

An excerpt from The Larry Meiller Show, Wisconsin Public Radio, 10/13/2020

Larry: During this time, how do you think the public's confidence in science has fared during this COVID time?

Bassam: That's a very good and pointed question Larry. I urge everyone in the listening audience to affirm their confidence in what scientists, medical professionals say. Not only about the pandemic, but about all kinds of discoveries, all kinds of technologies that we have. It's very important to engage in responsible public discourse about scientific advancements and the consequences of those advancements. It is very unfortunate, it is very sad for me to see so much misinformation on the internet. Not only about the pandemic, but about scientific discoveries. What is crucial is for each one of us to think and to engage in respectful conversations with each other about new developments and to take responsibility for the action that we take, not only individually but collectively in society, as a result of these experiments. And that's why, Larry, if I may just say one more thing about the importance of the public's confidence in science. We in science need to do a better job of communicating science to the public. We do it not only as I'm trying to do it here on your program, we do it via the internet, we do it via publications, and it's important for people to ask questions and to make inquiries and to express their own views and opinions. Science is not the answer to all the questions that we have in life, but science and technology have enabled us to get to where we are now in society. Science and technology are the engines that drive our economy, and that's why we have to be clear about what the new scientific discoveries are, what their consequences are, what their *good* consequences are, and how we can guard against the misuse, the bad use, of any technology that is developed. Including CRISPR, the one that's been so well recognized by the Swedish Academy in awarding the 2020 Nobel Prize in Chemistry. So, I think it's crucial that we each participate in responsible conversations about science and society, about the connectivity between science and society and that's why I urge everyone in the listening audience who is eligible to vote, to participate in one of the most important and highly consequential aspects of our society: the right to vote. Please vote, and as I urge others, not only on my website but everywhere, try to get five other people who are eligible to vote who have not voted yet, to vote. Voting is part of the democratic processes that we enjoy here and it is important for us to be electing representatives and to be electing leaders that are looking to the advancement of society through reliable scientific and technological means.

Larry: When it comes to science and education, what should we be looking for in all of the candidates for all of our offices? There's a lot of elections on the line in three weeks or so.

Bassam: I would urge everyone, as I have done, to be looking for honesty and reliability in the statements that the candidates are making. And how these statements can be helpful to be advancing the quality of life in society. It's very, very important that we have confidence in the people that we elect and it's equally important that they have confidence in us. It's very important that we have trust in them and it's very important that they are trustworthy and that we too are trustworthy. So I would examine the candidate statements carefully, not only about science, about everything that they say and hold them to what they say. And also think carefully and assess the validity of the statements that are made. Participate fully in the democratic processes that we enjoy in our society, one of which of course is voting but it's not the only thing. It's not over when we vote. We have to participate at the local level, at the state level, community level, at the national level. We have so much that we are so grateful for and we have to be confident in the people that we elect so that they would also lead us to continue to improve the quality of life at the local level, at the state level, and at the national level.