

Q: What political ramifications do you expect from the coronavirus?

Brian Lockhart: I think it is too early to tell at this point. We saw Trump's favorability ratings hit new highs in the early days of the pandemic as he was out front in the public eye and his response was viewed in positive light by a majority of Americans. As the challenges of dealing with the virus have continued, there has been some reduction in the President's support. I tend to agree with the hypothesis that the election this November will be a referendum on Trump's handling of the crisis, which includes the reopening of the economy. There is also the issue of Trump's likely opponent, presumptive nominee Joe Biden. The former Vice-President has been relatively absent during the crisis and has done little to cast himself as a strong leader capable of making very difficult decisions.

In many respects, the coronavirus appears to have solidified the sharp divide that exists in the country today more than bringing the country together. Trump supporters have rallied behind their candidate, while the mainstream media and those on the political left find fault with every statement or decision Trump makes (some for obvious or comical reasons).

The most interesting recent development is the protests across the country of people demanding the quarantine end and the economy reopen. These protests are comprised of people across the political spectrum and are largely people that feel like the needs of small business people are not being listened to.

Clint Pekrul, CFA: You have to assume that an event as impactful as the coronavirus outbreak will have political ramifications. Each party will use the disruption to jockey for power and try to push their agendas. That's politics. For example, Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell, a Republican from Kentucky, recently commented that he would be in favor of letting states simply declare bankruptcy. Is it a coincidence that the states that would be most deeply impacted by bankruptcy, namely New York, New Jersey, Illinois and California – are all blue? Money might run out for these states before the election, if the shutdown continues. Will president Trump side with McConnell and simply let states go bankrupt? The probability is greater than zero.

Make no mistake, there are numerous problems with the CARES Act, despite the government's best intentions. There was little resistance when Congress decided to supply the struggling economy with \$3 trillion. But after a month, there are several instances of small business not receiving funds, administrative breakdowns and delayed stimulus checks. Where did the \$3 trillion go? That's the question many voters will ask themselves come November, and there will be plenty of finger pointing, particularly at the politicians. Given the enormity of the coronavirus situation, there is bound to be some fallout.