

How coronavirus upended my college and political worlds

By: Aidan Levinson

Four weeks ago, I boarded the Amtrak train headed to home for spring break assuming I would return to Washington, D.C., in a week.

What I didn't know is that I was going to be holed up in Zionsville for the foreseeable future, finishing the last months of my first year at American University online.

This time last month, I was immersed in semester two at AU, where my courses had me delving into the art of public policy making and American political power structures, leadership styles, and more.

I combined my scholastics and professional endeavors while keeping up with the local political scene here in the Lehigh Valley from afar: planning for this year's political contests, assisting our trailblazing representative Congresswoman Susan Wild as an intern in her office and volunteering on Team Joe to ensure the former vice president's return to the White House, this time occupying the office in the West Wing.

All of that came to a near screeching halt. My friends and I were sent home, and I will not be able to get back in the swing of Washington culture and national politics in person until I return in August, five long months away.

A lot has changed in the few weeks I have been home. The coronavirus has infected every corner of our nation, and the Lehigh Valley is no exception. The virus has touched everyone's lives. Political activities have been turned upside down, as well.

And some of these changes have been groundbreaking and will change politics for each one of us.

On March 27th, Gov. Wolf signed legislation officially moving the primary election to Tuesday, June 2. It may sound a simple change to some, but it turned the lives of political consultants, candidates and election officials upside down.

Campaign plans are being changed left and right, and operations are being moved online as much as possible. I am attending up to at least 10 Zoom web conference meetings a week, whether they're for volunteer events or political planning discussions.

The shining light at the end of this tunnel has been the new opportunity for all Pennsylvanians to vote by mail.

Thanks to the leadership of Gov. Wolf and State Sen. Lisa Boscola, [Act 77](#) was signed into law. It put a number of voting reforms into place including the ability to apply for a mail-in ballot as a means of fulfilling our duty to vote.

For political consultants, candidates and the general populous alike, voting by mail presents a safe option for voting while opening up the opportunity to increase participation in elections. Given the circumstances we are under with coronavirus, all citizens who are registered to vote should take this opportunity to vote by mail.

At a time when sheltering in place — while still making sure that people provide a check on our elected representatives — could never be more important, voting by mail provides an opportunity to cover both of those bases while making sure the voters' voices are heard.

Now that I am 18 years old, I cannot wait for the first time I can walk into my polling place up the road from where I'm writing this and cast my ballot in person. But for the time being, voting by mail allows me to do my part in keeping our community safe and healthy, while making sure we march toward the November general election in support of Democratic nominees who are committed to fighting for the common woman and man.

In my position as a political operative and son of a physician at Lehigh Valley Health Network, I get inside glimpses at much of the current happenings in our community. I have been impressed by the sense of community, duty and leadership that has developed in the Valley and across our nation during this unprecedented health crisis.

So, stay home. Stay strong. And register at votespa.com for your mail-in ballot. We will get through these troubling times together.

Aidan Levinson, who lives in Zionsville, is a freshman at American University, a Democratic political consultant, and candidate for delegate to the 2020 Democratic National Convention.

This story was originally published in [The Morning Call](#) Opinion section on April 1st, 2020.