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Reporting I

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Election weighs heavy on students

Political pollsters, talking head pundits, attack ads, and controversy, thus is the American tradition of elections.

However, this year, even more so than usual, has been a particularly hard election year. Still, as of the time of writing, two weeks after the election, the losing side has refused to concede the race. With that side citing wide scale voter fraud of which there is no evidence as their reasoning to not concede.

All of this has piled onto the hard times of the American people, already rattled by a pandemic, advancements in the discussion over race, and constant issues that pop up day by day. Arguably, it could be said that all of this has piled onto the hardships of the people of the world.

Students have been particularly affected by this, many of whom voted for the first time in this election. Even here, at Pensacola State (PSC), students have reported the mental strain of this tumultuous year, with a particular focus on this election.

“It made me stressed... I was hoping it would go smoothly in one way or the other. Which it didn’t” says Katherine Ballard. Ballard was by no means alone in this regard.

Many students found themselves searching for constant updates on the vote count.

“I was watching it very closely,” Mason Andrus said, “checking it very frequently.” Mason Andrus considers himself to be a politically minded student. He actively watched the outcome of the election as the vote counts continued.

Amelia O’Malley, had a mirrored response and reported that she and her other friends were closely watching, saying, “I was watching the election, but I wasn’t watching it extremely closely. One of my friends was watching it really closely, so I ended up asking him about the election a lot.”

O’Malley continued, “I did get some anxiety just cause of how close it was and because of my family, but other than that I’d say it went pretty smoothly.”

However, it was not only the government-watching students who found their hearts heavy after another brutal election season.

Eli Smith, a dual-enrollment student, made similar reports. He largely hadn’t paid attention to the election at first. “I checked it occasionally, but I think I was watching something else at the time... maybe the Amazing Race,” said Smith.

However, he has still found himself concerned with the post-election count, particularly with claims of voter fraud. Smith said, “the people who were supposed to count it, who were supposed to witness it, were kicked out of the polling places.”

The argument over voter fraud has been a particular headache for students and election officials alike. As aforementioned, even on campus, this argument has torn into the student body.

“I feel that [the Trump campaign’s] accusations of voting fraud is ridiculous. Thankfully we live in a democracy and are allowed to have an actual opinion and voice about what happens in our country... we used that voice to vote Biden in” O’Malley said.

“I just get annoyed with it,” Andrus said, “because there is no evidence to back up said claims, so it’s just really annoying to seem making accusations without evidence or proof whatsoever.”

Both sides of the debate have appeared though, as Smith said, “they’re not unsubstantiated.”

“I believe they are based in truth, there were many cases and videos of voter fraud in many states,” Ballard said, echoing Smith’s sentiment.

Evidence of substantial voter fraud has been largely unsubstantiated and has even been refuted by GOP election overseers. An example of which being the Georgia Secretary of State, a

Republican responsible for overseeing the election, who, according to CBS News, stated, “At the end of the day, we don't see widespread voter fraud.”

However, this has not ceased the debate.

These troubling times continue on. Though the result is well known, with the incumbent continuing to contest the election, the strain on Americans will continue for some time. This all only furthering the difficulties of these students

Smith, for one, is waiting until after recounts and court decisions to settle on the result. “You know you’re recounting Georgia’s votes right?,” Smith said. He later continued, “We should look, I don’t want there to be voter fraud either way... I’d like to see what they come back with with the voter fraud, but I don’t think it’s going to end up changing anything.”

O’Malley stated a stronger sentiment, saying, “With the way that the election went, Biden is definitely going to become the President and Trump refusing to let that happen is only going to make him seem more moronic.”

Regardless of the outcome, these difficulties will continue. With continuing legal challenges and, not one, but two, senate elections in Georgia that will determine control of the Senate, the election is not quite over yet.

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