

## Governing in Crisis Teaching Guide

### Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald Perspectives from the Front Lines

#### Interview Summary

Rich Fitzgerald, the County Executive of Allegheny County, discusses the challenges that counties have faced in responding to the COVID-19 crisis. The interview also touches on the importance of the expertise of public health officials in planning and the need for collaboration between counties, the state, and local governments. The County Executive provides insight into measures that Allegheny County has taken to ease the burdens of voting in the upcoming primary election and managing the county's criminal justice system during the pandemic.

Watch or Listen to the Episode using your favorite video or podcast app: [YouTube](#), [iTunes](#), [Spotify](#), [Google Podcast](#), [Stitcher](#), [Amazon Music](#).

The Governing in Crisis series videos, podcasts, and resource materials are available at: [www.iop.pitt.edu/governing-crisis](http://www.iop.pitt.edu/governing-crisis).

#### Video Topics

- (0:00) Introduction
- (4:10) Impact of COVID-19 on Allegheny County and issues it presents for government officials
- (22:16) Role of state, county, and local governments in responding to COVID-19
- (18:59) Challenges of re-opening Southwestern PA
- (20:27) Disproportionate impact of COVID-19
- (25:30) County response to protect incarcerated individuals
- (29:24) Elections during COVID-19

#### Potential Uses

- Post a governance series video on Canvas and ask students to respond to a discussion question about the video, as well as comment on 1-2 of their classmates' posts.
- Show a clip of the video during class to enrich learning, emphasize a point, and/or contextualize a topic.
- Create a resource folder on Canvas that includes governance series videos, accompanied by "learn and do more" documents, as well as other links to support student growth related to current events.
- Incorporate a governance series video into pre-class readings for a live discussion using or

adapting the questions below.

## Suggested Written Reflection Questions

- If you could go back in time with the knowledge you have today, what would you choose to improve in the initial response to COVID-19 in your local community?
- What did you find interesting in the interview? What is something that you disagreed with?

## Suggested Classroom Discussion Questions

- Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald discussed the importance of government leaders' in-person presence to identify and solve challenges in partnership with community members. According to the interview, how do leaders instill faith in and understand the needs of their constituents while socially distancing?
- According to County Executive Fitzgerald, how have politics complicated or challenged COVID-19 response efforts?
- What disparities have become more apparent, and in many cases exacerbated, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?
- To curb the spread of COVID-19, Allegheny County postponed its primary elections and expanded vote-by-mail services. What are the benefits and detriments of vote-by-mail services? Do you think vote-by-mail opportunities will increase voter turnout in the November presidential election? Why or why not?

## Related Reading

- Read the final report of the Commission on the Practice of Democratic Citizenship titled, *Our Common Purpose - Reinventing American Democracy For the 21st Century*.
- Learn *why we turn to scientists in times of crisis* and how governance is informed by public health experts.
- Check out a *map* of Allegheny County's 130 municipalities.
- In partnership with County Executive Fitzgerald, the Institute of Politics established reforms for fostering a fairer and less costly Allegheny County criminal justice system, without compromising public safety in its report, *Criminal Justice in the 21st Century: Improving Incarceration Policies and Practices in Allegheny County*.

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