

Connie McCormack, Registrar-Recorder of Los Angeles County, Discusses Internet Voting, February 22, 2002

Caller: Thanks for taking my call.

Host: Sure.

Caller: I wanted to compliment the Registrar and let everyone know that when you have a highly-trained and conscientious and non-partisan staff, you can get good results with punch cards which wasn't the case in Florida because most of those factors weren't present.

What I'd like to say is that everything you've been saying tells me what we need to do is have Internet voting, both in the polling places and from remote locations in people's homes. Elderly people are happy to use new technology. We've had a call-in from a disabled person who says it's embarrassing and troublesome and difficult to get to vote. All of these problems are solved if people can vote from home over the Internet in a secure way. And the last caller but one said, "The whole state is voting electronically." Well, to do that, you need to let people vote over the Internet, and I think that would be a great idea if we could do that and I think it could be put into place at a cost and at a speed that would satisfy all the legal requirements that are now facing you.

Host: Well, Connie McCormack, what's the latest on Internet voting?

Guest: You know, everything you're saying, it just sounds so right and it really does until.... There was an Internet Task Force of the top experts that the Secretary of State put together who came in on their first meeting, all these techies saying, "We can do this" and left eight months later saying, "We absolutely cannot." The issues become security and if you can hack into the Pentagon and all these other companies' sites the problem of security is not solvable at this time according to the experts.

So at this point in time even though there are several companies trying to get a certified system...remember, nobody can vote on a voting system in California—and in 38 of the other states—without it being certified through a Federal and a state process to make sure it's going to be accurate and there's not a single company at this point in time that has a product that meets the rigorous criteria.

I think it's coming in the future. I think that we're going to see this. Why not? I mean, everyone's using the Internet. But as of right now—and I don't think in the next two to three years—but I hope within the next five, Marc's going to be absolutely right and this will be available at, you know, libraries and, by the way, our website is www.lavote.net. If you haven't received your sample ballot

and you want to know where to go vote, just go in there: www.lavote.net and click on “Where do I vote?”, type in your address, and bingo. It’s totally interactive. You can look up your sample ballot. We have 3,154 different varieties of sample ballot depending on where you live.

Host: Wow.

Guest: Click on it comes up for you. This is modern wonderful stuff and Marc’s correct. At some point we’re going to be voting that way. Unfortunately, the security issue has not yet been solved.

Host: Marc, thanks a lot for the call.

Host: We also got a request from a listener to basically sum up the court mandate. Basically, it’s requiring all Registrar-Recorders to get rid of punch card voting by 2004?

Guest: The lawsuit dealt with the nine counties in California—which is 75% of the registered voters voted on these—you know, big counties are the ones that have punch card voting, because punch card voting is the most inexpensive system and big counties are poor. So we’re talking San Diego, San Bernardino, Alameda, L.A., Sacramento. These big counties are the ones—9 counties out of the 58—that have lost their voting systems. The other counties, many of them are using optical scan technology or a different kind of punch card that isn’t the pre-scored kind that causes—supposedly—the problem. So we’re the ones who are confronting the court order and have to do something else in time for March, 2004. Whether or not we’ll have the time or the money to put in a state-of-the-art modern system or whether we have to transition to a paper system in between is, at this point, not totally determined.

Host: And is there any challenge, any legal challenge, to that:

Guest: Our attorneys are working with the Secretary of State’s attorneys to request a stay but the feeling is that it has no chance and an appeal would take so long and while the appeal is in place, you know, we have to conform to the code.

Host: Got it.

Guest: So, unfortunately, it’s not looking very positive.

Host: Connie McCormack, we are out of time. Thank you so much for spending it with us.

Guest: Thank you, Kitty.

Host: You bet. This is 89.3, KPCC.