conducting on Election Day early voting and then tried to contact voters through phone interviews.

But the problem with reaching people through phone interviews, there's a reason with caution with doing too much with the exit polls right now.

I will certainly entertain questions and have conversation about some of the findings in there and potential shifts toward one way or the other.

But I think I'm going to refrain from doing that today.

I do want to note a couple of things quickly.

This is a good day for Congressional Republicans.

It looks like at this point they're going to maintain the majority of the senate.

That map was always difficult for the Democrats anyway.

It looks like the Democrats are going to pick up one seat.

Interestingly as a politics nerd, the State of Georgia has a rule you have to have 50% of the vote to win the seat out right.

And if you don't receive 50% of the vote, you'll end up in a runoff election.

We have two senate races in Georgia.

Kelly Loeffler for a special election.

That race is going to a second round runoff.

They'll hold the election again with the top two candidates.

And David Purdue had 50% of the vote two hours ago in the other senate race.

If he falls below 50%, we'll go into a runoff.

So all eyes will be on Georgia after this is all done -- after the counting's done -- if that second race particularly goes to a runoff because that could actually influence the ballots of the senate.

Republicans picked up six seats in the house.

That's not done -- excuse me, five seats in the house as of right now.

The Democrats maintain the majority.

But Republicans are going to feel pretty good about picking up seats in the House of Representatives.

It's important to note there were some diversity gains across the country.

We have our first two Black gays.

So there's all sorts of stuff to be found in an election and hopefully we'll get to some of those.

Finally I was going to talk about why the polls were so far off.

And in terms of margins, they were.

The consensus, however, based on those polls prior to the election was that the states key to trump's win in 2016 -- Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Wisconsin, lean blue as did Nevada, Arizona, Georgia, and North Carolina as potential pickups for Biden.

Now, we don't know who won those states.

Not a one of them.

We know who's leading in those states but we have to count the votes to figure that out.

There are Battleground states and they're supposed to be close, right?

I should note that the average polling fork -- excuse me.

The average political science forecast based on the use of theoretical models or theoretical variables based on theory rather than simply relying on polls predicted that President Trump would run 48.2% of the votes.

Right now he has 47.8% of the vote.

All of that is to say that to me there really weren't many prizes on Election Day.

We're a closely divided country, divided along partisan lines and that's what the election of this outcome is telling us.

And it really doesn't matter which candidate wins.

In the end, that's where we are as a country.

So all we can do now is sit back and wait and see how it turns out.

So thank you very much.

And love to hear your questions.

>> ROELLKE: David, thanks so much. Very interesting.

And again, I know as soon as this webinar is over, you're going to be getting back to your television set.

Right?

To see what votes have been counted in Georgia, what votes have been counted in Pennsylvania, et cetera.

That's the world we're in right now.

And I fully agree with you we just need to be patient and wait for those votes to be counted so our democracy can move forward.

Thank you very, very much.

Professor Jackson?

>> JACKSON: Thank you.

So I was asked to talk about social justice, right?

Sort of as a sociologist, this obviously makes sense.

So what could we think about -- how could we think about social justice from this election?

And definitely an issue that was central to this race is the question of race.

Right?

Race in America, racism in this country.

And both candidates had to engage this question of race.

And both had very different kinds of answers, right?

And so I think what has kind of come out of the voting process is a little bit of a surprise when I kind of talk to people and hear what they have to say in the fact that this election is so close.

I think for many people, they felt that there was a clear winner.

Right?

In this election.

And we can probably say this race is almost a 50/50.

Right?

It's going to be a 51/49.

And so I did a panel where we talked about the last presidential debate.

And most the issues in the debate had already been rehashed.
The candidates didn't really offer up any new information we hadn't heard.
So I asked an interesting question.
And I asked the panelists to say who do you think's going to be the winner?
And they both paused -- they all paused.
It was three of them -- or maybe four.
There was four, right?
You were on that -- well, anyways.
And so there was a question of what does that even mean?
What does that even mean to say that there's a winner in this particular race?
What does it mean to say one side is going to win when almost half the country completely has a different perspective and point of view?
And so it doesn't really matter.
I mean, it does matter who ends up winning the election because it's going to be significant for the winner and significant for those who don't win.
But the challenge is we're one nation.
And how do we move together?
What -- which one of our candidates is going to lead the nation forward as a whole?
So what does this mean?
Dr. Hill talks about -- and several other panelists -- amazing voter turnout.
Right?
Okay.
So from a sociological perspective, amazing mobilization of the masses.
Widespread social movement activity is the potential.
So if you have half the population completely unhappy with your outcome and you don't have a strong leader in place, you potentially could have a situation -- you know, we have a very unhappy population.
And you really don't want to see that.
So what we need is a leader to come forward.
So I'm really hopeful that whoever ends up finally being declared here, right, pays attention to the fact that this is a sort of -- there's a lot of fractured issues -- particularly along the lines of race.
I think race was highly activated and charged in this particular election.
And it is embedded in that particular issue are so many other issues of social justice in this country and in this nation.
So movements toward social justice.
I actually think it's in the hands of the people.
I think what our population does is really going to drive what our leadership does.
And so I say kudos to all that social, right, social media and people coming together and really pushing forward their interests and asking the representatives in Congress and their leadership to really take their interests forward.

So I think this speaks to, again, some of the points that Dr. Hill makes when he brings up some of those changes that we've seen, some of this movement around the nation, because our population is becoming more woke and active.

Right?

So our leadership needs to respond to that.

So I actually think this is a great time for change and a change of sort of seeing us come together and hopefully moving through, however that happens.

I'm not sure how that's going to happen.

But I'm hopeful that it's at least on the table and set as the agenda.

>> ROELLKE: Sharmaine, thank you so much.

We really appreciate your insights there.

I think it's going to be fascinating as this plays out and we get more data, to see what kind of demographic breakdowns there have been in this election.

I know we're getting preliminary data on that.

But I think there's been some interesting things and perhaps others on the panel will talk about that later.

Dr. Smith?

>> SMITH: Yes, thank you so much for having me.

I want to start off to remind everybody that the great thing about American politics is we actually have a lot of elections.

And we have a lot of officials in this country.

And although the national elections are the shiniest and they garner the most media attention and they are, of course, very important, it's the state and the local elections that are going to have a really huge impact on your life.

I think the parties are starting to recognize this, especially the Republicans in 2010.

The Democrats after 2016 had some renewed focus on states.

So I just have to say once we know the results of the presidential election in the senate, if you're just made by the results, no need to fear.

There are so many opportunities at the state and local levels for you to push for political and social change.

And if you are invigorated and excited by the results of the national elections, don't forget what's happening at the state and local level because you might just miss some policy movements that maybe you wouldn't want to pursue.

So I just encourage you all to pay attention to the state and local level.

And there's a lot of ways to get involved there.

I want to focus a little bit on state legislative elections and then some of the ballot initiatives that we've had at the state level as well.

The big focus in -- one of the big focuses in 2020 for the parties was on state legislative elections and both parties were really trying to flip chambers.

So there were 86 state legislative chambers that held elections this past week.

All 120 seats in the Florida house were up for re-election.

And 20 Florida seats were up for re-election.

So going into the 2020 election, we had 15 democratic trifectas at the state level and 21 Republican trifectas.

What that means is both Houses in the state legislature and Governor's Office is controlled by the same party.

So obviously this gives a lot of power to whichever party holds the trifecta in the state.

So in 2020, the real focus was trying to flip some of these chambers.

Surprisingly as of now, they were actually not huge changes in state legislative maps which is a bit surprising, especially since the parties knew how important these chambers were.

And I'll get to that in a second, why it's so important.

So some votes are still being tallied -- obviously the national level.

But for our state and local levels too.

It looks like right now we have 27 Republican controlled legislatures and 19 Democrat controlled legislatures.

The Democrats were able to flip New Hampshire.

It looks again there will only be one divided legislature in the entire country, Minnesota, which is quite a rare occurrence.

We usually have much more divided state legislatures.

That may be a testament to our political polarization.

So why is this so important?

Besides the fact that states make critical policy decisions that affect your life, such as closings and openings due to COVID, whether to expand Medicaid, gun control policy, the kinds of in-state colleges you have access to, to attend university, whether you learn common course standards, abortion restrictions -- so many of these topics are dealt at the state level.

And that's why these state elections are so important.

This year's particularly important because it's a census year.

So what that means is that based on the population changes from the U.S. census, state legislatures are actually responsible for redrawing the district maps both for the U.S. house and for the state legislative districts as well.

And parties do tend to draw those maps in their favor.

And so that's why there was this increased attention to try to flip the state legislatures because both parties knew that this is going to have lasting political consequences for the next ten years because those maps, again, can be drawn to favor one party over the other in some ways.

And there are some restrictions to that.

So I would encourage you to pay attention to these state legislative races and pay attention to some of the redistricting fights that are bound to occur in these states.

The other thing I want to touch on briefly -- and I want to make sure we have time for questions -- are the ballot initiatives at the state.

This is another unique opportunity in the United States in that at our state level, we have an opportunity for direct democracy that we don't necessarily have at the federal level where many states -- over 20 -- have allowed for referendums or initiatives where the people can vote for policies and vote to amend their state constitutions.

And we in Florida are able to do that as well.

So there were 124 ballot initiatives this year across the states.

And some really, really big and important initiatives across the states as well.

In Florida, we can amend the constitution with 60% of the vote.

Usually even with this higher threshold, most amendments pass -- or lots of amendments pass.

In 2018, all but one passed.

This year two really big amendments that passed was Amendment One that changed the wording of the constitution to say that only a U.S. citizen can vote.

And the second really important amendment to pass raises the minimum wage by \$1 by five years.

So it'll get to \$15 by 2026.

So this will be a really interesting experiment to observe and kind of will help us wrestle with some of the effects of raising the minimum wage.

Outside of Florida quickly, there have been vast movement in drug policy over the past few years, particularly with marijuana policy.

So Arizona, Montana, New Jersey, and South Dakota voted to legalize marijuana last night.

This continues the -- continues action on the state to criminalize marijuana.

And we've seen this the past number of years.

Oregon took an even further step.

And they decriminalized other drugs as well.

So in state politics, we're going to be very interested to see how this policy plays out in Oregon and see whether other states start to make these similar policy changes that Oregon has made.

So I'm happy to talk more about the initiatives across the states.

But I want to leave time for questions.

But I just want to end with, again, if you want to become involved and change the world -- maybe you want to reform the criminal justice system or you want to make education more equitable or you want people to have more access to health care, you should get involved in your state and local politics because it's pretty easy to do and you can make really huge changes there.

So with that, I look forward to your questions.

>> ROELLKE: Thank you so very much.

And my sincere thanks to each panelist for their insightful remarks.

I think that will stimulate an excellent discussion.

It's my job to moderate the discussions.
And please feel free to put questions in the chat.
And I will try to direct them as best I can.
And to the panelists, I'll direct the questions to a panelist.
But chime in by saying, I've got something to add to that!
My first one goes to Professor Hill.
And it's about Florida's performance in the logistics of performing results.
It seems as though that went pretty well.
Is that more function to the fact there wasn't as narrow a margin as perhaps anticipated or is it because we got something right in the state of Florida with regards to the complexity of this election?
>> HILL: Well, I think you learn from past mistakes.
I see in the chat that Florida received a lot of negative criticism in the past.
And I'm assuming that's referring to 2000.
Florida happened to have the magnifying glass shown on it in 2000.
My guess that either Arizona, Nevada, Pennsylvania, probably Wisconsin are going to have the magnifying glass shown on them.
And so what I would like to respond to the question briefly is that it's about election administration in the United States.
2000 pulled back the curtain.
And everybody called us "Flori-duh" but that would have been the cases in a lot of states.
We have election administration in the United States done at the county and state level.
We have a patchwork of election laws.
Yes, there's some federal laws in place.
The health and American food act.
It's up will it to the county officials to do it.
I have faith for them or in them that they are hard-working, competent people who try to get the job right.
But if we really -- so for my answer about Florida, yes.
I think we learned and we're doing some things right as Professor Spelliscy noted having to do with the mail in ballots and counting those ballots.
I noted someone yesterday on Twitter note we really need a federal elections agency -- not commission -- but agency to oversee elections for national offices.
We just held thousands of elections -- well, yeah.
County level elections if you want to think about it that way to elect county officers.
And that's challenging.
>> TORRES-SPELLISCY: You're on mute.
>> ROELLKE: The next question is for Professor Torres-Spelliscy.
Thank you for telling me it was on mute.
We're seeing a lot in the news about some of our leaders choosing to produce misinformation or promoting conspiracy theories.

And it seems to also be ramping up in that regard when it comes to this election.

What do our leaders either elected or about to be elected or even currently in office and sustaining that office -- what do they need to do to combat the challenging we've got with misinformation?

>> TORRES-SPELLISCY: Well, to start with, it would help if they were not the source of misinformation.

I mean, it's very frustrating -- I mean, I got a whole book out of it.

I wrote a book called "political Brands" about how Trump uses commercial branding techniques for political gain.

And one of the commercial branding techniques is to lie to your customer.

So I'm not sure what to say when the misinformation is coming from the top.

>> ROELLKE: Any other panelists want to add to this dialogue?

Because I think it's quite fascinating.

Yes, Dr. Jackson?

>> JACKSON: Thank you.

Yeah.

I have to echo, right?

What can our leadership do?

Again, that unification question.

We want to win but what are we winning?

What are we really winning and at what cost?

Yeah.

That's -- yeah.

I don't know.

I think also the -- again, I'm going to put that back on the populous and the people.

We also take the bait.

Right?

So to what degree are we responsible also for sort of, you know, -- even if something comes out in a tweet or other forms of information, what is it that makes us actually go out and stand outside of a, you know, an office, some place where they're counting ballots and try to intimidate ballot workers.

Right?

Like that's actually, you know, -- so yeah, our leadership is responsible.

But we're also the ones, you know, choosing to follow through and take those actions.

So yeah.

I also have to say some of that, too, needs to come back onto us.

And we just also have to say no.

We believe in the political process of this nation and the legitimacy of our institutions because when we stop doing that, right, then the whole thing breaks down.

>> ROELLKE: Kevin?

>> WINCHELL: Yeah.

And for me, not looking at the national leadership and everything for a moment.

But it makes me reflect on the purpose of higher education and education as a whole.

And that's to inculcate these habits and skills for effective citizenship for every person in our country because without the ability to think critically and to question assumptions and identify assumptions to begin with, to talk with others and capable of self-correction.

Those are the small liberal art that is institutions like Stetson University are all about.

Making sure that all of our students graduate with the ability to think for themselves and to question what they have grown up with.

And that's one of the things I love most about the work that we get to do in communication engagement with Stetson.

Our university has a lot of assets to share with our local community as well.

Webinars like this where we get to take people that have so much expertise on these issues and allow them to share that with everybody else but also when we don't have pandemics going on, Stetson's a place that convenes for talking about major issues like homelessness and pedestrianism and how we use our water.

We also convene people to have debates for candidates and discussions and all sorts of different things.

So I think that just underscores the role of universities like Stetson for being a source of knowledge generation for our communities.

And it means that we need to lean more into that role, too.

>> ROELLKE: Great.

I think I'd like to throw another question out there from the chat to the entire group which is on the themes that I think emerged from this panel discussion.

One is, we are all very pleased with the voter turnout.

That's a good thing for democracy, right?

We like that.

We also heard that this has been a very, very close, highly contested election pretty evenly split.

Right?

And so how do we moving forward -- and I also heard from Amelia that the Stetson students themselves are hoping for leadership to broker peace and compromise.

I think "peace" was the word and working across the aisle is what we heard.

How do we make that happen, right?

Are we optimistic about that?

You know, when it comes to January 20th and we may have a change in leadership.

We may have a Republican-led senate.

And we may -- or we will have a Democrat-led House, then we move forward.

If we all agree that this is great news about the electorate being motivated.

But we still have evidence to suggest it's still a great deal of division.

That's a big question.

Amelia?

>> MAULFAIR: So I don't know if I can answer it.

But I think I may be able to locate some of the source of that issue which is the breakdown of faithful opposition in our country.

There's been a tradition in America of just because I, you know, disagree with someone's political opinions, I still respect them as an individual and as a person.

But in the past four years, we've seen that that ideal has broken down and dissolved.

So what can be done, I think, to -- I think the question is, what can be done to restore that faithful opposition and what exactly has caused that to go away.

>> ROELLKE: David, I think you wanted to add?

>> HILL: Yeah.

I just want to say I have enormous faith in the American people.

There are clearly some issues.

But for the most part, I believe in the wisdom of the people.

I believe in democracy.

So that gives me hope.

But the purpose of an electoral system is to translate preferences into votes into political power.

Right?

So what we have over the last several elections is a system where those preferences in votes are not being translated into a majority power.

They're being translated into minority power.

That's -- some of that division is that.

Right?

When you have one side winning the national vote and not getting the power from winning that.

And the same thing's going to happen in the senate and the house.

So that's part of it.

The other part is that our governing system and the electoral system creates incentives for representatives to not only represent a very narrow slice -- so a Congressional district, for instance, or state legislative district.

And if that state legislative district is very conservative or very liberal, the incentive is to have a very conservative or very liberal representative and not compromise.

And then of course you have the power of party leadership in Congress.

This is all interactive.

So all of that is to say, can the American people come together and find that compromise and unity?

Yeah, I think we can.

But with the system in place in our political elites being pulled apart by incentives, quite frankly, it's going to be very difficult.

So keep voting.

Right?

At very high rates and eventually it'll change, hopefully.

>> ROELLKE: Panelists, just by a show of a thumb up or waves, could we go a few minutes beyond our timeline?

We have questions coming, engagement is at a high level.

So with your permission, we'll go to 5:15?

Would that be okay?

Kelly, you're next.

>> SMITH: Yes.

I wanted to comment on Dr. Hill's comment.

This is why redistricting is so important as Dr. Hill mentioned.

You know, we want our districts to be competitive, to have -- to need different groups and individuals to come together to get a majority.

And that will help change the incentive structure of our national representatives.

I do think that there are -- there's definitely a lot to be hopeful for.

I did see an ad a couple days ago.

I think it was the gubernatorial candidates in Utah that actually put together a joint ad -- the Republican and Democrat put an ad together introducing themselves saying they can disagree without belittling each other's character.

And so I think that that's really great to see.

At least leaders at the state level are kind of demonstrating the civil discourse that we should and that we want to have throughout the country.

So if our leaders can continue to demonstrate that, I think we'll be moving forward in a positive direction.

>> ROELLKE: I think a connected question from the chat that I'd like to share -- and again, anyone can answer it.

But it's, given we're likely to see legal challenges in this particular election, contestant votes -- what impact will that have on this discussion?

In other words, I think our country has had a pretty strong history of candidates when the vote is calculated accepting the result and moving forward.

I don't foresee -- again, I'm not a political scientist though I studied it in college.

What impact is that going to have on our ability to speed forward?

This faith we have that we're going to be able to come together as a populous if, in fact, we see a drawn out, contested election?

>> TORRES-SPELLISY: I can start on that one.

>> ROELLKE: Thank you.

>> TORRES-SPELLISCY: I would remind us of what happened after Bush versus Gore.

So that was a Supreme Court decision that stopped the vote count in Florida in 2000.

And one of the things that Al Gore did which may have saved the public. He said, I deeply disagree with the opinion but I will abide by that.

I believe in the rule of law.

And I am hoping that if, for some reason -- and I really do not anticipate this Supreme Court playing that role again for a number of reasons in this election.

But if they do, I would hope that whoever is the losing candidate has the same spirit that Al Gore did.

>> ROELLKE: I think that's what we're headed if I'm not mistaken.

We're headed to -- at least the next couple of days, at least, some contestation with the result.

And we're seeing it already with lawsuits being filed as we speak.

And as a Sid, that worries me.

Anybody else want to chime in?

We want to get the vote right.

We all do.

But I think this prior discussion around how do we come together may be delayed a bit if we don't have an acceptance of the result.

Sharmaine?

>> JACKSON: So I mean, I think -- right?

This gets to that bifurcation of this country.

We have it around economic inequality.

The public has pushed economic inequality over on many Americans.

And even though that isn't -- the impact of that doesn't discriminate between Republicans and Democrats, we have very different views as to how we respond to the economy.

Right?

And that the economic crisis that goes along those lines.

And then the same thing when it comes to race, right?

Is that a problem?

Is it not a problem?

One of the questions I continue to engage in when we did panels on the debates is why when we talk about racial justice in this nation do we also have a conversation around law and order?

Why is it those two things are synonymous?

And in fact, is it ever possible for them to be separate?

Right?

And so these are very important issues in the fabric of America.

Right?

They exist in our historical legacy of slavery that we see playing itself out in contemporary times.

We are in a capitalist nation that does not provide very much of a safety net for those who are unable to maintain employment that's linked to so many of our benefits, to be able to participate in civic and everyday life. And we have very different ideas -- our leadership does -- on how that gets resolved.

So when the election is called, who's going to -- you know, if it goes to Trump and he retains in office, will we see protests?

Absolutely.

I would -- I would -- I would be super surprised if we did not.

If Biden is announced as the president, will we see protests?

Absolutely.

In both of those cases, I don't see one of those not resulting in mass movements to the streets.

And then comes the question, how do we respond?

How do we respond as a nation?

How does our leadership respond to this unrest in the people that is there?

Can we move forward?

Yes.

But we have to join our interests.

We have very many shared interests.

And fortunately, we're not as a people.

We're not seeing where we share an interest in working together to resolve, you know, the spread of COVID and the ways in which that manifests itself into the community.

Especially when we can't even, you know, decide as a people whether -- some of us don't even think COVID is something really to worry about.

And then another group very much, you know, invested in social distancing and shutdowns.

Right?

And this is something pretty much objective.

We have science behind it and then there's a question of, well, what's the role of science?

Right?

So we've got a lot of work to do.

And I think pretending we don't, that's the recipe for disaster.

Pretending that these cleavages are actually not there -- that there are not mass people even at this moment protesting in some form or another across this nation is not going to get us to where we need to go.

>> ROELLKE: Thank you.

We have another question in the chat that I guess I would put it in the category of electoral innovation.

David, you spoke about you may see an expansion, for example, of mail in voting given what we learn during this election.

There's questions in the chat about rank order voting perhaps in some primary races.

Are there other innovations?

Is there an anticipation that we might see a growth in third party candidates?

Can you read the tea leaves a little bit for us and tell us about what you see on the horizon in terms of -- I guess I would put it in the category of electoral changes or innovations.

>> HILL: Well, we need them.

And rank choice voting in Maine, they hold all their rank choice voting.

That's a good thing.

The problem is electoral system changes, not easy.

Can't do it at the national level really.

You can do some things but most of it's going to have to take place at the state level.

So we have an electoral -- we elect a president by a system that is electoral college, I mean, that probably didn't work in 1789 much less 2020.

It's in the constitution.

It's almost impossible to change.

In terms of third party -- so I would like to see, by the way, more things like rank choice voting in the United States.

I personally believe we need proportional representation.

But that's very difficult with our governmental system for it to work, much less implement.

In terms of third parties, yeah, it's there.

The support in the electorate is there for multiple problems.

Part of our problem is we have a two-party system and a pretty wide range of preferences out there that are not being represented.

We have win or take all elections that -- I'm trying to not use the word "force" -- we have elections in this country that move us toward two parties.

They create disincentives for minor parties to form.

There's a third candidate on the ballot in most states.

Jo Jorgensen's out there.

Nobody talked about that.

That's not a knock on her or the values she presented.

I'm 100% behind electoral innovation.

I think at the state and local level that is happening and will continue to happen.

And I think back to the registration and voting reforms, it's taking place all over the country.

19 states have Election Day registration.

16 states have automatic voter registration.

So slowly but surely we're moving in that direction.

But when you get to the larger electoral system, it's going to be difficult to change.

>> ROELLKE: Yes.

Go ahead, Kelly.

Thank you.

>> SMITH: I'm a little more optimistic than Dr. Hill because I think this is actually one of the great benefits of having a lot of our electoral system decisions being made at the state and local level because this allows states to innovate and try different things out.

And then other states can learn and adopt those electoral changes if they work well.

So for example, Florida did not pass one of the amendments on the ballot in Florida.

If you voted, you saw it.

It was a top two primary option.

And that is a -- that's a really fundamental change to the way that we do our primaries in Florida.

We have a closed primary system.

So only Republicans can vote in Republican primaries and Democrats can vote in Democratic primaries.

The top two primary would just create one primary in which everybody voted and the top two vote getters would go to the general election.

So you could have two Democrats in the general election or two Republicans or et cetera.

Washington and California have started this out although it's been pretty recent.

So we're not -- we're still studying the effects of the top two primary and what they can do.

There's some limited evidence to suggest it does make some elections more competitive.

But there are definitely concerns about the hardships that it puts on minority parties and minority candidates.

So we didn't adopt that in Florida this time.

But states have democracy options to change their primary systems and to change their electoral systems.

So there's optimism there.

And maybe this doesn't change our national elections, but there's a lot of room of experimentation and states do seem to be doing that.

>> ROELLKE: Great.

Thank you.

And there's a question about -- and it's building on the questions about bringing our communities together during an election season.

And can anyone speak to the concerns that may be out there about potential violence associated with disappointment and agitation around an election result?

Amelia?

No?

That's a big one, I know.

Sharmaine?

And then Dr. Hill.

>> HILL: No, please let Sharmaine go.

It's fine.

>> JACKSON: No, no, I was just going to piggyback off my comment earlier.

Right?

It will bring people to the streets to protest.

And what will be our response?

When we bring law enforcement out in the streets to maintain and protect private property and what will their reaction be to an angry citizen?

And that lies in the hands of our leadership, I think.

And in some various law enforcement units, they're going to have to be quite creative in their own ways and decide how much community policing are they going to do and how much suppression, right?

And that's a fine line, especially dealing with an American population.

>> ROELLKE: Professor Hill?

You're good?

Okay.

We are running out of time and I would -- I want to come back to a place where we started which was striking to me.

I knew the number was large but I didn't know it was \$14 billion large that the election has a number that's at 14 billion.

What does that say about electoral politics?

And I think I heard Professor Hill suggest that this is something that's an important thing.

That makes sense.

People are engaged in the political process.

As a leader in education and finances are tough, I wondered what I could do with that 14 billion.

So anyway, I don't mean to be silly about this.

But can we talk a little bit more about the costs of our elections?

And I know we have experts here on campaign finances reform and so on.

And what that means in terms of access to our political process, what that means to access to candidacies -- I think it's a legitimate question when you hear numbers like 14 billion.

>> TORRES-SPELLISY: I'll jump in on that one.

I am very concerned about the cost of our elections.

And we should be clear.

This is money that is mostly going towards advertising.

It isn't to run the election.

That's a different budget.

That is created, you know, by the states or in some states at the local level.

And so we under-invest in election administration.

And then I think we over-invest in advertising and trying to manipulate the electorate through messaging.

>> ROELLKE: Good.

Yes, Professor Hill.

>> HILL: I just want to note, to me, it's not the amount of money spent.

I think Dr. Spelliscy is correct.

We spend more time about counting the votes.

The cost of elections because of the nature of our elections and Supreme Court rulings, et cetera, it's who's spending the money, where the money's coming from and who's spending it.

And that's unequal.

Right?

I mean, you have to have money to contribute money.

Right?

And so some voices count more than others.

There's the Supreme Court case in '74 that says spending's free speech.

Well, it's not equal free speech.

So to me, the cost is too much but it's not the number.

It's the fact that we have a system of private campaign finances that values or privileges certain voices over others.

And that from a democratic theory perspective, that's a real problem.

>> ROELLKE: Thank you.

We are running out of time.

But please on behalf of all of Stetson University and members of our community, thank you to the panelists for really an interesting conversation.

Obviously there's more conversation that needs to occur as this particular election continues to unfold in realtime.

But I thank you for the sincerity and the kindness that you brought to this conversation.

We do have some upcoming events that I do need to alert the community to.

So Julia, if you would add on a slide, we have some upcoming events that are of note.

We have additional COVID-19 testing dates.

And also you should be aware that we are going to have gateway testing available in the spring.

As we continue to try to promote the health and safety of our community not only is our current testing important, but so is our gateway testing in the spring.

And again, we also have an upcoming presentation panel discussion that's going to occur on race in the 21st century, racism and the education gap.

That is tomorrow from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Please let me remind everyone in our community where I started this conversation today was we all need to acknowledge that this is quite an interesting time and fascinating time.

And in many ways, a very difficult time for our community and for the nation.

And it's very important that we engage in self-care and community care.

So please do continue to do your very best to mitigate the transmission of this virus.

And please do look out for yourself and for others.
Thank you all very, very much.
And as I like to say, go hatters!
Thank you.