

The Mount Observer

“Voices of the students of Mount Wachusett Community College”

2005

15 YEARS

2020

PREVIEWS



A Tumultuous Replacement

With the death of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg on September 18th, the United States will see what could be the most tumultuous appointment of a Supreme Court Justice ever seen in this country.

For the full article, see page 3

A Science Fiction Paradise

As of November of 2019, when the 1989 movie *Bladerunner* took place, we have been living in the future, as foretold by science fiction writers of days past.

For the article, see page 6

Letters to Our Neighbors

In the age of COVID-19 and quarantine, students were asked to pay closer attention to the areas immediately around their homes and write letters to those who may have gone unnoticed before.

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No-Show at the Voting Booth

Nearly half of those eligible to vote in MA do not

By Dylan Quigley
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Despite how important it is, and how much simpler the process has become, a mere 60% of eligible voters in Massachusetts do so.

Registering to vote is now easier than it has ever been. Social media sites like *Instagram*, *Twitter*, and *SnapChat* have features which ask if you have registered yet and will give you a link to register in your state. A good website to register or find out if you are still registered is turbovote.org. It's super easy to use and can also be accessed in Spanish.

According to the United States Census Bureau there are about 7 million people in Massachusetts and about 20 percent of that number are persons under the age of 18. That means there are about 5.6 million eligible voters in MA. According to the Secretary of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts's website, 4.5 million people are registered to vote in MA and only about



Image from pixabay

3 million of those people are casting votes in state elections. According to the United States Election Project only about 50% of Americans who can vote are voting. This number spikes to around 60% when it is a presidential election year, but that still leaves 40% of eligible people who are not voting. Citizens in higher age groups are the ones voting the

most, and the youngest age group (18-29) votes the least. One of SGA president Aidan Lane's thoughts on voting is "It is a good thing to realize what we don't know." In other words, it's alright for people's opinions to when they're confronted with new information about an issue. Keeping an open mind on issues when it comes time to vote will give people a good perspective

on the issues at hand and be allow them to make informed decisions.

If the reason you don't vote is because you don't feel educated enough about the elections, a good source to check out is isidewith.com. The website has a quiz made up of issues that are relevant to the country at the

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"Voter No-Show" >>>

Hands-On Learning from Home?

Remote learning is negatively impacting trade schools

By Dylan Quigley
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Most of the small businesses that are actively coming into our homes and working on our plumbing and electrical are not in danger of going out of business and they are still getting as much of the work as they were before. However, the men and women running these businesses are worried that their

tradespeople who are still taking online classes aren't going to get the education that they need. Electricians and plumbers have said that the curriculums that they are supposed to be learning have changed with the new online classes, and that puts their education in jeopardy and in turn puts our society in jeopardy.

Mount Wachusett Community

College and Quinsigamond Community College have teamed up and gotten a new facility for the automotive technology programs for each school. Both schools will be utilizing the space for the fall semester and will be taking all necessary precautions to keep the students safe. This is a great example of a community realizing the consequences of

automotive technology students not having a place to learn and taking charge to make sure they have a safe facility to get the experience needed.

Although many of these tradespeople are worried about their upcoming future, many of the trade high schools have opened back up. One school

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Voter No-Show Trade School at Home

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time. After filling out the quiz you will get your results and they tell you what candidate your answers align with the most.

We live in a very technologically driven age and information has never been more available than it is now. Research the issues you find most important to yourself and form an opinion based on multiple sources. It's good to start with local issues, like what's going on in your town/city. Then move to state issues like Senators and state ballot questions. Ballot questions are important cause they are petitioned by citizens and are usually important to local communities.

If a person wants to get involved with local politics or just wants to know more about what is going on in their area, there are a few things they can do. One important is to attend town/city meetings and listen and another reach out to local

representatives and share your concerns and interests. SGA President Lane was an intern for Massachusetts House of Representatives member Natalie Higgins and helped respond to citizens and set up meetings with the representatives.

In Massachusetts if you want a mail in ballot you need to request to be sent one. If a person doesn't want to mail in their ballot, they can go on their town's webpage or call their town clerk to find out how voting in person is being planned in their town due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Not only is it important to vote for President because they become the leader of the country, but one should also take a close look at their state elections too. Voting is a right and a freedom, and every citizen should feel comfortable enough and educated enough to cast their votes without judgment or pressure from what may be popular opinion at the time.

Voting for Number One Ranked-choice voting and why it works

By Nicholas Papini
EDITOR IN CHIEF

Ranked-choice voting is overall a better method to use for voting than the current first-past-the-post voting.

First and foremost, ranked-choice voting helps to ensure that the candidate that wins is the candidate that the citizens most desire. Unlike in a first-past-the-post system, ranked-choice voting ensures that the winning candidate has more than 50% of the total vote.

With ranked-choice voting, each citizen votes for multiple candidates, giving each one a rank based on which is their first, second, third choice, and so on. The ballots are then counted and, if one candidate does not hold the majority of the votes, then the last place finisher is eliminated. Votes with that person ranked first will then have their votes put in for whoever they ranked second. This process repeats until

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"Voting for Number One" >>>



Image from pixabay

Students wishing to learn trades, such as plumbing, are having a more difficult time than most with adjusting to online courses in the age of COVID-19.

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that is doing this is Leominster Center for Technical Education and Innovation; Classes are limited to the amount of people in the shops at once, but our students who are interested in learning the trades are getting a chance to do it first-hand. The Greater Lowell Technical High School is also doing something similar; students are allowed in the shops at limited numbers and are continuing to watch the

license) are taking virtual classes to learn the codes and regulations for their trades. This seems unnecessary and possible because the in-person teacher to student experience is important for learning the proper codes and regulations in these trades. This is also arguably unnecessary because these people are still working in the field because they are essential workers and making

getting as much business as they normally would. Therefore, a lot of these shops are losing a lot of money and contracts due to not having the staff on to take them.

Culinary students have also taken a hit from this virus. These students work in restaurants under skilled chefs and bakers, and due to the pandemic, a lot of these restaurants and bakeries have had to close and/or lay-off workers. The workers that got laid-off the most are the ones with least seniority in the business, i.e. culinary students.

"This is also arguably unnecessary because these people are still working in the field because they are essential workers and making them do classes online when they are already in danger of infection every day may just be endangering our communities for nothing."

- Dylan Quigley

data from COVID-19 and are continuously making changes to keep everyone safe. These are also great examples of communities realizing what they have to do to secure the future of our tradespeople.

Electrical and plumbing apprentices who are working in the field under licensed workers (workers who have already gotten journeyman or master's

classes online when they are already in danger of infection every day may just be endangering our communities for nothing.

It's important to note that not only plumbers and electricians are being affected, but all other trades are too. Some machine shops had to lay off workers just to keep their shops open due to the pandemic, and they are still

COVID-19 has impacted many different facets of our society, from how we shop to how we work and learn. Much of what a global pandemic has affected is still yet to come, these are things we are seeing hints of like economic depression and dramatic changes to how our society runs. Many of the jobs that keep our infrastructure strong like electricians, plumbers, auto technicians, culinary students, and many more essential occupations are also being affected and as a society it is important to pay attention to these effects and try to prepare for the consequences.

Voter Registration Deadlines

Online: October 24

By Mail: Postmarked by October 24

In-Person: October 24

A Tumultuous Replacement

Justice Ginsburg's death may spell trouble for the future



Photo by John Mathew Smith & www.celebrity-photos.com

Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, 1933 – 2020

By Kristopher Madden
ASSISTANT EDITOR

With the death of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg on September 18th, the United States will see what could be the most tumultuous

appointment of a Supreme Court Justice ever seen in this country. President Donald Trump is already moving to appoint his own choice to replace Justice Ginsburg, only 45 days prior to the election, one that is being

called the most important presidential election in the history of the United States.

The problem that many of his opponents have with this potential nomination is that in February 2016 President Barack Obama was faced with a similar opportunity to name a Supreme Court Justice with the death of Justice Antonin Scalia. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell issued a statement in 2016 that it would be in the best interests of the American people to wait until after the Presidential Election to appoint Justice Scalia's replacement.

Knowing what was at stake with her passing, Justice Bader Ginsburg dictated a statement to her daughter which said simply, "My most fervent wish is that I will not be replaced until a new president is installed." This alone should be a signal to American voters that her replacement nomination should be delayed, but "Moscow" Mitch McConnell, now known for undermining democracy, is actively trying to push President Trump to appoint a nomination as soon as possible, directly contradicting his 2016 argument.

The reason behind this is that McConnell doesn't care

about the American people, he cares that his own party's interests and therefore his own interests are benefitted. Donald Trump has already set his sights on ignoring Justice Ginsburg's request, suggesting in an interview with Fox and Friends that the letter was instead penned by Nancy Pelosi or Chuck Schumer, his longtime rivals.

Justice Antonin Scalia died in February of 2016, eight months prior to the election. Justice Bader Ginsburg died only 46 days before the 2020 Presidential Election, and McConnell is now trying to justify President Trump's nomination of her replacement. A third Supreme Court nomination from President Trump is sure to tilt the scales to a conservative majority for decades to come, as a Supreme Court Justice nomination is a lifetime appointment. Currently, the Supreme Court sits at a GOP majority, with five of the seated justices being appointed by Republican presidents, and with the death of Justice Bader Ginsburg only three justices remain appointed by Democrat presidents.

Justice Bader Ginsburg was known as a champion for

women's rights as well as a deciding vote in many pivotal Supreme Court decisions. The deportation of DREAMers, the immigrants from south of our southern US Border, as well as upholding of abortion precedent and banning of mass gatherings during the coronavirus are all issues that Justice Bader Ginsburg was fighting to protect during her last days, and with her death and inevitable replacement by the current president, the outcome for all of those cases has come into serious question.

Though President Trump has expressed interest in nominating a woman to replace Justice Ginsburg, an appointment from Trump is contradictory to what Mitch McConnell said in 2016, months prior to the election. It's not only hypocritical, it's an attempt to secure GOP ideals in our justice system, just in case the White House shifts away from Republican control. If Mitch McConnell is going to demand that a Democratic president delay his Supreme Court nomination, then he needs to demand that a Republican president does the same. And so too do the American people.

Voting for Number One

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a candidate holds the majority, or more that 50 percent of the vote.

The *Boston Globe* article on the ballot question co-written by Senator Elizabeth Warren and Representative Jamie Raskin says that ranked-choice voting has historically caused politics to become more constructive. "Everywhere it has been adopted, it has replaced the politics of personal destruction with positive coalition politics," the article says.

For example, let's say a candidate runs an attacking ad against one of their opponents

in the primaries. The fans of their opponent who see that ad will have a poor opinion on the candidate that endorses it and may give them a very low ranking on their ballot. With ranked-choice voting, candidates will be more incentivized to run positive ads that focus on their similarities and form blocs based on similar policies.

These blocs help to prevent vote splitting from occurring according to *FairVote*. Vote splitting refers to when the votes are split between similar candidates in a primary, causing a candidate with different

policies to win despite receiving fewer overall votes.

Ranked-choice voting is the ideal method to use if there are a large number of candidates on the ballot. While many may be skeptical of its use in a country like the US where we have a 2-party system, the primaries are an entirely different matter.

A February 10 *NY Times* article on the subject asserts that one of the primary downsides to ranked-choice voting is that voting becoming a bit more complicated could lead to lower voter turnout. Some historical data, such as Maine's voting

turnout since imposing ranked-choice voting, runs counter to that sentiment.

In a November 3, 2016 article, *Democracy Journal* proposes that, a large portion of Americans are unsure if their vote would be correctly counted and making that process more complicated would only exacerbate the issue.

This is a valid point, but not one that I believe will be worsened should ranked-choice voting come to be.

The MA Secretary of State's packet of information regarding the ballot questions states that one downside to ranked-choice

voting's is that it makes it more difficult for voters to make informed choices. This is true, though it would be mitigated by the formation of voting blocs among candidates who are like-minded. They would have an idea of each candidate's policies based on which bloc they belong to.

Those interested in more information about either ballot question can follow this link to the MA Secretary of State Website: https://www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/elepdf/IFV_2020.pdf

To whoever is stealing the signs...

By *Olivia Ouellet*
OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

To the person or people who steal my neighbors "BLM" (Black Lives Matter) signs constantly, why? We live in a town that has a good relationship with our police department as well as diverse political stand points, but I see the posts on the town Facebook page and I see for myself when I look out my living room window every morning.

Is it because you are against BLM? Or is it because you are a "back the blue" supporter? Are you trying to prove your patriotism? Doesn't it matter to you that this country was built to allow freedom of speech? Or maybe you are just someone who is messing with our community to start meaningless fights on the Internet.

**To the mother struggling with homeschooling children...**

By *Megan O'Dell*
OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Schools in Leominster reopened and started their classes again. Many of the schools in Leominster are doing online/remote learning due to COVID-19; however, some schools and/or programs have opened their doors for the public. Schools such as Leominster Center for Excellence and Center for Technical Education Innovation have reopened and Leominster High School has reopened their special education program as well.

Most students are sitting in front of their computer while watching their teacher and classmates talk over a zoom call. For students that are in high school and middle school, most of them have gotten used to the idea of online learning due to having to do online classes since March; however, many students that are in elementary school are not having the best of luck.

When finding out classes would all be online again, many parents were outraged when they found out that their children would not be able to return to their classes and would have to stay at home. Many parents argued that their kids have to go back to school due to some parents being essential workers, while other parents argued that their kids had to go back due to their child needing special accommodations.

With parents working and having to help their children with their schoolwork, many parents are hoping that by the beginning of 2021, students will be able to get back to in person classes. Pamela Loughran is one of many parents who are essential workers in Leominster and she hopes that school will go back to normal so her son can get the help he needs.

"I feel that it's very stressful because one, I am not a teacher and also I have to work at the same time that I am trying to help my son," said Loughran. "I'm not computer literate so a lot of the things I don't understand. I am hoping that kids will be able to go back to school even if it's only part time. Students need the interaction between them and their teacher in person."

As Loughran is preparing her son for possibly a whole year of online learning, many other parents are doing the same thing. Leominster residents must wait until the first of November to hear if there is any chance for the children to be able to do in person classes yet again.

Until then students must do all their work online and parents have to move their schedule around to help their children in any way they can. As the students think about work and think about what they want to be for Halloween or what they want for Christmas, the only day that their parents are focused on is November first.

**Letters
to Our Neighbors****To the British-American
Club down the street...**

By *Alex Ruehlicke*
OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

Since recently moving into my new apartment, I've been struck with immense curiosity driving past this lonely building on the side of the road each day. The sign on the building reads "British-American Club." No cars parked out front and no lights or customers to be seen inside. Could it be due to COVID? Is it the construction nearby? Regardless of why, it being closed only adds to my curiosity.

I must admit, my first thought about the British-American club was that having a nice place to grab a cheap beer within walking distance of my home is nice. But, after pondering the origin of my interest in this place, I realized the true reason for my desire to join can be attributed to the story of how my Grandparents met each other. I don't remember much of the story, only that they met at a German-Canadian club in Calgary, Alberta. With my grandfather being German and my grandmother British, and both of them having lived through World War II it was the irony of the story that made it stick.

It is this memory of my childhood that explains why I don't see this building on the side of the road as just a cheap beer, but instead I see the endless possibilities and experiences to be had. Where rare conversations are conceived, and where otherwise impossible relationships become possible.

So to the owners of the British-American Club, I can only hope that your business opens back up in the future, and, when it does, I hope you'll welcome me as your newest member.

**To the drummer down the
street who has a sick beat...**

By *Angela Risotti*
OBSERVER CONTRIBUTOR

The kid around the corner is always banging on his drums, from the first morning light until the evening comes. When I walk around the block and I hear a familiar tune, it adds a little pep to my step and a smile slowly creeps upon my face.

Sometimes you go for hours and sometimes you go for a few minutes, but when it is that time of the day, I make sure to sit outside and enjoy the personal performance. Hearing the progress you have made throughout these last few years, and especially during this quarantine, really goes to show that hard work does pay off.

I see how you have moved on from practicing in the basement of your small house to the big, red shed that your parents built for this noisy hobby; perhaps it was a better decision so you finally have the space to play as you please. I find it funny how the quietest couple in the whole entire neighborhood somehow created the noisiest child by introducing him to one of the most powerful and controlling instruments.



THE MOUNT OBSERVER
VOLUME 15, ISSUE 2
October 7, 2020

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A Science Fiction Paradise

2020 is a great year to be a sci-fi fan



Image from pixabay

By Kristopher Madden

ASSISTANT EDITOR

As of November of 2019, when the 1989 movie *Bladerunner* took place, we have been living in the future, as foretold by science fiction writers of days past. Unfortunately, we rolled some bad dice and wound up in a dystopian nightmare of corruption, oppression and global pandemic instead of flying cars and moon colonization. The good news is that this is an excellent time to be a fan of the science fiction genre in all forms, with numerous works across different mediums coming out in the near future.

Science fiction loving gamers have a lot to look forward to in the coming days. It may seem like the world has gone mad outside your front door, but luckily you don't need to wander out into it to find your own new adventure. The releases of Sony's Playstation 5 and Microsoft's Xbox Series X, both due to launch later this year, will each bring an amazing new library of titles available to sci-fi gamers.

"The best thing about any newly launched console is that there's no telling for sure what titles are going to be released after launch. Everyone talks

about launch titles like they're the only ones that matter, but I really feel like what we're going to get later is going to blow us all away. I can't wait to see the next generation of gaming, but I say that every time a new console launches," said Ben Smith, sales associate at Gamestop. "With all the great movies coming out this year, we're gonna have some great spinoff titles."

The tabletop gaming community has been abuzz recently with the release of Warhammer 40,000's 9th Edition, showcasing not only exciting new rules and narrative campaigns, but most excitingly new models for almost every playable army including the Sisters of Battle, Necron, Chaos and of course, the Space Marines. "I feel like if 2020 has given us one good thing, it's 9th Edition [of Warhammer 40,000]." says popular *YouTube* personality, GershOne of OneMindSyndicate. "Whether you're new to Warhammer or you're a veteran player and master of the lore, exciting things are happening, and with new Codexes and editions of the game come out, that means new novels and progression in a story that's been panning out for

almost 30 years already."

December will bring Denis Villeneuve's long-awaited remake of *Dune*, scheduled for release on the 18th. Adapted from Frank Herbert's 1965 science fiction novel of the same name, *Dune* will follow the interstellar conflict between the noble House Atreides and the evil House Harkonnen in the year 10,191. Fans of tabletop strategy games that want to revisit the desert planet of Arakkis and fight for control of the Spice Melange for themselves will be excited to see the tabletop strategy game *Dune*, released alongside the film.

Fans that would rather binge a series from the comfort of their own home can rest assured that there is plenty in store for them as well. Apple TV has announced a television adaptation of Isaac Asimov's *Foundation* series. The series is highly acclaimed, chronicling the rise and fall of an interstellar human empire, paralleling the Roman Empire. The second season of *The Mandalorian* will premiere on Disney+ October 30th and has fans of the series speculating exciting things for their favorite bounty hunter and his familiar green companion. Will *Star Wars* fans finally learn where

The Child comes from? You'll have to watch to find out.

Should nothing unexpected happen, the 46th annual Boston Science Fiction Film Festival will begin on February 10th, 2021. Due to COVID restrictions, the details of the film festival are currently not concrete, but fans of science fiction will be treated to a collection of both classic and amateur films in Boston's historic Somerville Theatre. The festival will conclude on February 15th with The Marathon: The Original Binge Viewing, a 24-hour motion picture endurance test.

Our future is undetermined and many of us question what tomorrow will bring, but the fictional realities that inspired our own brave new world will help us explore new and exciting locales, characters and adventures. If tomorrow's headlines always give you a pit in your stomach a day early, you'll be relieved to know that the future still holds hope for new and exciting things. You may not be able to visit Mars or fight for the Imperium of Mankind yourself yet, but science fiction will always bring a future of your choosing.