



MO ELLEITHEE

Executive Director of Georgetown University's Institute of Politics and Public Service.

Mo Elleithee is the founding Executive Director of Georgetown University's Institute of Politics and Public Service, the first institute of its kind in the nation's capital.

Before launching the institute in 2015, Mo spent two decades as one of the top communications strategists in the Democratic Party, most recently as Communications Director and Chief Spokesman of the Democratic National Committee. A veteran of four presidential campaigns, Mo was Senior Spokesman and Traveling Press Secretary on Hillary Clinton's 2008 campaign. He served as a senior advisor and strategist for Senator Tim Kaine's campaigns for Governor and U.S. Senate and has worked on numerous other statewide and local races in every region of the country.

A frequent political commentator on television and radio, Mo was named a FOX News contributor in 2016. He was a founding partner of Hilltop Public Solutions, one of Washington's leading political consulting and public affairs firms. He's been recognized on Washington Life Magazine's "Power 100" list; as a "Top Influencer" by Campaigns & Elections Magazine; and featured on Washingtonian Magazine's "Guest List."

Mo earned his undergraduate degree from Georgetown's School of Foreign Service, and an M.A. in Political Management from The George Washington University.

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In general terms, how concerned about politics is young people nowadays?

I think young people care a great deal about key issues like the climate crisis, economic security, justice and equity. But while we saw strong voter turnout from young people in the last election, I don't think they see politicians as the solution. We are instead seeing a great deal of youth activism at level truly unseen since the 1960s.

What do the younger generations expect of global leaders today? Is easy for them to find referents in line with their future expectations?

Young voters care about justice and equity and expect their leaders to live up to those ideals. They are frustrated by a lack of results and are increasingly demanding that their leaders get things done.

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How may a lack of political and intellectual leadership affect the implication of young people in public life? Is individual activism an alternative option?

As evidenced by the global Climate Strike in 2019, and the March for Our Lives (demanding action on gun control in the United States), young people

have demonstrated that they are willing to take action themselves when they feel that political leaders are not being responsive to their needs. At the same time, there is concern that they become so disenchanted with the process, that they choose not to participate. That could have tremendous consequences for their generation. As we saw with the Brexit vote in the UK, young people overwhelmingly wanted to remain in the EU, but young voter turnout was low, allowing older voters to carry the leave position to victory. By not participating, young people —who will live with the consequences of that vote for much longer— allowed seniors to set the course of the future instead of doing so themselves.

Launched in the fall of 2015, the Georgetown Institute of Politics and Public Service is dedicated to reconnecting young people with the notion that politics is a noble vehicle for public service. How has the organization fulfilled its purpose in these five and a half years?

It hasn't been easy. The past few years have seen a political system more polarized than anytime since the tumultuous 1960s. What has encouraged me, however, is seeing young people come to our Institute with a real desire to break

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through the polarization. We continue to offer them opportunities to engage productively across their differences, and they are seizing those opportunities —unlike many of the current political practitioners.

In March 2021, the “American Rescue Plan” was passed by the U.S. Congress to stimulate the economy after the dramatic consequences of the COVID-19 crisis. How will it work and how effective do you think this exceptional \$1.9 trillion bill would be?

There are three parts to the Biden economic agenda in his first year. The “American Rescue Plan” which focused on immediate COVID-relief; the “American Jobs Plan” which offers an unprecedented investment in national infrastructure as a tool for jobs creation; and the “American Families Plan” which expands the social safety net. While critics point to the cost of these proposals as a sign of government overreach, the President and his allies have been highlighting the direct impact each initiative will have on people’s lives. We have already seen faster than expected

economic growth as a result of the passage of the first plan, which further bolsters the President’s argument.

Given the actual context of upraising social and political polarization in the U.S., especially after the 2020 election outcome, how necessary would it be to integrate this reality in the economic and social policymaking process developed by the new Administration to face the consequences of COVID-19?

This is one of the biggest challenges we face today. In a recent poll conducted by our Institute, a plurality of Americans believe that political division is the greatest issue facing our country. While the



policy making process needs to address this, that won't be enough. Every single major institution in the United States —Government, Wall Street, Silicon Valley, academia, the media— faces a crisis of trust (with the exception of the military which is the only major institution that public polling shows people feel positively about). Until more institutions figure out how tackle this problem, the polarization will be difficult to overcome.

After COVID-19, how necessary is for Governments to keep updated the conditions of their current public policies and their mid/long-term objectives, and consequently, to revise their expectations in public investment?

It's critical.

You have devoted more than 20 years of your professional career to presidential campaigns. In your view, how has former President Trump's strategy shocked the game rules of conventional politics?

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President Trump tapped into a populist sentiment that was on the rise due to people's distrust of institutions. Rather than offer a way to restore that trust, he spent every day of his presidency stoking the anger even further. Rather than take his loss in 2020 as a rejection of that, his supporters and the broader Republican Party are doubling down, continuing to attack institutions (and democracy itself). If that trajectory doesn't change, it could have profound effects by either further eroding trust to the point of no return, or by destroying the Party of Lincoln from within. And we may not know which result wins out for quite some time.

