

Does Social Media Have an Effect on the Elections?

BY KALYNA XIONG

THE TIME TO VOTE is coming as elections are just around the corner. Not everyone is interested in politics, I get it, but it is important to choose someone who we think is fit to lead our country. Growing up, I was able to keep up with the elections due to school and my parents, who watched the news. Nowadays, we can just look online and see news on social media. However, how effective is social media when it comes to the election process?

When registration came around, many social networking sites inserted a small pop-up at the top of the page asking, “Are you registered yet?” followed by a link that led to the voters registration page. At first, I would shrug it off telling myself I would do it later. However, as days passed, I would go to bed every night forgetting to register. With that, it did not seem social media was helpful. However, many celebrities and influencers decided to use social media to their advantage and encouraged their followers to register and vote, from actress Lili Reinhart to Korean-American K-pop singer Eric Nam. Those who were devout followers would probably listen and do it automatically, but in some other cases people would use these as constant reminders to actually register (like me).

Life gets busy and we cannot always keep up with election updates. I admit, I’ve missed the debates on television. Part of it is because I am busy, but personally, I am also not very interested in politics, so it is difficult to sit in front of the television for an hour or two as I feel time drags on for an eternity. However, there are always clips of the debates circulating around the internet. Watching short clips for a couple hours may seem like no different from watching the actual thing, but time seems to move faster watching multiple five minute clips compared to watching one that is an hour or so.

If watching clips get too tiresome, then Instagram and Twitter are my go-to-apps. I found Instagram to be helpful as users condensed all of the main points made by each candidate and inserted them within the ten photo limit. It was made to go through quickly. Twitter has the beauty of creating threads where users can compile all of the updates under one chain of tweets.

As effective as social media can be for the elections, it only works when I surround myself with those who do care about it and posts about it, or when I decide to take the initiative myself to actually look-up information. Other than that, social media is catered for our interests and if we show no interest in the elections, it may never show up in our feed at all.

Peekers: The Underground Community of CSP Anti-Maskers

BY RYAN SKILLE

BY NOW, ANYONE ATTENDING face-to-face classes at Concordia, Saint Paul is aware of the mask mandate. All individuals, whether students, faculty, or visitors, must always be wearing a face mask whenever they are inside any building at CSP. There are some exceptions, such as inside one’s own dormitory or in certain specified practice rooms in the Buetow Music Building, but for the most part, everyone is doing their part to keep the people around them safe.

However, there are some individuals who have decided to take matters into their own hands. These people are not afraid of showing a little nostril. These individuals are law-abiding citizens that are aware that masks are required by the administration on campus, and they will be in trouble if they do not comply. Nevertheless, these students have found a loophole. Two, in fact. Individuals like these have been identified by the only term that effectively encompasses their behavior: “Peekers.”

Peekers are students who wear their masks low enough so that it covers their mouth but not their nose, so that it “peeks” out from behind the mask. There has been speculation as to whether these students are simply too lazy to pull their mask up, or if the placement is a deliberate attempt to make a political statement. We reached out to one of these alleged “Peekers” for comment.

Josiah Sandcork, a well-known student in the Lutheran Classroom Teacher program and active Peeker said this about his feelings of the seriousness of the pandemic: “I will take and follow the advice of the medical experts when they say something is serious. However, I do not trust the media portrayal of how deadly the virus is. The fact that the virus has become political gives me no faith in the media to portray it accurately.” Sandcork then details multiple individuals in his personal life who have tested positive for COVID-19 and experienced little to no severe symptoms or only a few non-severe symptoms. “The media only reports the worst of things.” Sandcork mentions. “Heart disease caused obesity is one of the leading causes of death in the country and you don’t see the media using cardiovascular problems to their advantage.”

When asked about his opinion on the effectiveness of masks, Sandcork replied, “To me, the masks are more political than they are a factor in trying to slow the spread of the virus. If that were the case, there would not be such division on something as simple as a mask. If they save lives, then let’s do it. Period.” Sandcork then compares the mandating of masks to keeping a bird in a cage. “If you asked that bird [whether it would prefer freedom or safety], it would say freedom. Why? It’s in a cage where nothing can hurt it. But it would rather take the risk of flying than living its life with no freedom where safety is guaranteed.”

Sandcork raises what some would consider a lot of good questions about the politicizing of simple safety measures, the bias of the media, and the right for one to choose their own freedom or safety. However, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, along with Dr. Anthony Fauci, “the world’s 10th most cited HIV/AIDS researcher from 1996 through 2006, the recipient of numerous prestigious awards, and who holds 38 honorary doctoral degrees from universities all over the world,” disagree (harvard.edu). The CDC states, “While people who are sick or know that they have COVID-19 should isolate at home, COVID-19 can be spread by people who do not have symptoms and do not know that they are infected. That’s why it’s important for everyone to practice social distancing (staying at least 6 feet away from other people) and wear cloth face coverings in public settings. Cloth face coverings provide an extra layer to help prevent the respiratory droplets from traveling in the air and onto other people” (cdc.gov). Dr Fauci says, “We usually say that regular particles from coughing and sneezing that are greater than 5 micrometers fall to the ground within three to six feet, but what you find out from aerosol particle scholars is they say, ‘You know, there are particles that are larger than that that are floating around a lot longer and don’t always fall to the ground. The notion is something we need to reexamine. The one thing it really does tell us that you really better wear a mask” (ama-assn.org).

There’s also the fact the severeness of COVID can vary, especially when it comes to age. The CDC says, “Among adults, the risk for severe illness from COVID-19 increases with age, with older adults at highest risk. Severe illness means that the person with COVID-19 may require hospitalization, intensive care, or a ventilator to help them breathe, or they may even die.” So yes, many students at Concordia are at lower risk of having severe symptoms if they contract COVID, but what about our and our classmates’ older family members? What about our professors? Doctors are straight up telling us that masks save lives, and even if it isn’t a life, it’s a lot of discomfort, time, and money. That’s not political, it’s facts. Wear a mask.