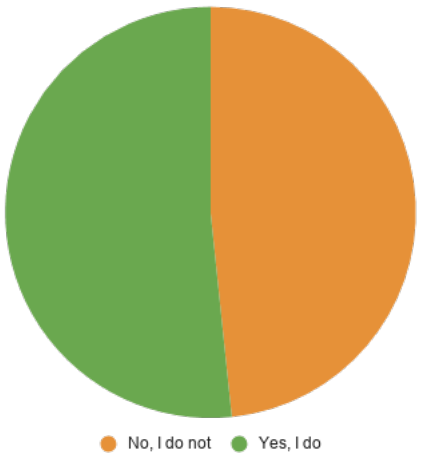
What's Your Opinion?

Last week, we asked students if they wanted to return to campus after Thanksgiving Break.
Out of 91 responses, here are the results:
Yes, I do -- 47
No, I do not -- 44



Next Week's Poll:

Vote Vote Vote Vote Vote
From registration to casting your ballot, how easy or difficult was your voting experience?

Students can answer the poll and find previous poll results on The Herald's website, **theherald.home.blog**, or on The Herald's Instagram page, **@astate-herald**. Website polls are posted on Wednesdays and Instagram polls are posted on Mondays.

These and future articles can be found on the Opinion section of The Herald's website. All comics and memes can be found in the Comics section.

Election Questions Answered

LILY CABIBI-WILKIN

OPINION EDITOR



Lily Cabibi-Wilkin is a junior music composition major from Hot Springs.

Election Day was yesterday, and now the country waits to hear the results as states finish collecting and tallying ballots. There are many uncertainties and questions floating around, especially for those of us voting in a presidential election for the first time.

When will results be reported?

Arkansas will have "unofficial results" at the end of election night, according to FiveThirtyEight. The New York Times says to expect "nearly all votes" to be reported by noon today. Early in-person votes are often counted first.

The data differs for the rest of the country. In Alaska, for example, in-person voting will be counted first, with mail and absentee ballots counted a week later. Florida expects to still be counting mail ballots through today. Louisiana has no timing estimates at all.

Under federal law, states have until Dec. 8 before the meeting of the Electoral College to count ballots and settle disputes. Despite this, many news stations will speculate based on available results.

What is the Electoral College and why does it matter?

If you're like me and haven't thought too hard about the words "Electoral College" since your "Schoolhouse Rock!" days, here's a quick breakdown.

Each state gets a set number of electors based on the number of members of Congress it has. Arkansas, for example, has six electors. Electors are selected on Election Day by the winning political party. Then, six days later (Dec.14), the electors vote on separate ballots for president and vice president. If a presidential candidate gets the majority of electoral votes (270 is the magic number), they win the electoral vote. There is no constitutional or federal law that requires electors to vote the same way as the popular vote (which is the total number of votes received on Election Day -- including yours, assuming you voted), but some states require that electors vote for the same candidate as the popular vote.

Why is the Electoral College important? To be honest, I'm not sure. Sources I've read (such as the National Conference of State Legislatures) say the Electoral College "prevents states with larger populations from having undue influence."

Important Dates:
Nov. 3 -- Election Day
Dec. 8 -- States confirm votes
Dec. 14 -- Electors vote
Jan. 6 -- Congress counts electoral votes
Jan. 20 -- Inaguration Day

Maybe that was true when America was founded, but now we have states with larger populations getting more electoral votes than states with smaller populations. For example, California has 55 electoral votes, compared to the three votes in Wyoming. Doesn't that give California a larger influence?

I definitely don't understand the Electoral College well enough to debate its merits, but hopefully now you've come out with slightly more knowledge. If not, don't worry, I'm in the same boat.

What am I supposed to do now?

Aside from cautiously watching the news and practicing self-care? There's not much you can do once your ballot is cast. However, keep an eye on local elections going forward. Donate to those in need. Find a way to reach out to your loved ones and make sure they're OK, especially if they're marginalized minorities. Donate to a local food bank or homeless shelter. Find a way to make someone's life better around you, even if it's just one person. Make a snack you haven't had in awhile that makes you happy. And above all, give yourself credit for having made it through a presidential election. If you voted, know that you did all you could. If you didn't vote (and would have been able to), watch the results and think about voting in the next election. Elections are a big way us laymen can affect our country, and even if this one doesn't turn out the way we want, it's always good to do what you can.

Craighead County A "Red Zone"

LILY CABIBI-WILKIN

OPINION EDITOR

It seems like every week for the past month, Gov. Asa Hutchinson has held a press conference to update the public on Arkansas' response to the coronavirus. It seems like every day, I wake up to news that Craighead county has the most cases in the state, or the third most cases in the state, or is in the top five. Despite this, campus is still open, and nothing has changed. Why?

As of production, Arkansas has a total of 114,519 total cases. Over the last 14 days, total cases have risen from 98,961 (Oct. 18), and the CEO of St. Bernards, Chris Barber, said that Northeast Arkansas saw a 112% increase in hospitalized COVID-19 patients in the month of October.

On Oct. 28, the White House Coronavirus Task Force said that Craighead and five other NEA counties are in the "red zone" for COVID-19 cases, and recommended rapid tests and isolations. The term "red zone" indicates "101 or more new cases per 100,000 population" according to a state report from Oct. 25.

The state report also says that, "what worked in the summer is not working in the fall with cooler weather," and recommends a different strategy for reducing transmission that considers "COVID-19 fatigue."

I can certainly understand COVID-19 fatigue. I often struggle to remember to distance from friends when I get to hang out in groups. Sometimes, when I snack at work, I leave my mask off for a moment longer than I probably should. I definitely am not washing my masks as often as I should, but anyone who has used the laundry room in Northpark Quads will understand my reluctance to do laundry.

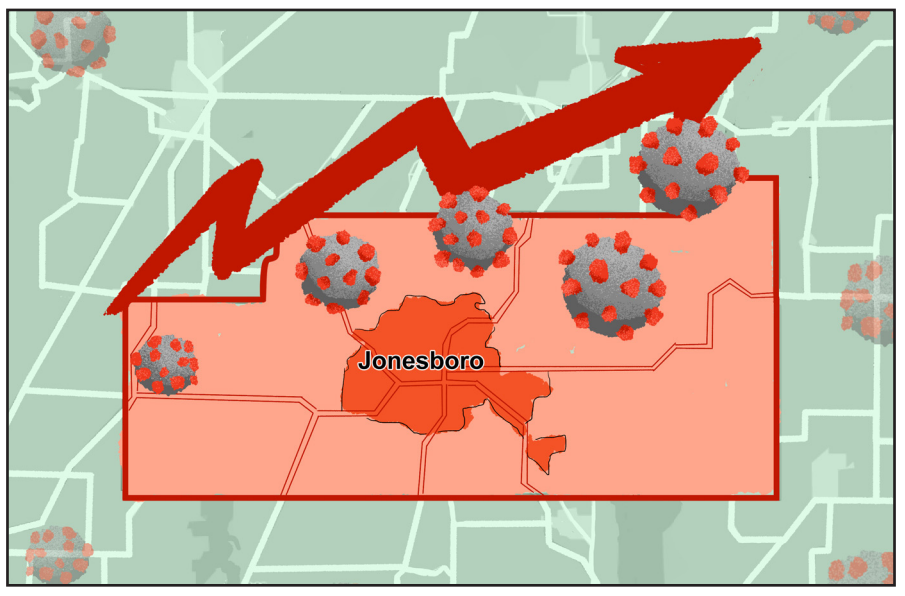
Along with my small action, there are times I see people on campus not following COVID-19 rules to the letter. Sometimes multiple people will stand on the same dot in line at Flex locations. But there are also a lot of larger parties and activities going on on campus, and I have to wonder if they're really a good idea when we're in a "red zone."

I do watch the number of cases on campus, which is much smaller than the number of cases in the county (33 to 4,972). I do feel like the parts of campus I see on a regular basis are following the rules. But I also feel a bit nervous at the idea that the cases in the county are growing by the day, and nothing is being said or changed on campus. The last email we students received regarding COVID-19 boiled down to "keep doing what you're doing," and that feels like a platitude in the context of what's going on around us.

I want to make it clear that this is not a callout for A-State's administration. I understand running a university is stressful, and I understand not wanting to panic the student body by pointing out the spike in cases. But we're college students in a global pandemic and an election year. We are always going to be panicked. Panic, much like my schoolwork, is something I struggle with daily.

It's not that I outright want campus to be shut down, either. If it turns out that campus is safer than the rest of the county because we've been following social distancing and sanitization rules better than the general public, then of course I'd want to stay.

I just think that transparency about the situation is the best policy, and it would comfort me to know that my school's administration is reviewing the county's COVID-19 numbers and adjusting campus policy to reflect them. It would definitely matter more to me than just another email saying, "make sure to distance and wash your hands!"



ART BY THINH VU | CONTENT CREATOR

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