TRENDS IN DEMONSTRATIONS RELATING TO THE UNITED STATES PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OF 2020

21 October 2020

SUMMARY
To further evaluate the probability of further social unrest surrounding the upcoming election, this report anticipated demonstrations. Demonstrations and controversies relating to local and state elections reflect common national themes including social unrest, the Supreme Court, and the conduct of law enforcement. On Monday October 12th, 21 people were arrested outside the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. for demonstrating against the nomination of Judge Barrett. Several organizations are mobilizing nationwide demonstrations via social media on election day and on November 4th (2, 3). Current demonstrations are focused on the confirmation proceedings of Judge Barrett to the Supreme Court. The possibility exists for local demonstrations to occur that relate to national election issues. The demonstrations currently being planned on election day and November 4th are likely to impact local and national businesses located in city centers where demonstrations occur. Large scale demonstrations could block both vehicular and pedestrian traffic and prevent staff, clients, or customers from reaching business locations.

KEY FINDINGS
Demonstrations relating to the confirmation proceedings of Judge Amy Coney Barrett continue at the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. and at state capitol buildings across the country. Demonstrations are expected to continue until October 22nd, when the Senate is scheduled to vote to confirm the Judge’s appointment. Demonstrations continue to be mobilized on social media for November 3rd and 4th. These movements remain extremely fluid and continue to be planned in several locations. Demonstrators are mobilizing due to their perceived distrust in the voting system. In addition, demonstrations for social justice that began in May 2020 continue to occur in select locations, including Portland, Oregon and Seattle, Washington.
Final Presidential Debate in Nashville, Tennessee
Be Better Belmont plans to hold a demonstration in front of Belmont University - the debate venue - on the night of the debate from 4:00pm to 6:30pm. According to the group’s Facebook page, they do not plan to engage in civil disobedience (4).

SCOTUS Nomination Demonstrations
Peaceful Demonstrations in Opposition of the Confirmation of Judge Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court of the United States. 21 people were arrested for demonstrating without a permit. Smaller protests have occurred elsewhere in the country with less arrests (5, 6).

Women’s March on Saturday, October 17th remained peaceful and no notable arrests were made.

Ongoing Demonstrations for Social Justice
In Portland, Oregon, demonstrations are planned for October 21st at 5:00pm at Oregon Health and Sciences University

In Portland, Oregon a child-friendly Black Lives Matter march is scheduled for Saturday, October 24th. The march will start at Sunnyside School Park at 1:00pm.

In Seattle, Washington, demonstrations are planned at Seattle Central College (Broadway Ave and E Pine Street) on Saturday, October 24th at 1:00pm.

Election Day Demonstrations
ShutDownDC is mobilizing demonstrators to gather at Black Lives Matter Plaza in DC - and other locations around the country - after voting on election day to demand that the vote be respected (20).

Post-Election Day Demonstrations
ShutDownDC has stated that the intent of their demonstration remains flexible. Depending on the results of the election, their demonstrations could focus on advocating for COVID-19 relief legislation. The organization intends to demonstrate at least through November 11th when members of Congress return to Washington, D.C. Their website states that they may meet members of Congress at train stations or airports as they arrive back in Washington (21).

Count on Us, an initiative launched by a coalition of several grassroots organizations (including Sunrise Movement, Dream Defenders, March for Our Lives, United We Dream) calls to mobilize youth into demonstrations the day after the election if President Trump wins the election.

In addition, the National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression is organizing nationwide demonstrations on November 4th, regardless of the outcome of the election (4).
Considerations

Many sources have indicated that the results of the presidential election may not be known on the night of the election. Consequently, businesses can expect large scale demonstrations on November 3rd and 4th, and potentially beyond. Several groups continue to mobilize demonstrators as a result of a mistrust in the electoral process which includes the lengthy vote counting process and litigation could provide further fuel to demonstrations. Three election scenarios are likely to result in a higher number of demonstrations:

- If the most contentious outcome occurs;
- If the final results of the election are delayed due to mail in voting;
- If the results are contested in court by either candidate.

ANALYSIS

Demonstrations relating to the upcoming presidential election in the United States continue being organized on a national level. While the result of the election remains unclear, grassroots organizations plan to mobilize on the day of the election and the days following regardless of the outcome. These demonstrations have the potential to gain considerable traction and cause large disruptions to vehicular and pedestrian traffic, as well as business operations. A considerable delay in the voting results is likely to exacerbate demonstrations. In addition, demonstrations for social justice are likely to continue and could increase following contentious incidents. More demonstrations are likely to be planned by other groups in the next few weeks.