No Voting Machines!
Online Voting is More Secure.

Why Switching to Online Voting on Personal Devices is Essential

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Our engagement with democratic processes needs to be brought up to date. We need to leverage new technologies to make interactions easier and more productive. Traditional voting methods, such as visiting voting machines in precincts or placing ballots in the mail, need to be initially complemented and eventually replaced by online voting. Voting on personal devices like computers or cell phones offers numerous advantages, making it the superior choice to adopt.

Secure and Tamper-Proof

Online banking is routinely and reliably used by millions of people every day. If security measures are deemed reliable enough for banking transactions, they can certainly be trusted for government business and voting.

Tampering with a routinely used online digital system is inherently more difficult than with traditional voting systems. Paper ballots can be lost, miscounted, or intentionally altered. Dedicated voting machines are not used frequently enough for their integrity to be scrutinized effectively. While they must pass prescribed “rigorous” tests before approval, no test is as rigorous as widespread use. Their sparse usage means that it takes a long time for any errors in the system to be detected, often only after an election is over.

A case in point: The Volusia County error in Florida’s 2000 election. The county reported negative votes. The error was corrected and dismissed at the time. The real cause which was tampering with the machines by what is now known as the “Hursti Hack” was described by investigative reporters in a 2006 documentary titled “Hacking Democracy”.

In contrast, a system that is routinely used by people for government business is less prone to illicit alteration, as widespread use will quickly bring any such attempts to surface. Additionally, online voting can employ multiple layers of security to prevent unauthorized access. Encryption technologies, secure authentication protocols, and continuous monitoring can safeguard the integrity of the voting process. If we trust our life savings to online banking, we can surely trust our democracy to a similar online voting system. Let’s phase out the use of dedicated voting machines in favor of more secure and versatile online voting.

Speed, Accuracy, and Verification

One of the most significant benefits of online voting is the speed with which votes can be cast and counted. Unlike traditional methods that require physical presence or postal services, online voting allows individuals to participate in elections with just a few clicks. This efficiency not only reduces the time spent

on voting but also accelerates the counting process. Election results can be determined almost instantaneously after the last vote, providing quicker insights into public opinion and reducing the uncertainty that often accompanies prolonged vote counts.

Voters will be able to receive immediate confirmation of their vote, and also review and verify the records of all their previous online votes. This transparency helps build confidence among voters and encourages increased participation. Additionally, in the event of any detected discrepancies or mistakes by the user, voters can be promptly notified and given the opportunity to correct their submissions, ensuring that their voices are accurately heard.

Increased Frequency of Voting

Online voting facilitates more frequent and accessible participation in the democratic process. Without the logistical constraints of physical polling stations or delays associated with the postal service, elections and referenda can be conducted more repeatedly. The increased frequency enables government representatives to be in closer and more routine contact with their constituencies. At the same time, it allows citizens to have a more direct and continuous influence on governance, ensuring that their viewpoints are represented on matters they care about most.

Efficiency

From a financial perspective, online voting eliminates the huge cost and burden of conducting nationwide traditional voting. The expenses associated with printing ballots, staffing polling stations, purchasing and updating voting machines, and managing postal services can be significantly reduced. The initial investment in digital infrastructure will be outweighed by substantial long-term savings and efficiency gains.

Environmental advantages are also significant. Traditional voting is inherently wasteful of paper for ballots, envelopes, and instructions. Online voting eliminates all that waste and saves a lot of time and cost associated with driving to polling stations and transporting ballots.

Risks and Vulnerabilities

Concerns about privacy, accuracy, illicit manipulation, and fraud are rampant in discussions about online voting. It is important to note, however, that these are the same concerns everyone has with online banking. Over time, online banking has managed to alleviate most of these concerns by detecting and fixing shortcomings. What allows quick detection and removal of flaws is the fact that these systems are used by millions of people every day. There is security in numbers of uses per day. Dedicated voting machines that are used sparingly can’t offer the same security. Online voting needs to be a part of an “integrated government services platform” that will be used by millions every day.

Realistic Approach

Estonia was the first country to offer e-voting in national elections in 2005. This practice has continued and is believed to contribute to their high voter turnout. In addition to Estonia, which is a very small country, limited online voting has been implemented in Canada, France, and Australia.

Slow implementation of online voting can be attributed to social, legal, and economic factors. Social concerns include accessibility and the digital divide. Some people will not have the means to engage in online voting, so centers that offer voting help to this sector of the population need to exist for some time. Some regulatory and technical issues are closely related. The government (federal or state) cannot approve online voting unless a good system is in place and ready for approval. The only way to have a well-developed system ready is to establish limited versions locally and expand them in stages. This is where the last hurdle is encountered, which is financial. Lack of sufficient financial incentive for the development of such a system hinders its deployment. It is essential that the system has general functionality for the interaction of people with government and not be limited to voting. This requires a government initiative and sufficient budget to bring it to reality. In the United States, government agencies such as the IRS or FEMA could spearhead the development of online service management protocols that could become all-encompassing and include online voting over time. Although the necessity that presidential vote collection be administered at the state level, may require that online voting be implemented in individual states first.

Conclusion

Online voting on personal computers or cell phones presents a forward-thinking approach to modern democracies. The advantages of speed, accuracy, instant feedback, security, tamper-proofing, increased voting frequency, enhanced voter engagement, environmental benefits, and cost efficiency make online voting a superior alternative to dedicated voting machines. As technology continues to advance, embracing online voting systems can enhance the democratic process, making it more accessible, transparent, and effective for all citizens.