

Changing Views on Government and Politics

Hunter Peoples – May 17, 2020

Throughout this pandemic, I have definitely watched a lot more news. I have become more interested in everyday political issues because I feel like I should be informed before I make opinions. For pretty much my entire life, I have been a conservative. I believe that government should have a limited role in people's everyday lives, and I believe that mass government programs can end up hurting the average person in the long run and contribute to long-term economic troubles.

When Governor Gavin Newsom declared a stay-at-home order here in California, I was furious at the immediate onset. Schools were closing, restaurants were beginning to close, and everyone was being told to do things that they had never been told to do before at such a high capacity. But throughout the first month of the shutdown, I began to understand why it was happening. The virus was spreading across the country and the number of new cases and the number of deaths were continuing to increase state by state. I would watch every night on the news about how people were dying, what their stories were, and how overwhelmed hospitals were becoming, especially in places like New York City.

The main reason for the shutdowns, most governors across the country were saying, was to "flatten the curve". The goal became leveling out the number of new cases and deaths. This slowly began to happen as the White House worked with states on solutions as well as providing assistance to the hardest hit areas. The curves in each state began to flatten throughout April. While the White House and President Trump at times declared victory, some states were still suffering mass numbers of new cases. The White House eventually outlined a 14-day plan for reopening eventually. People were anxious to go back to normal as it seemed like the whole world had shut down. But as states began to reopen like Georgia and Florida, other states and politicians criticized their efforts, saying they were just putting more people at risk. I decided to look at the facts about the claims that officials were making. I found that the coronavirus was affecting states all differently, not all states were the same when it came to the number of new cases and the number of deaths. I soon began to realize that state governments should be able to make their own decisions about opening back up.

When I turn on the local news here in Sacramento, I see that Governor Newsom continues to claim that everything that is happening in response to the coronavirus is in the name of public health. He talks about how his closure of the beaches, state parks, restaurants, and other public areas must remain in place to ensure California comes back the right way. I have looked deeply into this and have done research on what exactly the public health experts have been saying about lockdowns. In general, all of the government control that is taking place all across the country right now has made me, at times, furious at the immense power that our leaders have. As a conservative, I am skeptical every time a government, local, state, or federal, tries to implement a broad policy that everyone must follow.

This pandemic has also taught me a lot about the economy. While I have taken economics in high school and college, I never truly knew how influential the economy is on people. I also did not consider how complex the U.S economy was until the shutdowns of major industries began. The domino effect has been felt by everyone in the country.

I believe that policies should not be blindly followed just because a politician says we should follow them. Even if they claim to have a legitimate reason for their implementation, each individual should do

the research on their own to make their own opinions. I first heard about the coronavirus back in January when news came out of China that a virus was spreading. I never thought that it would reach the United States, let alone thought it would lead to a literal change in everyday life of each American. But as the shutdowns began, particularly at my university in California, Sacramento State, I became very worried about the future. I made a promise to myself that I would do lots of research, watch the news from both sides of the political aisle, and make my own opinions based on the facts. I think that this pandemic has forever changed my outlook on government intervention in everyday life. I hope that others will look at the orders that have been implemented during this crisis and keep them in mind when voting for political leaders in coming elections.

While I have always been skeptical of government intervention, I am even more skeptical now. I have no idea what the next year will look like in terms of which regulations will be passed. I think that is very important however, no matter what happens, that people protect their civil liberties and their way of life.