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Straight Talk:
Observations of an Elections Administrator

2012 Electronic Voting Technology Workshop / Workshop on Trustw
Elections – August 6, 2012 – Bellevue, WA

The Tireless Campaigner

By Sylvia Nogaki
Sun Staff Writer

At the ripe old age of 14, Dean Logan is the veteran of two Kitsap County political campaigns.

Three years ago, he cut his political teeth on the campaign of county Auditor Sherill Huff, a family friend. And this year, he doorbelled, stuffed envelopes, pumped hands and carried political signs outside the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard for mayoral candidate Wanda Mosbarger.

He offered his services to Mrs. Mosbarger after reading the candidates' campaign literature at the county fair. After deciding that Wanda was for him, he went back to her fair booth the next day and offered to doorbell.

"She said she'd love to have me and she asked me what I did," the soft-spoken Bremerton Christian School eighth-grader recalls.

Even so, Mrs. Mosbarger confesses that she had some initial reservations.

"When he first offered... I thought, how can a 14 year-old kid doorbell? Well, you should have heard him. He was very, very polished."

The son of Duane and Christie Logan of Bremerton, Dean says his parents had nothing to do with his political choice. When he first volunteered his services, "my parents hadn't decided yet."

Dean says he picked Mrs. Mosbarger for mayor because "she seemed like a nice lady" and because, among other issues, she supported having a city civic center.

"I liked the civic center idea because I like to be in plays and she said there would be a theater and an auditorium."

Most voters thought the young doorbeller was related to the candidate, or that his parents were enthusiastic supporters who had enlisted his assistance, he said.

His age may have prevented some voters from taking him seriously, he admits.

"Not everybody asked me questions, because I'm a kid. But some people asked me questions and I told them the right things, what she thought about the issues."

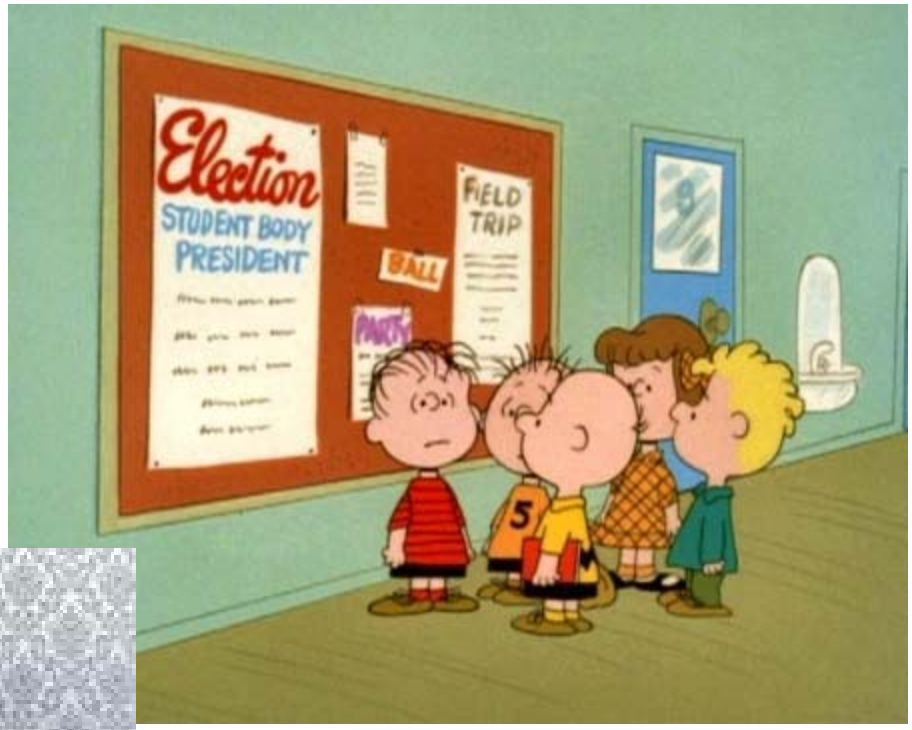
During both campaigns, he usually doorbelled three hours nightly, three times a week for two weeks prior to the elections. All told, he figures he put in about 40 hours on the campaign.

Despite his efforts, however, his candidate lost. But Logan says the experience didn't sour him on politics.

"It was disappointed after we did all that work," he admits, "but we still had a lot of fun and we're glad we did it. It was worth it just knowing Wanda and getting to know all the people."

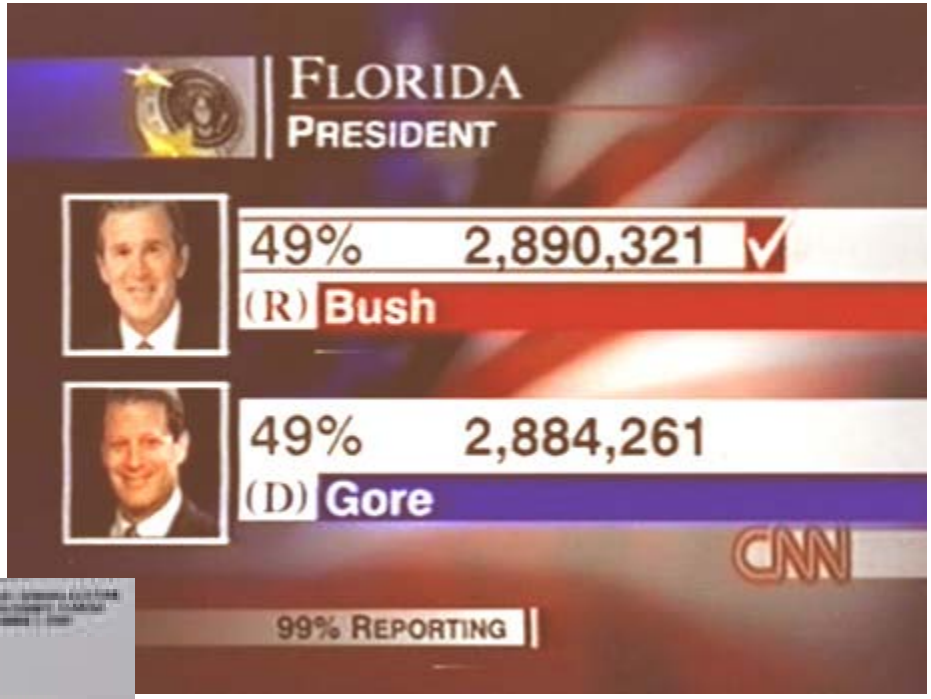
Staff photo
Dean Logan

Wide-eyed youth – fascination – inspiration



High School ASB Election

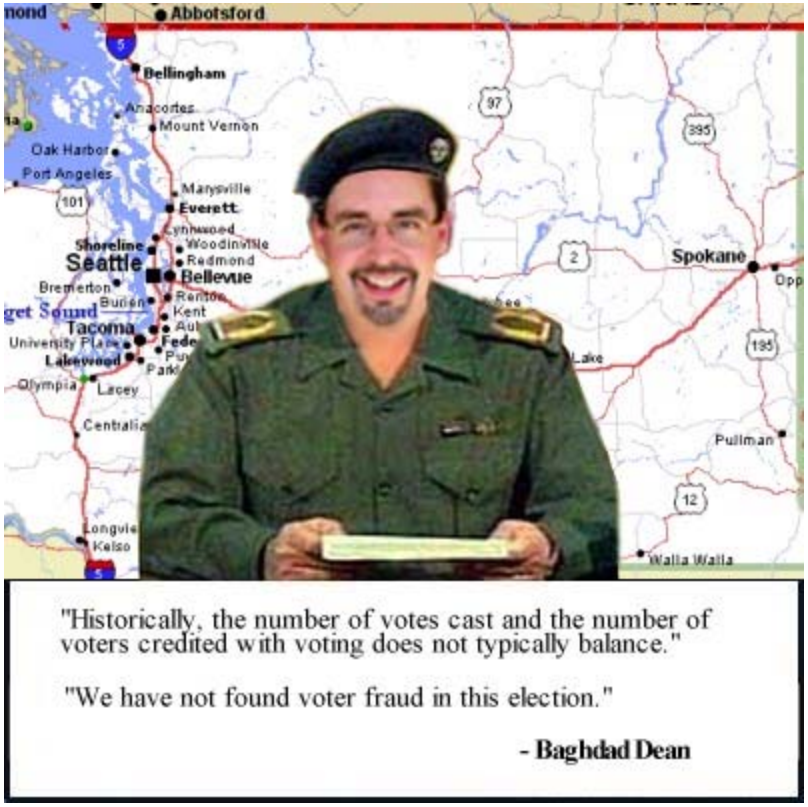
6 votes
8 absences



Bush vs. Gore: The lure back to elections

Confronting the brutal facts of the current reality…

2004 Washington Gubernatorial Election



Ten + Years of Change

- ★ Focus on technology and systems
- ★ Fraud versus accessibility
- ★ A new federal role and agency
- ★ A new profession
- ★ Close contests: from exception to the rule
- ★ Influx and evaporation of resources
- ★ The politicization of the process

*Qu*HAV*&*A

Quantify How America Votes and Acts

Current Landscape

- ★ Shrunken voting systems market
- ★ Unstable regulatory environment
- ★ Increased scrutiny
- ★ Disincentive for innovation
- ★ Unnecessary complexity
- ★ Decreasing voter participation
- ★ Mixed messages

Survey: Most Young Adults Do Not Know Their State Voting Laws

Report: State systems for overseas voters vulnerable

Partisan Rifts Hinder Efforts to Improve U.S. Voting System

Federal Voting Commissioners AWOL As Election Approaches

Voting Tech Errors Could Be a Deal Breaker in Swing States, Report Says

Wide Divide In States' Voting Preparedness

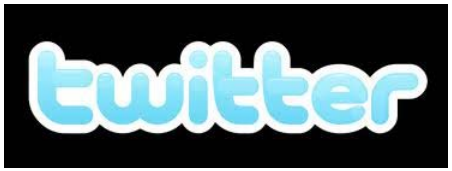
Is your vote secure? Many digital systems lack paper backups, study says.

Voter ID laws could swing states

What is our message?

Several hundred thousand votes lost from design flaws in recent elections: @BrennanCenter study #votingrights

New @BrennanCenter study outlines how officials can cure election design defects, save votes #votingrights



Bright Spots

- ★ Post election audits
- ★ Performance indexing and benchmarks
- ★ Quality assurance; variance measurement
- ★ Ballot and material design
- ★ Voter registration modernization
- ★ An emerging spirit of collaboration

the BIG BANG THEORY

Elections in Los Angeles

4.5 Million registered voters

Support **12** languages

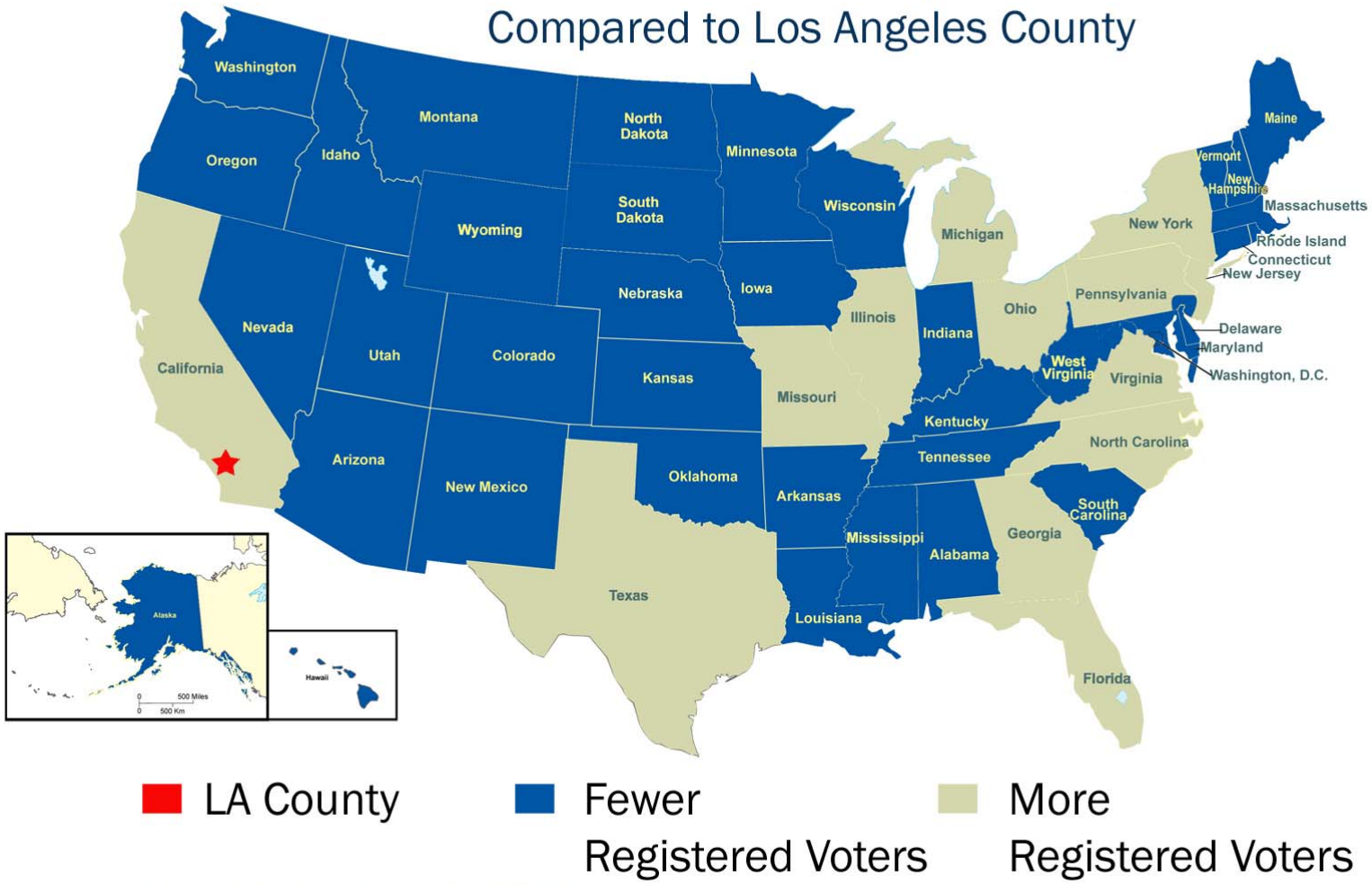
More than **1,000,000** mail ballots

Recruit and train **25,000** pollworkers

Manage **5,000** polling places

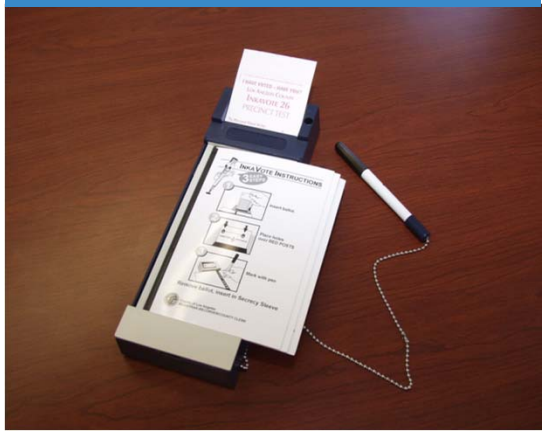
"More registered voters than 36 states"

U.S. States With Fewer Registered Voters Compared to Los Angeles County



Source: Websites of respective SOS Offices.

Voting system challenges



Aging technology

System core is outdated and becoming less reliable and obsolete. Available technical support is limited.

Limited ballot capacity

More than 500 political subdivisions and only 312 voting positions. Ballot capacity also affects ability to create accessible/usable ballot formats.

Limited voting options

Unable to support in person early voting and other reforms like election day registration. Limited options for persons with disabilities. Limited language assistance.

Challenges to modernization

Dysfunctional and Limited Market

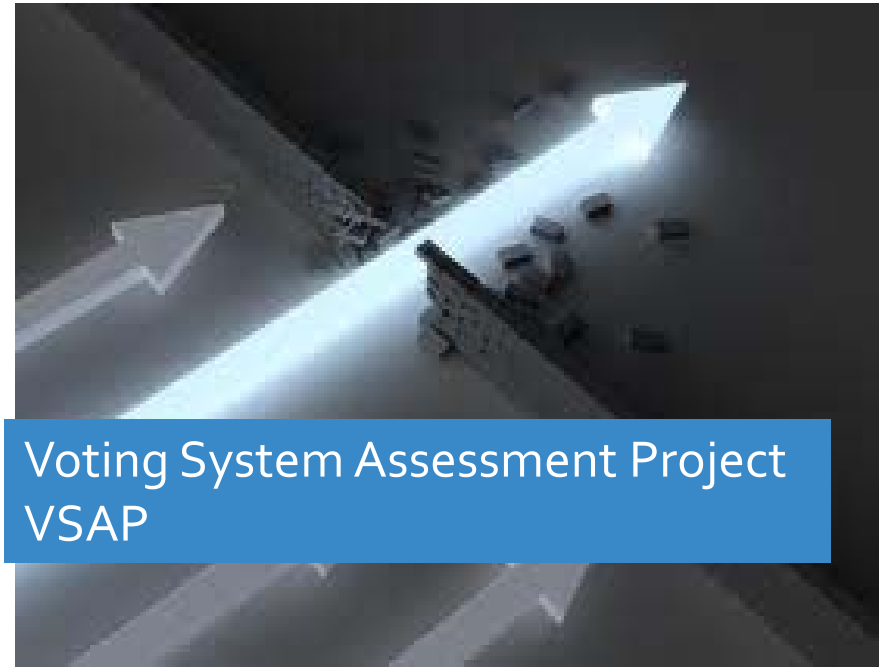
Existing commercial voting systems do not meet our needs. No new systems have been approved in California.

Voter trust

Since the 2000 and 2004 Presidential Elections, voting systems have become over politicized. High level of voter distrust of commercial voting systems.

Clock is ticking

Department seeks to implement a new voting system in time for the 2016 presidential elections.



About

The VSAP is an unprecedented approach at modernizing the County's voting system. The innovative project envisions implementing a voting system through an open, transparent, and participatory process. This projects breaks the mold of the traditional voting system acquisition model.

County driven development

Present a new market model where the county has greater control. Modernize the regulatory environment to accommodate more creative development models.

Transparent processes

Restore voter trust in voting systems through a proactive process that takes citizen input and is open.

Meet current and future voter needs

Engage stakeholders and design a system that is based on real user needs and expectations. This includes citizen input and field research.

Recurring Themes

- ★ Voter interface: *user-friendly, modern interface with integrated accessibility features and options for attaching assistive technology tools*
- ★ Ballot design: *small paper ballots for audit, ease of handling and storage*
- ★ Technology standardization: *open source development, Election Mark-up Language (EML) for reporting and cloud technology for storage*
- ★ Providing options: *varied options for accessing and marking ballots, independent and secure options for ballot submission and tabulation*

What's Next?

Time for a new conversation…

★ Proactive vs. reactive

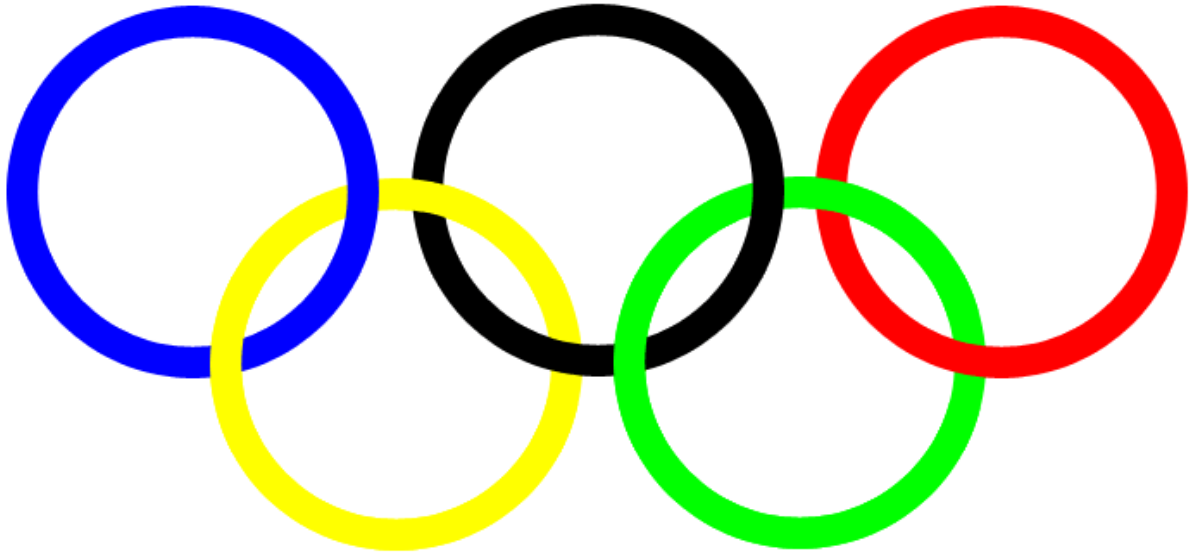
★ Collaborative vs. divisive

★ Embraces and incentivizes innovation

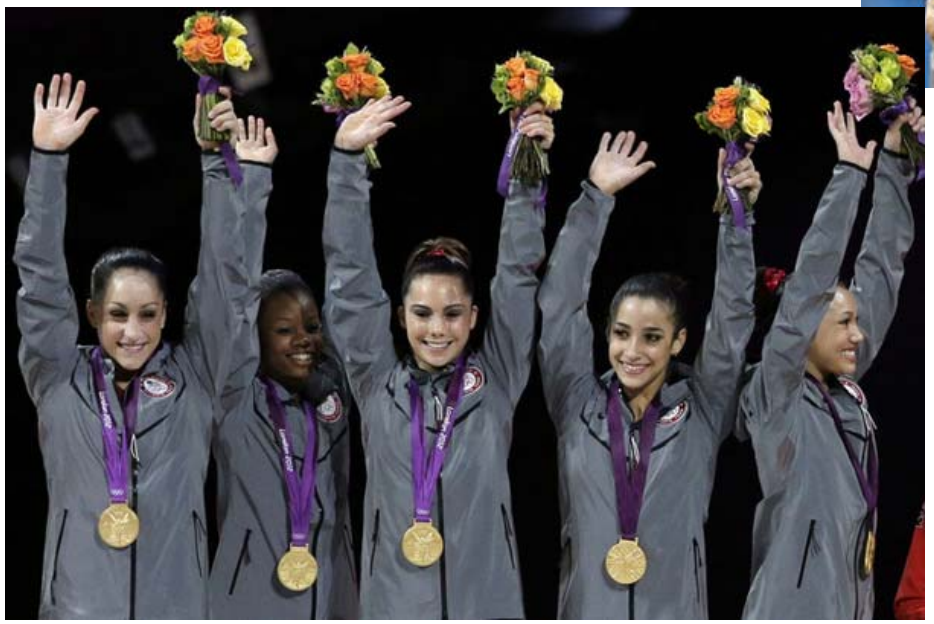
★ Moving from *proving the problem* to *securing a solution*

Emerging Issues

- ★ Demise of the U.S. Postal Service
- ★ Changing demographics
- ★ Signature-based authentication



Beyond individual achievement…



Election Administrators
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