The "Strassman for Mayor" Website

I ran my campaign by talking to reporters and putting materials—text, audio, and video—up on my website. The website was built and maintained by Raymond Steding, president of the Linux Public Broadcasting Network (LPBN) (http://www.lpbn.org), where the site was hosted.

The only media outlets that posted the campaign site's URL were
NetPulse
(http://netpulse.politicsonline.com/content.asp?sname=IN+THE+STATES&issue_id=6.18),
Wired.com (http://www.wired.com/news/politics/0,1283,55911,00.html),
and Telephony magazine
(http://currentissue.telephonyonline.com/ar/telecom_talk_broadband_economy_25/).

*The **Daily News** and the **Los Angeles Times**, enjoying a duopoly of coverage in the Valley and the City of Los Angele s, refused to include the URL of my campaign site (or that of any other candidate) in any of the many articles about the secession election that they published.*

The League of Women Voters/Smart Voter site did include a link to my campaign site on its own site, at http://www.smartvoter.org/2002/11/05/ca/la/vote/strassman_m/.

Since most people got most of their information about the campaign from these two papers (the local radio and television "news" stations, private and public, were fastidious in not covering the San Fernando Valley Reorganization Area Mayor's race), my multimedia website was like the proverbial tree falling in the forest. With no one knowing where the site was, all the text and audio and video ceased to exist, at least as a source of communications.

But I'll include the URL here, so you can see what most voters missed:

http://sfm.lpbn.org

I'll also include a copy of website itself:

The Historical Strassman for Mayor Campaign Platform
The Candidate on MSNBC
The Candidate Speaks Out at Adelphia
The Candidate Addresses the Ad Hoc Committee on Redistricting in Van Nuys - 04-23-2002
The Candidate Prepares to Talk to the BBC - Part 1   **The Candidate Prepares to Talk to the BBC - Part 2**
The Future Candidate Questions California Secretary of State Bill Jones About

Digital Certificates 10-26-2000

The Candidate's page at the League of Women Voters//Smart Voter website

"An E-Mayor for Virtual L.A. City," by Patrick di Justo in Wired News

Real Audio Message by Candidate Strassman

The Last Questionaire - Q and A with Wired News

Video from the Granada Hills "Meet the Mayors" Public Forum

Candidate Strassman Addresses United Chambers of Commerce 08-14-2002

Candidate Strassman Replies to the Progressive Coalition Questionaire, August 29, 2002

Candidate Strassman Replies to the Los Angeles Daily News Questionaire, August 26, 2002

For the latest Secession related videos on the LPBN click here

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The Richman Dossier

Extended Video Version of Adelphia Cable Remarks 10-22-2002

Extended Text Version of Adelphia Cable Remarks

Contributors: $1000-$2000 || $2000 - $3000 || $3000 || $5250 || HTML Listing

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Marc Strassman

Strassman for Mayor flyer #1: The Pot & Kettle Issue

Strassman for Mayor flyer #2: The Sportsman's Lodge Issue

Teddy Bear

Talk of the Valley - Episode 3

An Interview with the Bear

An Interview with Joe Shea, Editor-in-Chief - The American Reporter

The Internet's Digital Daily

Talk of the Valley - Episode 2

[Charts of the Percentages](#)

Joe Shea
www.American-Reporter.com

Marc Strassman
sfm.lpbn.org

Talk of the Valley Episode 1 08-23-2002

Rev. Leonard Jackson

Marc Strassman

Mel Wilson

[Is Valley Secession good for Los Angeles?](#)

Six Etopia Audio Clips

Alex Padilla at LA City Hall 11-14-01

Carnivore on KPCC 10-31-01

Connie McCormack on KPCC 02-22-02

PKI Forum - Montreal 09-12-00

Smart Initiatives in Sacramento 01-22-01

The Future of Internet Voting - Lake Chelan 05-15-99

Click on the links below to hear the candidate deliver a briefing to a group of Etopia Consulting clients from NEC/Nexsolutions at the Marriott Downtown Hotel in Los Angeles on June 24, 2002.

Understanding E-Government Part 1 ------------------------- **Understanding E-Government Part 2**

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Here's how I did:

Official Results in San Fernando Valley Reorganization Area Mayor's Race
(November 26, 2002)

http://rrccmain.co.la.ca.us/0022_LocalContest_Frame.htm

LA-SFV AREA REORG - MAYOR

Candidate	Votes	Percent
KEITH S RICHMAN	91,865	52.6
BENITO B BERNAL	20,186	11.56
D R HERNANDEZ JR	16,139	9.24
LEONARD SHAPIRO	15,015	8.6
MEL WILSON	12,009	6.88
BRUCE JOHN BOYER	4,350	2.49
HENRY DUKE DIVINA	4,316	2.47
MARC STRASSMAN	4,132	2.37
GREGORY E ROBERTS	3,647	2.09
JIM SUMMERS	2,978	1.71

Registration	563,857
Precincts Reporting	681
Total Precincts	681
% Precincts Reporting	100

Remember, you need to refresh this page to ensure that you have the latest results.

Last Updated: 10:38 11/26/2002
November 5, 2002 - Los Angeles County General Election

*One title I've held for a while now is "Contributing Editor" at **NetPulse**, an online newsletter about e-politics and e-government maintained by PoliticsOnline (http://netpulse.politicsonline.com/). After the Valley Secession Election I checked to see what I'd sent them over the years. Here's a copy of it.*

Contributions to and Coverage by NetPulse
(February 2, 1999 to November 8, 2002)
Search Results
Your search returned 18 articles.

1. **POL CONTRIBUTING EDITOR FIRES UP THE WEB OUT WEST**
   Note: From Issue 6.18, section "IN THE STATES".
   Contributing Editor Marc Strassman has been making a stir out West online lately. A mayoral candidate for the unsuccessful Valley City (the vote for secession was beaten out on Election Day), Strassman ran on a platform that focused on technology and ran an exclusively online campaign. Good try, Marc. Read on for more.

2. **CALIFORNIA CANDIDATE MAKES TECHNOLOGY HIS CAMPAIGN PLATFORM**
   Note: From Issue 6.15, section "IN THE STATES".
   Contributing Editor Marc Strassman has an interesting campaign going in the Golden State. Strassman is running for Mayor of the currently fictitious Valley City. (It will be created if the San Fernando Valley is allowed to secede from Los Angeles.) He is calling for the creation of the most wired jurisdiction anywhere. But better yet, he is running the entire campaign online. No staff, no volunteers, just he and his trusty laptop. Very interesting...

3. **EU ONLINE VOTING**
   Note: From Issue 5.16, section "THE WORLD'S WIDE WEB".
   Contributing editor Marc Strassman reports that while Internet voting is battered in the U.S., Europeans have invested about $3 million to build a continent-wide system for online voting from PCs and mobile phones. More: EUCybervote.

4. **E-GOV BILL**
   Note: From Issue 5.14, section "MODEM-OCRACY".
   During a July 11 hearing, Senate Republicans were skeptical of Sen. Joe Lieberman's blueprint for building an electronic government. According to Federal Computer Week, Lieberman said his E-Government Act of 2001 would harness information technology to make the federal government better deliver services to citizens, improve accountability and cut costs. More: USA Today. In a related development, Los Angeles-based Contributing Editor and President of Citizens United for Excellence in E-Government Marc Strassman was invited by Senate Government Affairs committee staff to submit testimony on S. 803, the "E-Government Act of 2001." You can get a PDF copy of his testimony and access links to a copy of the bill, other witnesses' testimony, the official analysis of the bill, and an article on the status and benefits of e-government worldwide by following this link.

5. **INTERNET CZAR**
   Note: From Issue 5.12, section "DC CONNECTION".
   Contributing editor Marc Strassman forwarded a Bush Administration press release in which the Office of Management and Budget named Mark A. Forman to serve as associate director of OMB for Information Technology and E-Government. In his role, "Mr. Forman will work to fulfill the President's vision of using the Internet to create a citizen-centric government."

6. **ILLINOIS**
   Note: From Issue 5.04, section "IN THE STATES".
   Contributing editor Marc Strassman of the Smart Initiatives Project says the state of Illinois is moving aggressively to provide up to 1 million of its citizens with digital certificates, which would make it easier for a wide array of secure government e-services, initiatives, petitions and more. To read more, go to: http://www.fcw.com/

7. **ONLINE INITIATIVES**
   Note: From Issue 4.17, section "NETPULSE BRIEFS".
   Los Angeles-based contributing editor Marc Strassman reports he recently submitted a request to California Attorney General Bill Lockyer to allow his Smart Initiatives Project to begin collecting the 420,260 signatures it needs to be put on the March 2002 ballot. According to Strassman, "The Smart Initiatives movement is working to give all citizens the right and the means to sign initiative and other official petitions online, with binding legal effect, using free digital certificates issued by state governments. Our slogan is 'Political Reform through Internet Power'." For details, visit the Smart Initiatives Project website. Other news: Strassman will be addressing the PKI Forum's annual meeting in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, on Sept. 12, 2000, on the subject of "Ubiquitous E-Democracy Powered by a Universal PKI."

8. **ONLINE VOTING GARNERS MORE ATTENTION**
   Note: From Issue 3.24, section "NETPULSE BRIEFS".
   More states are considering using online voting to boost turnout, USA Today reported Dec. 7. Wired outlined in a Dec. 9 report how Arizona, Alaska, California and other states are seriously looking at the medium's potential. Contributing editor Marc Strassman of the Campaign for Digital Democracy is a big booster of online voting. He says the results are in for the first Internet Presidential Primary Election. Take a look: Politics.com.

9. **NATIONAL ONLINE PRIMARY STARTS FRIDAY**
   Note: From Issue 3.23, section "NETPULSE BRIEFS".
   What's being billed as the first online U.S. presidential primary starts Dec. 3 and continues through Dec. 8, according to Business Wire. "The mock primary will allow all eligible Americans to make history by voting online and getting a glimpse of the future of the voting process, according to Politics.com and Votation.com," the two companies sponsoring the online primary. Results will be announced Dec. 9. In other online voting news, the University of California at Davis tested online voting in November in an attempt to increase turnout, according to contributing editor Marc Strassman.

10. **BEATTY WATCH**

   Contributing editor Marc Strassman, who lives close to Hollywood in California, says he's been having fun watching the emergence of the online "Beatty for President effort. "Anyone interested in watching or helping Clyde Barrow-John Reed-Mickey One-Dick Tracy-Bugsy Siegel-Bulworth in an extensive audition for the role of American President should visit http://www.beatty2000.com/ and/or join the fun at: beatty4pres-subscribe@onelist.com," he writes.

11. **VOTE NOTES**

   Swarthmore political science professor Rick Valelly argued online voting would be a big mistake in the new issue of The New Republic. Online voting, he says, will foster even more apathy. Absentee voting, for example, has long been an option for people who couldn't make it to the ballot box on election day. "The problem is that e-voting will transform voting, an inherently public activity, into a private one," he writes. "If our era is a time of citizen disengagement, of staring at screens and passing in and out of our gated communities or apartment fortresses as we wave to private security personnel, then e-voting from home is all too congruent with the spirit of the age. Far from enriching democracy, e-voting pushes us toward political anomie." As NetPulse readers would expect, Valelly's comments raised the ire of contributing editor and e-voting proponent Marc Strassman, who fired off a letter to the editor of The New Republic. In the letter, he countered that the virtual community wasn't a sheltered, lonely place. Instead, it is a lively community "in which almost every form of political activity except voting is taking place with increasing breadth and intensity as we speak….Adding the right to vote over the Internet is, in the most profound sense, giving these communities and the people that live in them the right to vote where they live." The debate continues.

12. **GETTING GOOEY**

   EGooey is a free Web/chat tool that allows users to post little electronic yellow notes and "talk" with others who are simultaneously using a Web site. Says contributing editor Marc Strassman: "This is either the latest way to waste a lot of time online, or a valuable tool for building community among like-minded Netizens."

13. **ONLINE VOTING ROUNDUP**

   In recent days, stories about online voting whirled through the Web. Here's a summary of the top news:
   1. Military voting muscle. The U.S. Department of Defense is leading the way for online voting through a pilot program in five states. The DOD's Federal Voting Assistance Program will allow service members in Florida, Missouri, Texas, South Carolina and Utah to vote online by absentee ballot in the 2000 presidential election. In 1996, about one quarter of service members said they did not vote in elections because their ballots

did not arrive in time to be counted, according to a report by the American Forces Press Service.

2. Global referenda. IBM Chairman and CEO Lou Gerstner told a congressional committee in June that technological developments in the infant information age have the potential to have worldwide impact on political systems with innovations like global referenda, according to a CNN report . "Why not envision a day when we vote with much greater convenience - - from our home or workplace - - or a day beyond that when issues are presented to all the people of the world and we vote as a global statement of individual preference without regard for conventions like political parties or national borders?" Gerstner asked at a hearing on Capitol Hill.

3. Changing everything. Contributing editor Marc Strassman says online voting may empower people in a June 17 column in Intellectual Capital. "It may become practical to allow voters to aggregate themselves in new and creative ways. Voters can achieve representation in ways they consider more meaningful than the current geographically-based system," he says. He also encourages people to visit his online voting site, VoteSite.

4. Louisiana says no to online caucus. Louisiana Republicans cast aside a plan to allow members of the state GOP vote online in next year's presidential caucus. Full story: The New York Times.

14. **VOTESITE.COM**
Note: From Issue 3.12, section "WEB SITES".
Contributing editor Marc Strassman's newest project is VoteSite.com, an online effort that's being launched to win the right to vote over the Internet. The site, a project of Strassman's Campaign for Digital Democracy, is starting its efforts in California. Strassman says the site isn't fully operational but he invites readers to take a look and offer comments.

15. **POLLSTERS THREATENED**
Note: From Issue 3.10, section "NETPULSE BRIEFS".
ONLINE VOTING UPDATE Contributing editor Marc Strassman has been making media waves in pushing online voting. "Internet voting and its cousin, digital signatures on initiative petitions, are now seen by many observers as inevitable steps in a national effort to get people back to the polls or, more accurately, to get the polls out to the people," he wrote in a May 6 article in Intellectual Capital. Also on May 6, Strassman was interviewed by IBM's Institute for Electronic Governance. The conversation is available online at: ieg.ibm.com.

16. **ONLINE CONFERENCE**
Note: From Issue 3.09, section "THE ELECTRONIC ADVOCATE".
The Initiative and Referendum Institute is a non-profit organization that exists to educate people about the initiative and referendum processes as political options. On May 6th-8th, it will be conducting "A Century of Citizen Lawmaking: Initiative and Referendum in America." Visit the Institute site to

learn more about the Institute. Contributing editor Marc Strassman will participate 4 p.m. EDT May 7. The forum will be webcast by D.C. Orbit.

17. **GOLDEN STATE CARPE DIEM**

    Note: From Issue 3.05, section "NETPULSE BRIEFS".

    In California, elections in seven cities around Los Angeles have been cancelled because of a lack of competition. Two Internet political activists (both NetPulse contributing editors) believe the new media can change that. On Feb. 22, Marc Strassman of the Campaign for Digital Democracy wrote, "Perhaps allowing people to vote over the Internet would solve both the problem of diminishing participation and the problem of paying so much to conduct the elections." The following day, Kim Alexander of the California Voter Foundation opined, "Three of the seven cities that cancelled their elections don't even have a municipal Web site. The Internet is the best place to begin addressing these problems…Given that there is no master list of municipal elections in California available on the Internet, CVF hopes to compile one soon that at the least can inform voters that there is a local election going on in their area."

18. **ONLINE ELECTIONS SOON**

    Note: From Issue 3.03, section "NETPULSE BRIEFS".

    A recent article in Governing magazine suggests that some voters in November 2000 will vote online. "The era of Internet voting will inch closer this spring when a mock election is held in Cyberspace," Christopher Swope reported in November. "Dozens of U.S. military personnel stationed overseas will send ballots over the Internet using specially developed encryption software." Also, Florida is considering using Internet technology in elections. And contributing editor Marc Strassman of the Campaign for Digital Democracy reports that Washington State has moved to the front lines of providing online elections with the recent introduction of House Bill 1594. There is draft legislation that is being drafted for consideration in California that Strassman offers a view at: http://www.suresite.com/ca/e/elelbill. Says Strassman, "The current fiasco in Washington has convinced millions of citizens that either some new ways of governing ourselves have to be found or many more people will just opt out of the self-governance process entirely. Electronic elections, including Internet voting and electronic initiatives, may offer a way out of the current crisis of (non-) participation.

My complaint, broadcast by NPR station KPCC on Halloween Day, 2001, that the government, reluctant to allow the use of computer and Internet technology for political empowerment, was chomping at the bit to use it for surveillance and monitoring, seemed to be corroborated when word hit the media that DARPA, the same Pentagon agency which had helped create the Internet, had embarked on a program of "Total Information Awareness," which aimed to harness the same dual use tools I'd been recommending on behalf of democracy for purposes possibly far more sinister.

So I wrote a series of three articles about this.

Transparency: Seeing It Through, *or* A Dozen Things Excellent Transparency Should Be

By Marc Strassman

November 28, 2002

Now that "transparency" is all the rage for governments and corporations, it's important to take a minute to delineate just what's involved in making an institution truly transparent, easily visible, not camouflaged, or directly knowable by normal citizens and reporters who want to scrutinize it or just know exactly what it's up to.

To help provide a basis upon which to judge the transparency of a city government or a big corporation, here are a dozen characteristics that any institution aspiring to transparency ought to exhibit. The information provided by an organization to establish its transparency should be:

1. Accurate

   Unless the information provided is truthful and correct, it doesn't contribute much to transparency.

2. Timely, if not Instantaneous

   Data delayed is knowledge denied. To the greatest extent possible, data needs to be captured, added to the transparency data base, and made available for viewing as it is generated. This is "real-time transparency."

3, Complete

   Partial information may be worse than no information at all, especially when it creates an inaccurate picture of an important context or all the implications of some isolated facts.

4.   Accessible

If citizens and the media don't have convenient, no-cost, readily-available access to the information that is supposed to make an organization transparent, then that organization isn't transparent. Universal broadband connectivity is the best way to provide this level of accessibility to transparency data.

5.   Comprehensible

Presenting data in incomprehensible formats, or legal jargon, or accounting jargon, or other private languages designed to keep laypeople from understanding what's going on is the opposite of transparency. If necessary, organizations need to commit substantial resources to translating the records of their operations into language (and non-English languages) that citizens and the general circulation media can readily understand.

6.   Correctable

When citizens or media people know that such-and-such a vote went a different way than official records purport it did, or consumers know that some product never performed as stated by the corporation that made it, there needs to be a mechanism in place for them to submit their proposed corrections and for these submissions to be seriously considered by the organization and, if valid, to have the data changed.

7.   Evolving

As times and conditions and technology change, the means for collecting, correlating, data mining, storing and distributing the information in transparency data bases need to keep pace, so that the latest information and the latest means of communicating it are made available to everyone who wants to know.

8.   Open Source

Open source software refers to computer operating systems and applications where the actual software code that makes them run is available to people for examination and improvement. Using open source software to support transparency makes it harder to hide important data. Also, the open source model, involving the collective involvement of users rather than their passive receipt of mysteriously-prepared finished products that exclude their participation, provides a constructive way of approaching the transparency process itself.

9. Cumulative and Comprehensive

Transparency databases need to go back to the origins of the organization that wants to make itself transparent. The minutes of the first meeting need to be as readily available as those of the latest, as well as records of everything that happened in between.

10. Pro-Active

Transparency needs to be at the top of an organization's agenda. The transparent institution should take the initiative in making information about itself available to its constituents, rather than relegate the transparency process to an obscure and lowly corner of its operations, merely providing "pro-forma transparency" that puts the data in a "virtual basement" or "virtual attic" where interested parties need to search long and hard to find it. Passive, or passive-aggressive, transparency is no transparency at all.

11. Free

Charging people for information designed to make a government agency or a corporation transparent contradicts the very idea of making this information easily accessible to all. Making itself transparent is a cost of doing business that needs to be borne by the agency or company itself and not imposed on its constituents.

12. Good-natured

Transparency is a right enjoyed by the constituents (citizens, customers, community members) of an organization, not a privilege to be reluctantly and stingily doled out on its own timetable and in a manner that it feels best suits its own needs. Corporations and government organizations should willingly and enthusiastically "go transparent" because the citizens and customers that make their existence possible and whom they exist to serve deserve it.

Marc Strassman is President, Etopia; Executive Director, Coalition for HRX and Citizens United for Excellence in E-Government; host of Etopia Talk, a web-based talk show; and the losing high-tech candidate for Mayor of the San Fernando Valley in the recent failed secession election in the City of Los Angeles. He is also the author of "A Dozen Things that Excellent E-Government Should Be," attached. He's transparent himself, and accessible by e-mail at: hrx@adelphia.net.

Informational Asymmetry, Power, Privacy, and Transparency

By Marc Strassman
President, Etopia
hrx@adelphia.net

November 30, 2002

HAMLET, Act 2 Scene 2

... : what have you, my good friends, deserved at the hands of fortune, that she sends you to prison hither?
  GUILDENSTERN Prison, my lord!
  HAMLET Denmark's a prison.
  ROSENCRANTZ Then is the world one.
  HAMLET A goodly one; in which there are many confines, wards and dungeons, Denmark being one o' the worst...

When politicians commission polls and convene focus groups to find out what voters look for in campaign slogans, and then use this knowledge to spoon feed these same voters their preferred slogans as a sign of their "leadership," while keeping secret the means and methods they use to get themselves elected, they are leveraging informational asymmetry to their own advantage.

When the "merchants of cool" at MTV arrange to position VPs of marketing casually on the bedroom floors of typical teens to hear the intimate details for their preferences in clothes, CDs, and sex, without letting the teens sit in on their own strategic planning and marketing meetings, then use what they've learned under cover of their own secrecy to launch marketing campaigns to sell teens low self-esteem/coolness and selected garments, recordings, beverages, and the lifestyles made up of same, they are using informational asymmetry to expand their gross revenues and power.

When the United States Government undertakes to collect, store, correlate, and data mine every person's banking, shopping, credit, media, medical, working, and recreational habits and transactions, while holding this data secret, while instigating secret wiretaps authorized in secret judicial proceedings, but refuses to allow citizens or media access to the overall principles or specific facts of these operations, it is most certainly building its power by taking advantage of the informational asymmetry it has established, as a matter of law, and justified in the name of counter-terrorism, as it once justified similar, but less extensive, informational intrusions in the name of anti-communism and "national security."

The English Utilitarian Jeremy Bentham and the French Deconstructionist Michel Foucault have, in a sense, collaborated across time and space to instruct us on the philosophical underpinnings of the power and the danger of this "informational asymmetry."

The Panopticon

> The Panopticon of Jeremy Bentham is an architectural figure which "incorporates a tower central to an annular building that is divided into cells, each cell extending the entire thickness of the building to allow inner and outer windows. The occupants of the cells . . . are thus backlit, isolated from one another by walls, and subject to scrutiny both collectively and individually by an observer in the tower who remains unseen. Toward this end, Bentham envisioned not only venetian blinds on the tower observation ports but also mazelike connections among tower rooms to avoid glints of light or noise that might betray the presence of an observer."

> The Panopticon thus allows seeing without being seen. 'Such asymmetry of seeing-without-being-seen is, in fact, the very essence of power for Foucault because ultimately, the power to dominate rests on the *differential* possession of knowledge'"("Subject" 223).

> "According to Foucault, the new visibility or surveillance afforded by the Panopticon was of two types: The synoptic and the analytic. The Panopticon, in other words, was designed to ensure a 'surveillance which would be both global and individualizing'"

> (*Power/Knowledge* 148)

> From Barton and Barton, "Modes of Power" (139-41).

In short, to be seen by unseen eyes is to be disempowered to the extent of that seeing, while the unseen seer is similarly and reciprocally empowered by that transaction/relationship.

This was certainly shown to be true in the recent case of the Washington area sniper, who himself expressed his perception of how putting people into his cross-hairs prior to murdering them made him feel: as he wrote on the back of a tarot card which he left for the police to find: "I am God."

For architectural drawings and more on Foucault's explanation of the how the Panopticon is supposed to work, see:

http://cartome.org/panopticon1.htm

For David Engberg's conception of a "Virtual Panopticon," see:

For an historical/technical/deconstructionist proposal for "reverse engineering the Panopticon," by Deborah Natsios, see:

The technology to build a specific and concrete Panopticon existed when Bentham first proposed it as a model for prisons in 1791. The Panopticon as a metaphor for a "total-surveillance society," was intelligible in 1975 when Foucault published "Discipline and punish: the birth of the prison," which contains his analysis and elaboration of Bentham's ideas about this conceptual structure.

But it is only now, when the technology has become advanced enough and the perceived need for self-protection has become great enough to fund its development, acquisition, and deployment that the possibility of actually building and operating an all-seeing, all-knowing, all-pervading, all-encompassing Omni-opticon has arisen.

The technology necessary to monitor everyone, collect all the data they generate, store it, analyze it and prepare it for consideration by the data overlords is dual-use technology. It can be used by the people to watch the government; and it can be used by the government to watch the people (or both). Computer and Internet technology is of the essence in this discussion.

Last Halloween, I had a chance to comment on the dual-use dichotomy of information technology on a local radio show:

> … I've been working since about 1995 to convince the government to use the Internet and related technologies to empower people, so they could vote over the Internet, so they could sign initiative petitions over the Internet. These were designed to take money out of politics and give more power to the people to decide how their government would make policy. I've been recently working on trying to convince the City government to provide websites for all the Neighborhood Councils in Los Angeles. I've spent almost ten days trying to get an e-mail through to the Office of Homeland Security, which doesn't seem to have a phone number or a web address, to convince it that it should build websites in all of the counties in the country to provide a means for people to get authoritative and up-to-date information about things that bother them. I haven't heard from them.

> On the other hand, we see here that the Government, [through] Carnivore and related systems, they're poised, they're ready, they've been prepared, they're taking advantage of the situation to implement systems to use technology to surveil people, to sort of disempower them. And I'd like to

get more listeners' comments on this paradox: that the Internet is not viable, it is not acceptable to use to empower people but it is acceptable for the government to use it to disempower people.

Recorded October 31, 2001, on "Talk of the City" with Kittie Felde on KPCC, 89.3 FM, Pasadena, California

All of these takes on the Panopticon idea highlight how transparency and privacy are reciprocal values. To make oneself (or to be forced to become) transparent is to lose just that much privacy. The issue to be decided (or not) politically is who or what is to be transparent and who will retain their privacy.

The dozen things that excellent transparency should be, about which I recently wrote, are intended to set a standard for corporate and government institutions. Corporate and governmental transparency dictates that, as institutions, these organizations need to give up some of their privacy.

For their part, corporations and governments, through the programs of surveillance and data collection and analysis they undertake, strive to make individuals transparent to them, by peeling away layers of their privacy.

 Science fiction writer and social commentator David Brin argues that the answer to this confrontation is for everything to be transparent, both the activities of the citizens and the surveillance and monitoring by the government:

http://www.privacyfoundation.org/privacywatch/report.asp?id=79&action=0

It might help all sides in the coming debate over reciprocal vs. uni-directional transparency if they could add a certain understanding of the historical context and philosophical underpinnings of this issue to their own demands for consideration solely of what they perceive to be their own immediate self interest. An examination of the ideas included in, and pointed at, in this essay may be helpful in doing so.

Prologue to the Surveillance Coming On

By Marc Strassman
President, Etopia
hrx@adelphia.net

December 1, 2002

…And even the like precurse of fierce events,
As harbingers preceding still the fates
And prologue to the omen coming on…

From Act I, Scene 1 of "Hamlet," lines 121-123

We all know how much fun filmmaker and social critic Michael Moore, and, eventually, his audience, had due to his going around the US trying to embarrass gun users, gun lobbyists, and gun sellers. I thought I could have almost as much fun doing the same with those people and organizations that will participate and profit from the upcoming Surveillance State sought by the Bush Administration and authorized by the United States Congress.

Where will the data to be mined by the Total Information Awareness team come from? Willie Sutton said he robbed banks because "that's where the money was." It's only logical to assume that the data miners working for convicted felon and inveterate pipe smoker John Poindexter will go looking "where the data is." This should include banks, credit reporting agencies, insurance companies, medical records, retailers, police records, legal files, and, if they want to really track troublemakers and terrorists to their lair, the chat rooms of AOL, Yahoo!, and MSN, the Microsoft Network.

I figured I'd start with the least fortified of these data sources, the chat rooms. I called Yahoo! but haven't yet heard back from Fleishman-Hillard, the public relations agency they use to stay opaque to the public and media. I got a lot further with Microsoft, owner-operator of MSN, the chat "community" represented in the media by the guy in the butterfly suit.

Microsoft, now already on extremely good terms with the Bush Administration after the almost-complete resolution, on terms very acceptable to the Redmond Administration, of the anti-trust lawsuit originally brought against Bill's Software Trust by the Clinton Administration, told me to talk to the people at Waggener Edstrom, their opaquing front-end.

I contacted Waggener Edstrom and asked if they had any comment about transmission to the Total Information Awareness team of the content and metadata of the chats going on

in the MSN chat rooms. Here, in its entirety, is their response, which arrived in my office by e-mail on November 27 , 2002:

Hi Marc,

Thank you again for your call yesterday. Unfortunately, we just don't have anything to provide for your story at this time, but thank you for giving us this opportunity.

Happy Thanksgiving to you,
Erica

I'm looking forward to hearing from Yahoo!.

(Note: as of December 6th, I hadn't)

In late August, 2001, I created the EuronaCUEE mailing list. Here's its mission statement:

Description	**Category: Campaigns and Elections**

EuronaCUEE (Euro-North American) Citizens United for Excellence in E-Government is an educational and advocacy group working to develop and spread ideas and implementations of leading-edge e-government and e-democracy systems and practices in the European Union (EU) and Canada, the United States, and Mexico.

Here are its addresses:

Group Email Addresses

Post message: EuronaCUEE@yahoogroups.com
Subscribe: EuronaCUEE-subscribe@yahoogroups.com
Unsubscribe: EuronaCUEE-unsubscribe@yahoogroups.com
List owner: EuronaCUEE-owner@yahoogroups.com

I used it to send notices, articles, and casual exhortations to a small but select group of e-government enthusiasts in the US, the UK, and Scandinavia. Below are copies of the materials I sent out to the list between late August, 2001 and the end of 2002.

From: virtualorange@yahoo.com
Date: Wed Aug 29, 2001 2:02 pm
Subject: The Emerging "E-Gov/E-Dem Gap"

```
Dear EuronaCUEE subscriber,

One of the reasons President Kennedy was elected President in 1960 was
his constant harping on the "missile gap" between the US and the USSR,
which was said to threaten the national security of the US. As it
turned out, there wasn't really much of one.

Now, 40 years later, another "gap," with possibly severe consequences
for the US, is emerging. This is the "e-government/e-democracy gap"
between the US and the European Union. Take a look at some of what
they are up to (at public expense) in Europe right now:

EUROpean CITIes platform for online transaction services (EURO-CITI)

http://www.euro-citi.org/home.html


A European project to allow Internet voting in a highly secure and
verifiable way by using PC and palm computers, by using mobile phones
(CyberVote):
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http://www.eucybervote.org/index.html

Compare that to what they are up to in the US:

S. 803, The E-Government Act of 2001

http://www.ombwatch.org/info/2001/sb803.html

This bill, now pending in the US Senate, would provide money for an
innovation fund to research interesting new e-government ideas. But
most of the discussion so far about this legislation has focused on
whether a new federal Chief Information Officer (CIO) should report
to the head of the Office of Management and Budget or directly to the
President. While Europe builds, the US bickers.

Equal Protection of Voting Rights Act of 2001

(I tried, and failed, three times to get a link to this bill, but the
antiquated and inadequate House server would not allow it. If you are
committed to finding it, go to:

http://thomas.loc.gov/

and enter H.R. 1170 in the search box there.

This bill, now pending in the US House of Representatives, would
provide certain new protections to voters. It may, or may not,
include provisions that will move the transition to Internet voting
forward. While Europe is researching and testing continent-wide
electronic systems for voting, the US wallows in "chadgate" and falls
further behind.

While Europe is moving ahead to equip its cities and citizens for
advanced versions of e-gov and e-dem, the main activities in these
areas in the US are bickering and inaction, if you can call inaction
an activity.

This disparity is among the reasons for the formation of EuronaCUEE.

The rationale behind this list is to share and synergize ideas and
projects from both sides of the Atlantic and elsewhere. Right now,
that may mean learning more about what's happening in the EU and
trying to educate US policymakers about these developments, warn them
of the impending "e-gov/e-dem gap," and organize a movement to lobby
them to bring the US up to speed, as compared with our European
counterparts.

If you're a member of this list, your own contributions to it are most
welcome, be they news or opinion, long and complicated or short and to
the point. Please send your contributions to this discussion of
e-government and e-democracy to:

EuronaCUEE@yahoogroups.com

Contributions from those of you living or working outside of the North

Atlantic area are also very welcome, since the transition to
e-gov/e-dem is obviously a worldwide, not just a Euro/North American,
phenomenon. Perhaps we will soon change the name of this group to
CUEEWorldwide.

Also, we want to grow our list, so if you have friends, co-workers,
family members or mere acquaintances who you think might benefit from
membership in the group, please ask them to join, by sending a blank
e-mail to:

EuronaCUEE-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Thanks for your participation.

Sincerely,

Marc Strassman
Founder
EuronaCUEE

From: virtualorange@yahoo.com
Date: Wed Aug 29, 2001 2:19 pm
Subject: Fighting Social Exclusion in the U.K. through E-Gov


```
Dear EuronaCUEE subscriber,

Here's a recent story that highlights what a pro-active government can
do with Internet-based solutions to social and economic problems.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/in_depth/sci_tech/2000/dot_life/newsi
d_1507000/1507831.stm

In case your last post included a truncated version of the e-mail
address for signing up to this list, here it is again:

EuronaCUEE-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Regards,

Marc Strassman
Founder, EuronaCUEE
```

From: virtualorange@yahoo.com
Date: Mon Sep 3, 2001 4:28 pm
Subject: Cyber Stamps Now!

Cyber Stamps Now!

By Marc Strassman

August 31, 2001

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The economy is hovering extremely close to recession. The Dow
has dropped below 10,000 for the first time in months. Layoffs
abound, accelerate, threaten to multiply. Unbought computers gather
dust in gloomy warehouses. There is no joy in Silicon Valley, the
mighty New Economy has struck out.

But wait. When dairy farmers overestimated future demand for
cheddar, and blocks of the curdled stuff were gathering dust in gloomy
refrigerators, their politically powerful Representatives and Senators
stepped in. Using their clout, they created the idea of FOOD STAMPS,
and got a program embodying this concept passed by the Congress,
signed by the President, and enacted into law.

Food stamps, given with abandon to the calorie-challenged, did
what they promised: they put food on the tables of hungry people and
they cleared out those piles of surplus cheese.

Now, faced with the New Economy's version of too much brie,
it's time for the still-politically powerful Representatives and
Senators from Palo Alto, Cambridge, Research Triangle Park, Seattle,
and so on to do no less for the device-challenged masses and the
overstocked producers than did their agricultural counterparts in
distant days past.

COMPUTER STAMPS and INTERNET STAMPS (hereinafter, jointly,
CYBER STAMPS) offer the best way out of the current doldrums being
experienced by the high-tech sector, and, indeed, the entire economy,
wagged as it has become by the Silicon Sector. Furthermore, by
providing those on the wrong side of the digital divide with the means
to acquire the hardware, software, training, and Internet connections
they need to join the highly-productive high-tech sector, the entire
economy will be invigorated, as millions of new people begin to use
e-mail, chat, surf, shop, learn, commute, and generally mess around
online.

Every additional person who comes online with sufficient
digital identification and the means to authenticate him- or herself
means one more person who can officially transact business with his or
her local, state, and the federal government. Every time a citizen
can do that, not only has his or her life been made easier, but the
government agency with which they've transacted their business has
saved at least 80 per cent of their costs in doing that business.

Further, the data generated by the e-transaction can then be
automatically entered into the relevant databases, saving more time
and more money, as compared with the tedious, time-consuming, and
expensive manual alternative.

And beyond that, once EVERY eligible voter has a computer, a smart
card, and a digital certificate with which to securely and verifiably
identify and authenticate him- or herself online, the way will be
paved for universal remote Internet voting and the remote signing of
Smart Initiatives, thereby tremendously increasing the ease and
convenience for citizens wanting to participate directly in making the
laws and rules by which they are governed.

Many programs already exist to bring some part of the unwired
population online. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has just
donated 85 million dollars to bring people in Mexico online. This is
a humanitarian gesture, and it is also a shrewd move to create more
customers for Microsoft.

Providing EVERYONE who wants it with a decent computer and an
adequate connection to the Internet is similarly a humanitarian
gesture and also a shrewd way of meaningfully upgrading the national
average level of computer literacy and network access, something that
will immediately and for a long time pay big dividends in e-learning,
e-commerce, e-learning, e-government, and e-democracy.

And don't forget how happy it will make the management,
employees, and investors in the companies that created those surplus
piles of cheese, uh, I mean, computers. With inventories cleared,
they'll have more money to invest in more R & D and start creating
some REALLY hot products to power the NEW New Economy.

Marc Strassman is President of Etopia and the Founder of the
European-North American Citizens United for Excellence in E-Government
(Eurona), the mailing list of which can be joined by sending a blank
e-mail to: EuronaCUEE-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. Mr. Strassman can
be reached at etopia@pacificnet.net.

From: virtualorange@yahoo.com
Date: Mon Sep 3, 2001 8:31 pm
Subject: A Frog-Based System of Pollsite Electronic Voting

```
Dear EuronaCUEE subscriber,

Ron Rivest (the "R" in RSA Security) and two colleagues have developed
an extremely clever scheme for creating electronic pollsite (but not
remote) voting systems using what they call "frogs."

Learn more about this (and any number of other interesting subjects in
cryptography and related subjects) at Professor Rivest's website at:

http://theory.lcs.mit.edu/~rivest/publications.html

Regards,

Marc Strassman
President
Etopia
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From: virtualorange@yahoo.com
Date: Tue Sep 4, 2001 5:29 pm
Subject: City of Cambridge, England, Government and E-Government Through the Ages

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Dear EuronaCUEE subscriber,

For a wee bit of e-government fun (and perspective), I'd recommend a
visit to the website of the City of Cambridge, England, U.K.

On its homepage you'll see, within less than an inch of each other, a
link to the city charters being celebrated during the town's
octocentenary and a link to an explanation of how the town, along with
the rest of Great Britain, is working to put all of its
anciently-derived/modernly-configured government online by 2005.

Maybe in 2801 there'll be a website commemorating what we all did to
create a universal virtual democratic governmental system.

Join the fun at:

http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/cambridge.htm

Cheers,

Marc Strassman
President
Etopia
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From: AlanKotok@cs.com
Date: Thu Sep 6, 2001 5:49 pm
Subject: Analysis of E-Government Act of 2001

The U.S. Techno-Politics page on Suite 101.com has a new column on the
E-Government Act of 2001, calling it the 'sleeper in the Senate' because of
its potential long-term impact. Read the column at
http://www.suite101.com/article.cfm/10818/79163.

Alan Kotok
AlanKotok@cs.com
http://www.technewslit.com/
Editor, <E*Business*Standards Today/>, http://www.disa.org/dailywire/
Editor, Techno-Politics,
http://www.suite101.com/welcome.cfm/us_techno_politics

From: virtualorange@yahoo.com
Date: Mon Sep 10, 2001 7:44 pm
Subject: Three UK e-government URLs

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Dear EuronaCUEE subscriber,

After <hotmail.com>, the most common e-mail address domain on our list
is <gov.uk>.

It's great that so many people in the British government are on this
list, and it's great that that government is doing so much in the
field of e-government.

To recognize that fact, and to better acquaint the non-UK members of
our list with more of what's happening in e-Britain, I'm sending you
three URLs from the UK e-government space:


http://www10.org/program/society/sladen/detr.htm

Socially Inclusive e-Government?

Excerpt:

The UK Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR)
aims to improve the quality of life of British citizens. But how can
it really achieve this through the Internet? The combination of
ambitious electronic service delivery targets and a social inclusion
policy, illustrate how government wrestles with potentially
contradictory aims. Can the Internet be socially inclusive? What
relationship can government have with this powerful medium?


http://www.isaware.org.uk/textonly/subsection.asp?ID=45

This page on the ISaware site is full of links to many of the British
organizations that are leading the way towards providing all
government services online to everyone in Britain by 2008 (or 2005, as
others seem to think).

Excerpt:

e-government is concerned with the delivery of public services in the
Information Age. It focuses on better services for citizens and
businesses and more effective use of the Government's information
resources. The UK Government aims to be a global exemplar in its use
of information and communication technologies and in the Modernising
Government White Paper it set targets for 100% of Government services
to be delivered electronically by 2008.
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This one is the last link on the ISaware page, but I wanted to call special attention to it because it's an important site, not least of which because it's run by the British national government.

Excerpt:

This section of the site will contain a list of the subject areas within the e-Government agenda that are relevant to getting the UK Online by 2005. Our intention is to create internet communities of interested stakeholders around each subject area to inform the development of policy. These areas will include:

Broadband
Transactions
e-Charter
e-Democracy
Life Episodes
Channels
Security in the Information Age
Change of Address

While the United States Senate is preparing to spend weeks debating to whom the Chief Information Officer of the United States should report, the British Government is moving ahead in areas as profound as "e-Democracy" and as mundane, but still important as "Change of Address."

In 1765, ten years before he delivered his "give me liberty or give me death" speech, the Virginia patriot and orator Patrick Henry said:

Cæsar had his Brutus; Charles the First, his Cromwell; and George the Third ["Treason!" cried the Speaker]-may profit by their example. If this be treason, make the most of it.

Profiting from examples can be a two-way, trans-Atlantic street. We in North America should make the most of the current British example, in both those specifics that can be adapted and used here and the overall approach of this nationwide effort. We should also consider emulating the way the British are making the transition to e-government an explicit national priority.

Cheers,

Marc Strassman
President
Etopia

From: virtualorange@yahoo.com
Date: Tue Sep 25, 2001 1:59 pm
Subject: A Simple New Reason for Adopting E-Government and E-Democracy

Dear EuronaCUEE subscriber,

If I knew what to say about September 11th, I would. I still think we
should be looking for ways to use technology, in conjunction with good
ideas, to make the world safer, freer, and more democratic. I hope we
can. What we should do here is try.

Sincerely,

Marc Strassman

A Simple New Reason for Adopting E-Government and E-Democracy

By Marc Strassman

September 25, 2001

A few nights ago, one of the major network news shows ran a
segment about how the Federal Government is in for some big trouble
over the next ten years as the baby boomer core of its administrative
worker force retires. Another one of the major networks promised a
story tomorrow night on the impeding disaster facing the entire
country as all the baby boomers retire.

As someone who looks at all news stories for what support they
can give my ongoing efforts to persuade the media, the population, and
the decision-makers that instituting e-government and e-democracy is a
great idea, it didn't take me long to see how this inexorable
development offers a concise, simple, persuasive additional reason for
moving in the direction of deploying such electronic networks.

Take voting. Most of the fevered discussion of the voting
process that followed in the wake of last fall's debacle in Florida
has focused on how to replace the Chad-O-Matic voting systems with
higher-tech upgrades and how to pay for doing so. Some, but not much,
attention has been paid to the subject of how to recruit and deploy
the poll workers who need to be at the polling stations whatever the
technology employed.

It's difficult to generalize about this, but my own experience
tells me that most poll workers are taken from the upper reaches of
the age spectrum, if for no other reason than as the age cohort with
the highest percentage of retirees, this group has, as a rule, more
time for such activities. Also, this age cohort came of age at a time

when civic duty was not considered an oxymoronic concept.

I'm not certain what the current stereotypes are for boomers long
characterized as self-indulgent or their younger X-ian counterparts
often derided as slackers, but I'm not sure either group is likely to
show the same commitment to the political process that their elders
have demonstrated by staffing polling places during the recent past.

This means that remote Internet voting, with its minimal need for
humans on the ground, as well as its lower per voter costs, will look
increasingly attractive.

Voting is just one area where government and citizens meet and
interact. Social Security is another. Tonight's television segment
on the looming crisis in Washington made the obvious point that just
at the time when tens of millions of boomers will need to contact the
government to find out about their Social Security checks, the
seasoned and experienced workers who might have been able to help them
will have gone, having themselves retired.

To someone who's been arguing for years that putting
government functions on the Web offers a way to lower government
costs, increase citizen convenience, reduce error rates, and generally
upgrade and re-engineer government and elections, this new crisis
seems like just another, and maybe the best yet, argument for doing
just that.

Of course, it's equally essential that everyone be able to
access these electronic transaction systems, from devices like PCs,
handhelds, cellular phones, or kiosks. And that they know how to use
these networked access devices.

I've made the related point recently (in "Cyber Stamps Now!")
that one way to respond simultaneously and effectively to the current
economic downturn and the ongoing existence of a serious digital
divide is to have the Federal Government issue Computer Stamps and
Internet Access Stamps (collectively, Cyber Stamps) in order to speed
the process of putting everyone online. The exact means are not
important, but providing everyone in the country with the means to
access and interact with the Internet, in order to involve everyone in
solving these intertwined problems of recession, the digital divide,
and the looming boomer retirement crisis, is.

The alternative may be having to wait on hold for several days
before getting to talk to one of the few human staffers still at work,
in either the government or private sector.

From: virtualorange@yahoo.com
Date: Tue Sep 25, 2001 2:04 pm
Subject: Replacing Secession with E-Government and E-Democracy

Dear EuronaCUEE subscriber,

Here in Los Angeles, secession of large parts of the city is a major
political issue. Separatist movements are not prominent in other US
cities, but they certainly are in many countries around the world.
Maybe the same principles that govern municipal split-ups also apply
to national ones, and maybe many countries around the world could help
prevent their own break-ups by moving expeditiously to implement
e-government and e-democracy systems within their (current) borders.

Sincerely,

Marc Strassman

Replacing Secession with E-Government and E-Democracy

By Marc Strassman

September 25, 2001

Taken together, the implementation of e-government to deliver
information and services to citizens rapidly, inexpensively, and
efficiently, along with the introduction of e-democracy to allow
citizens a REAL role in their own government, would go a long way
towards making Los Angeles a much better place for everyone who lives
here and could go most of the way towards undermining the large and
growing movement to break up the City.

As one means of thwarting secession, the City of Los Angeles has
already launched a program of neighborhood councils, designed to more
fully involve local residents in lobbying for the interests of their
own local areas. Like the plan for decentralizing the school
district, this effort to somewhat disperse the city administration is
still "a work in progress."

But the kind of civic participation offered by neighborhood councils
may not be nearly enough to satisfy Valley, Hollywood, and Harbor
residents looking for even more local control. Put most simply, many
people in the Valley, in Hollywood, and in the Harbor Area want to
secede because they feel alienated, distant, cut-off, and ignored by
City government downtown. They feel SO alienated that they are
willing to go through years of political aggravation to avoid the
greater aggravation they think will never end if they remain as part
of Los Angeles.

Decentralizing the City might alleviate these feelings. Secession might alleviate them, too. But so could implementing meaningful systems of e-government and e-democracy, which might greatly enhance the quality of the city while avoiding the need to break it up.

Lack of good communication between government and citizens is at the heart of the secessionist's complaints.

Given the realities of traveling in Los Angeles, who wants to spend half a day getting to a counter to fill out a form that can be more easily filled out online?

E-government would allow Angelinos to fill out city forms from their desktops (or laptops, or PDAs, or, soon, smart phones) in a few minutes, then digitally sign them with a smart card and digital certificate. This not only makes life easier for each citizen, but, by drastically reducing the total number of daily automobile trips needed, makes life easier for everyone else as well.

Multiply this by millions, and you can see the time, trouble, fuel, and frustration avoided by putting citizens "online, not in line."

Civic apathy is widespread and is demonstrated constantly by low turnout rates in City elections. Even though the recent voting resulted in the election of an unusually distinguished group of intelligent, energetic, and reform-minded people to serve in City Hall, they were nonetheless elected in a process involving only one-third of the REGISTERED voters, which is itself only a portion of the total ELIGIBLE voters.

Many of the races were close, with the winner capturing barely more than 50% of the votes. On average then, this new crop of politicians has been elected by one-half of one-third of the registered voters. One out of ten citizens voted for their "representative." This is not democracy, but "oligarchy by apathy."

Contrast this with e-democracy, a system of Internet-mediated surveys, initiatives, and elections that gives every citizen a chance to have his or her voice heard, and, beyond that, to actually participate in political decisions that affect him or her. Giving all people the means to access the Internet and through it a real say in their own self-governance would remove the basic motivation now driving the secession movements throughout the city.

The choice we face could be as absolute as e-government/e-democracy or secession/break-up. The immediate implementation of e-government and e-democracy, along with genuine decentralization, is not only the best way to prevent the break-up of Los Angeles. It is also the best way to make it worth keeping together.

From: virtualorange@yahoo.com
Date: Thu Sep 27, 2001 4:45 pm
Subject: Security Portal Network

One way to put the Internet to work in pursuit of domestic
security is to build a "Security Portal Network" (SPN). Such a
system, which could be built and run by the newly-formed Office of
Homeland Security, might consist of 3,000 or so double-layered
e-government portals, one in each county of the United States.

The first layer would provide a means for officials and agencies to
communicate with each other and coordinate their anti-terrorism
strategies. The second layer would provide all residents of the
county with accurate and up-to-date information that would help them
prepare for and protect themselves against the ravages of terrorism
and other kinds of emergencies.

The first, officials', layer would be heavily secured, by smart cards,
digital certificates, tokens, encryption and the like, in order to
limit access to the discussions and information there to those
properly allowed to participate. Among the agencies that would be
involved might be, at the federal level, the Department of Defense,
the CIA, the White House, the US Department of Justice, the Food and
Drug Administration, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,
and the Federal Emergency Management Agency; at the state level,
governors' offices, state departments of justice, state police
agencies, and state emergency management agencies; and at the local
level county executives, county boards of supervisors, mayors, city
councils, police and sheriff's departments, local health agencies, and
local emergency preparedness agencies.

Using chat rooms, document exchange systems, white boards, and other
tools for discussion, data storage and retrieval in this layer of the
SPN, government officials could conveniently and securely educate each
other about security principles and practices in each particular
county and work together to develop comprehensive and effective
strategies for preventing and, if necessary, responding to, threats to
the population within each particular jurisdiction.

Using similar and possibly additional digital communications tools in
the more open and accessible second, public, layer of the SPN
websites, residents of each community would be able to ask questions
of themselves and the experts in the officials' layer, discuss their
concerns with others, find out the latest in rules and regulations
being promulgated by national, state, and local authorities, express
their views, and get up-to-date information about security-related
conditions at airports, on roads, and in specific parts of each
county.

Each layer could facilitate the performance of important tasks

necessary for building a more security-conscious society. Working in tandem, they can synergistically enhance both the work of officials and the participation of citizens in this common task.

A Security Portal Network can enhance our security while protecting our freedom. We ought to begin discussing whether, when, and how to build and deploy it.

If you have any comments on this proposal, or ideas of your own about how the Internet could be used to respond to the present crisis, please send them to EuronaCUEE@yahoogroups.com and they'll be forwarded to the rest of the EuronaCUEE list.

From: virtualorange@yahoo.com
Date: Tue Oct 2, 2001 9:07 pm
Subject: If It's Good Enough for Wall Street, It's Good Enough for Me

Dear EuronaCUEE subscriber,

This may be preaching to the choir, but I wanted to briefly share with
you an idea I had this evening relating to the right of people to use
the Internet to transact political business, such as voting and
signing official initiative petitions.

The inspiration for the idea was a preview on television of a Public
Broadcasting System program about how the billions of dollars flowing
in and out of Wall Street are largely virtual, or electronic. This is
because most stock and bond trades are done online. Thousands, or
millions, or billions of dollars are transferred, instantaneously,
from London to New York to Hong Kong and back, and there's no paper
involved.

No one needs to fill out a piece of paper, sign it with a pen, put it
in an envelope, find a stamp, find a carrier, and wait days to see if
the transaction has gone through. Doing that, or asking about doing
that, would be ridiculous today. Financial transactions, large and
small, are conducted online.

Which matters more to the future of a community, the vote of one of
its residents in a local election, or the decisions of countless
investors, analysts, and corporate officers in a company that may or
may not locate in that community or may leave or may lay off thousands
of workers?

Of course, it's the business decisions and transactions, not the
political transactions, that will affect more lives more deeply.
Those buying and selling stock in a company can conduct their
transactions online in real time utilizing the power and reach of
computers and various networks. Those affected by decisions made
about and by that company, in their role as citizens, cannot. They
get to vote once a year, using paper, pen-and-ink signatures, and
lists printed out from ancient mainframes. Investors can vote as
often as they want, everyday, using the best and latest in computers
and networks.

And yet allowing citizens to sign petitions online, or vote online, or
complete forms to run for office online, is strictly prohibited, on
the grounds that the electoral process is too sacred, too important,
too crucial to be subjected to the whims and risks associated with
online transactions.

But billions of dollars are trusted to that medium, and who can deny
that the impact of the constant sloshing of this money around the

world is far more consequential than the mere election returns from
almost any jurisdiction you might care to mention.

Need it be spelled out more starkly that electronic financial
transactions are allowed and electronic political transactions are not
because money talks and politics walks?

Not coincidentally, the power to determine the voting rules resides in
those incumbents who have ridden the existing rules into office.
Ridden them, of course, under the colors of the same individuals and
organizations that have full use of computer and network power to make
their own financial dealings as convenient and practical and
remunerative as they can.

Only when we citizens realize that the arguments used to block the
advent of electronic democracy but not the ongoing hegemony of
electronic finance are hypocritical shams standing in the way of real
democracy and commit ourselves to repudiating these arguments and
providing ourselves with the means of formulating and implementing our
collective political will online will this imbalance be righted and
the proper relationship between human rights and financial rights be
established.

From: virtualorange@yahoo.com
Date: Sat Oct 13, 2001 11:33 am
Subject: Boston Review article

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Dear EuronaCUEE subscriber,

A piece I wrote for the Boston Review a few months ago has finally hit
the virtual newsstands and can be accessed at:

http://bostonreview.mit.edu/BR26.5/strassman.html

If you've got a minute, give it a look, and, if you'd like, check out
the rest of the issue as well.

Sincerely,

Marc Strassman
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From: virtualorange@yahoo.com
Date: Sun Nov 4, 2001 2:50 pm
Subject: Community, Democracy, Politics

Dear EuronaCUEE subscriber,

Writing theoretical papers about e-government is one thing. Trying to
implement e-government and e-democracies in jurisdictions full of
apathetic and/or cynical citizens, ignorant and anti-technological
bureaucrats, and entrenched politicians eager to protect their
privileges at all cost is something else.

Below is a piece I just wrote that combines a bit of narrative with a
bit of analysis in an effort to make sense of my recent political
efforts in Los Angeles and some of the anomalies these efforts have
surfaced. I hope it will be both entertaining and instructive.

This latest set of rebuffs from the powers-that-be has caused me to
wonder if I might be better spending my transformative energy
elsewhere, specifically on projects in places outside the US where the
objective conditions for using the Internet to upgrade democracy are
less bleak. Wondering how I might do so, I realized immediately the
answer: the Internet. Organizationally, I think it might be
practical to mobilize the members of this list (and others we could
recruit) to focus on a few specific places and projects where
our individual and collective knowledge, experience and contacts could
play a positive role in bringing about change in the areas of
e-government and e-democracy.

Not only would such efforts bring real benefits to those impacted by
these projects, but we would also be able to provide a concrete
demonstration of the power of Internet-mediated and
globally-dispersed communities such as ours to make a difference.
Think of it as an "e-democracy/e-government virtual strike force,"
swooping down from cyberspace to do good in an interesting way, then
returning to our home bases, deep within the network. Is there a
television series or feature film here?

In any case, please look at this essay and send any comments you have
to:

EuronaCUEE@yahoogroups.com

I will approve your comments and send them on to the rest of the list.

You could also submit the names, URLs, and some information about any
e-government or e-democracy projects, anywhere in the world, that you
think might be worthy of our group's time and attention.

Thanks for your time.

Sincerely,

Marc Strassman
Founder
EuronaCUEE

Community, Democracy, Politics

By Marc Strassman
President
Etopia
etopia@pacificnet.net

November 3, 2001

What I want to briefly do here is tie together two of my recent experiences with the Los Angeles municipal bureaucracy, both of which involve the three terms in the title of this essay: community, democracy and politics.

I spent most of the first three weeks of October, 2001, standing out in front of Gelson's upscale supermarket in Valley Village and in front of K-mart's downscale store in Sunland collecting the signatures of registered voters living in the 2nd City Council District, in order to qualify for the special election in that jurisdiction to serve out the last year of departed Councilmember Joel Wachs, who represented some version of that district for 30 years.

I have written elsewhere about what it's like to be rudely ignored and insulted by people who hate politics and politicians so much that they would apparently rather have sex with a decaying corpse than even consider taking a minute or two to contribute one of the hundreds of signatures required by potential candidates in order to get on the ballot to "represent" them. There were also those people, many more at Gelson's than at K-mart, whose contempt went beyond even that and who would not for a second interrupt their lives of cell phones, gourmet coffee, high fashion, and shopping to acknowledge my mere existence.

But that's not today's subject. Today's subject is jurisdictional boundaries and how the city determines them.

Before collecting a signature, before even asking for it, I would "qualify" my prospects by asking them if they were registered voters, since only registered voters were entitled to sign the nomination petitions potential candidates need to submit to get on the ballot. If they said they were registered voters, I would follow-up by asking them if they lived in the 2nd Council District, since only bona fide residents of the 2nd Council District were entitled to sign the nomination petitions potential candidates need to submit to get on the ballot.

A few, a very few, people knew they lived in the 2nd Council District (or in the 4th, immediately adjacent to the 2nd). This testifies to the low salience of Council Districts in the lives of most people. These people, and a few more, whom I collectively regard as the "politicized intelligentsia" of the area, knew that Joe Wachs had been "their" councilman before leaving for New York City to become the Director of the Andy Warhol Foundation. (A few thought he still WAS their Councilmember.)

For everyone else, I had to run through additional tests. I'd ask where they lived. I'd ask if they lived in "Valley Village, North Hollywood, Arleta, selected parts of Van Nuys, and certain parts of Studio City below Dona Pagita." If they said Valley Village or North Hollywood, I'd sign them up without further ado. If they said Studio City, I'd worry, and ask them, "Where in Studio City?"

But the map showing the boundaries of the 2nd District that I'd been given by the City was way too big to handle easily in public and not wanting to miss out, I let people living almost anyplace in Studio City sign the petitions, saying, "If you're not in the District, they'll just throw your signature out." I thought I'd be able to get enough signatures overall so that it wouldn't matter.

There were similar problems in front of the K-mart in Sunland. Many residents of La Crescenta shop at that store and were willing to sign my petition, but La Crescenta isn't even in the City of Los Angeles, so their signatures wouldn't have been valid, and I wouldn't let them sign.

Let me now make explicit the obvious point that the 2nd Council District has very little relationship to "communities of interest" or even shopping patterns. Like all the City's Council Districts (and the State of California's Assembly and Senate Districts, and the state legislative districts in other states, and the federal Congressional districts), its boundaries are set by incumbent politicians and their parties in order to maximize their electoral market share and the lavish contributions they can attract as a consequence.

The 2nd Council District, especially, is a mish-mash of scattered blocks and neighborhoods stretching all over hell and back, grabbing Van Nuys Airport here, crawling a bit up into the hills there, sprawling over the vacant acres of Sunland-Tujunga there. Of course it has to sprawl, and so do all the other Council Districts, because there are only 15 Council Districts for the whole 468 square miles and 3,800,000 people in the City. These 200,000 person districts are about half the size of a basic US Congressional District.

Why doesn't Los Angeles have many more much smaller Council Districts so that communities of interest could be reflected in them, citizens could know which one they lived in, Councilmembers could be accessible to those they represent, and we wouldn't need to have Neighborhood Councils to remedy all the ills that huge and unwieldy Council Districts generate? Guess.

A Los Angeles of 150 Council Districts (Chicago has 50 for a population of under 3 million.) would mean both less power and

influence for Councilmembers and more trouble for "community leaders" wanting to exert control over the direction of city affairs. Keeping the legislative power concentrated in the hands of barely more than a dozen people makes things more convenient all around.

Enough analysis. Let's get back to my sordid little political adventures.

So, for the reasons just outlined, it's hard to know where one Council District ends and the next one begins. At least it was for me, running my Council campaign on a zero budget. I did manage to scrape together the $300 filing fee required by the City. I made my way through anti-terrorist barricades and armed guards on Saturday, October 20th, and took my completed nomination papers to the Office of the City Clerk, Election Division. They counted the 648 signatures I'd gathered (which included 25 gathered by my sole volunteer) and took my $300.00. I needed 500 good signatures to qualify.

A few days later they notified me that 290 of the signatures were disqualified on account of the signers residing outside the district. I guess this was my comeuppance for not screening those Studio City residents more carefully. Of course, I always felt fortunate to have the presence and attention of my signers for as long as I did, and trying to pin down their residency within the district might have been more than many of them could bear, but that's not the problem of the City Clerk's Office.

I was out of the race.

But I had an ace-in-the-hole, in terms of public service in my community: Neighborhood Councils.

Neighborhood Councils, like the open seat in the 2nd District, were the legacy of the recently-departed Joel Wachs. Thinking he could ride the idea of community-based councils into the Mayor's Office, Wachs and his allies saw to their inclusion in the New City Charter that was adopted by a smattering of Angelenos in 1999 (17% of registered voters bothered to vote, meaning about 10% of eligible voters participated, and I can't find the split in the vote on the City Clerk's site.)

Wachs ran for Mayor in 2001 as the person who could best implement his brainchild, Neighborhood Councils. He lost in the primary. But his legacy, Neighborhood Councils, lives on. In fact, his former Chief of Staff, Greg Nelson, was recently appointed General Manager of the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment, the city agency responsible for implementing the Neighborhood Council provisions of the New City Charter.

I attended the first (and only) organizational meeting of my local Neighborhood Council on September 12, 2001. It was run by people from the Valley Village Homeowners Association. I was very skeptical going in that NCs were anything more than sham fronts to involve people in pointless begging of City Councilmembers under the guise of giving "the community" a "voice." Homeowner associations already had as much of a voice as they could get, cajoling and threatening incumbents with the granting or withholding of their approval, endorsements,

volunteers, and money.

The theory, to the extent there was one, seemed to be that the NC would allow conflicting and excluded interests to be locally reconciled and the resulting consensus positions passed on to the rulers/elected officials who would then, would then what? Do what the reconciled and conciliated community members wanted done? Or graciously accept their recommendations and then do whatever they and their contributors and the real "community leaders" wanted done?

I raised these issues at the meeting, or tried to, but the Homeowner "leadership" wasn't interested. Nor were they interested in my suggestion that the complaints raised by attendees about insufficient copies of proposed by-laws, last-minute distribution of flyers, and lack of public notice in the print media could all be effectively and elegantly addressed by using the Internet. The core response was "What's the Internet?"

After being disqualified for the 2nd District Council race, my attention turned back to my local NC, as a possible focus for the issues of e-government and Internet democracy that had been well-received during my short-lived campaign for Council. I called the local DONE office and asked when the next VVNC meeting was going to take place. "Nothing's scheduled," they told me. I called again last week. "Nothing's scheduled," they re-iterated. "In fact," they added, "nothing's scheduled until next year."

"Two months from now?" I asked. "That's right. They're taking off for the holidays."

I decided to organize my own NC for VV. I downloaded the Certification Form. It said I needed to provide a description of the boundaries of the proposed NC. Thinking that I had perhaps over-reached with my effort to electronically-democratize all 200,000 people in the 2nd Council District, I vowed to focus like a laser beam on the one-tenth as many people living in Valley Village.

A word to the uninitiated: Valley Village is a name for that part of the City formerly known as North Hollywood where the homeowners, frightened of both the physical threat and the concomitant decline in property values engendered by the elevation of their "community" to a very high ranking among the most violent and dangerous areas in the country, appealed to the City for relief and, for their trouble, were rewarded by the posting of signs on lamp posts declaring them to now be residing, not in the forlorn district of North Hollywood but in the bright and shining district of "Valley Village."

So I was going to focus solely on Valley Village. I needed the boundaries. I wanted a nice digital map setting them out for me to use and for all to see. On Friday, November 2, 2001, I called the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment and asked for one.

The DONE bureaucrat didn't have one, but she suggested I try the "Community Planning Bureau." They sent me to the "Mapping Section." The people there mentioned a "Valley Village Specific Plan." Two other people were in charge of that, but one was out because she was on a 10x4 work schedule, and the other wasn't in at all.

From there it was off to "Building and Safety," where I got nothing. Next was the City Clerk's Office, where the woman I spoke to asked me "What city is Valley Village in?" This amazed even me. I gave her an abbreviated version of the origin story above. She sent me to "Engineering," from where I was directed to "Public Works," where the numbers I was given to call were fax numbers, even more useless than all the other sounds so far.

When I was referred, after 40 minutes of this, to "the Planning Department," I admitted defeat and gave up.

There is a satisfying and ironic twist to all this, however. Today, Saturday, I went to the DONE Workshop that was being held at Loyola Marymount University. I noticed that Greg Nelson, General Manager of DONE, was holding forth with two empowered citizens. I cautiously approached and asked about the appropriateness of creating a "second layer" NC in Valley Village to be built around the Internet, on the order of a cell phone area code overlay, in order to deal with the hostility to the Internet, not to mention the non-presence of, the Valley Village Homeowner Association's proposed NC.

Mr. Nelson found this approach unacceptable, agreeing with my analogy that, like nation states, only one NC could occupy any particular geographic area at any one time. But the real fun came when I complained to him about my recent inability to get a map of Valley Village from his department.

After telling me he could easily remedy that problem if he only had the time, he explained to me that THERE WAS NO MAP OF VALLEY VILLAGE. All the NC areas, he explained, are fluid, open, indeterminate entities. They emerge out of the community unconscious (my phrase, not his) and cannot be pinned down to anything as mundane, rigid and unchanging as say (my point again) City Council Districts.

By now we were outside, and surrounded by a few other empowerees, who listened in and joined in as General Manager Nelson and I discussed the metaphysical underpinnings of NC boundaries. He twice accused me of wanting them to be defined in a "top-down" way. Twice I rejected his accusation and vigorously asserted that I was a "bottom-up" person.

Thinking I was in a crowd where self-confident self-deprecation counted for something, I rhetorically suggested that my efforts to get a map of Valley Village from DONE had been a "fool's errand." This brought agreement and snickers from the crowd. Then I set Greg up by asking how these boundaries should be determined. "Common sense," he triumphantly crowed. The crowd went wild. One woman smirked, "It's called democracy."

I left thinking I'd somehow been outflanked, or refuted on some important point, or just mocked and abused. But as I thought over Mr. Nelson's point of view and compared it with my recent experience of being excluded from the 2nd Council District race I realized there was a real ideological bonanza here.

In fact, as I hope I've made clear already in this essay, there is a

very interesting set of interlocking factors relating to self-government in Los Angeles involved here. Not least of which is the fact that Greg Nelson, the man who knows more about NCs than anyone in the world, was formerly Chief of Staff to Joel Wachs, who spearheaded the campaign to put NCs into the New City Charter.

Here are the core propositions:

The City enforces precise, strict and rigid rules regarding signatures for City Council races.

The City refuses to enforce any rules regarding community boundaries for Neighborhood Council "districts"

Why is this?

Common sense tells us that the City Council seats count and the Neighborhood Councils don't.

Since Council Districts are laid out to maximize the concentration of political power in a few hands, it's important that their boundaries, however gerrymandered and bizarre they are, be established and enforced with the utmost rigor and attention to precise, if confusing and obscure, detail.

Preserving or integrating whatever "communities of interest" may exist in neighborhoods or larger contiguous areas is not a goal for the Council Districting process. In fact, the inclusion or synergizing of communities of interest within a Council District could conceivably upset the status quo and so may need to be actively opposed, for example by breaking up possible communities of interest across multiple Council Districts.

Neighborhood Council boundaries, on the other hand, can and should be nebulous, constantly shifting, and indeterminate, as Greg Nelson told me, because the NCs aren't going to have any real power and so who cares if communities of interest can actually organize themselves coherently in the form of NCs?

Two alternate approaches could conceivably actually empower individuals and communities. One, mentioned above, would be to build City Council districts on the model being used for Neighborhood Councils and in similar numbers. In short, to let communities and individuals aggregate themselves into 150 or so Council Units with nebulous, constantly shifting, and indeterminate boundaries and have these entities elect City Councilmembers to represent them at the citywide level.

There would then be no need for Neighborhood Councils, which will have turned into City Council Districts.

A second approach is to take this model one step further and, making full use of the Internet and other communications tools, let registered voters (and possibly others) aggregate themselves in a creative and fluid way across the city in whatever way they find most appropriate and useful.

What this specifically would mean is that members of a particular religious affiliation, or a gender, or a sexual orientation, or shared age range, income or education level, height, ethnicity or whatever could create their own "virtual caucus" and elect as many representatives to the citywide representative body as their numbers entitle them, on a proportional basis.

Perhaps the City should have a bi-cameral legislature, with one house elected according to the 150 or so geographically-determined districts and the other elected by the various virtual caucuses of aggregated individuals.

This might work by letting whomever represents a certain number of people cast that many votes in the citywide body. Of course, with the perfection of the technology and the universality of Internet access, we might be able to dispense with the representative aspect partially or entirely and let everyone vote directly on the matters at hand. Or a direct vote might only appear in the context of vetoing legislation passed by the representative body. Other fluid and constantly-evolving methods and processes should be sought, developed and used to give citizens the same power and choices they have in other areas of their lives.

New technology will enable the same flexibility in politics and public decision-making that we now see in manufacturing, e-commerce, entertainment, business and almost every aspect of contemporary life except politics.

Of course, letting all "people" participate in this system rather than all "registered voters" raises in another form the same dichotomy between the rules governing City Council elections and the creation of Neighborhood Councils.

A fully inclusive system of democracy would include people who are not registered to vote, who live in the City but are not citizens, who live in the City without the permission of the US Government, or are under 18. Purists may cringe at the idea of allowing such people to participate in public decisions affecting anyone, let alone the purists. Let me mention anecdotally the many "people" I encountered while collecting signatures who, when I asked them if they were registered to vote, proudly snapped an aggressive and self-assured, "NO!" After hearing this over and over again, I asked a few of them if they'd mind if their right to vote were revoked. None of them objected to this suggestion. If they don't want to participate, maybe we should let some of those currently excluded from the municipal democratic process participate in their place.

Remember that the New City Charter under which we are being governed, and which mandates the creation of the Neighborhood Councils, was approved by fewer than one in ten of us. To say that high school students or foreign nationals should be excluded from the municipal decision-making process because including them would undermine our "democracy" is ludicrous. What democracy?

Students and foreign nationals are fully included in the consumption and production processes. What makes the political process different?

The Internet is fully utilized in the consumption and production processes. What makes the political process different?

Including everyone and using the best technology we have in the process of self-government are essential if real democracy is to be preserved and extended. We forget at our peril that the enormous material progress and success enjoyed by the people in this country have come about because of social openness, political inclusion, and vigorously exercised civil liberties. If we forget that and try to have the fruits of these virtues without practicing them, we will be in for some unpleasant surprises, however we define the boundaries of the units we use to govern ourselves.

From: virtualorange@yahoo.com
Date: Mon Nov 5, 2001 11:38 am
Subject: Neighborhood Watch, Neighborhood Councils, Security Portal Network

From: AlanKotok@cs.com
Date: Mon Nov 5, 2001 7:34am
Subject: RE: [EuronaCUEE] Community, Democracy, Politics

Marc, et al:

That's some good first-person reporting of your experiences. Many
thanks for sharing those experiences with us.

I saw an article this weekend (I believe New York Times) that
neighborhood watches are being revived to keep a watch on potential
terror threats. This could be a function for the neighborhood
councils in Los Angeles that you described.

A new study by the Congress Online project shows that (are you sitting
down?), the public wants more relevance and substance in Congressional
Web sites. My reporting on this study is found on at:
http://www.suite101.com/article.cfm/10818/84062.

Best regards.

Alan Kotok
AlanKotok@c... http://www.technewslit.com/
Editor, <E-Business*Standards*Today/>, http://www.disa.org/dailywire/
Editor, Techno-Politics:
http://www.suite101.com/welcome.cfm/us_techno_politics

To Alan and Everyone Else,

Not only could neighborhood watch programs be integrated into on- and
off-line Neighborhood Council operations, but so could community
policing, after school programs, protection for students on the way to
school, and ongoing physical clean-up, anti-drug, anti-gang, and
other neighborhood-specific upgrade projects.

I've already proposed to the Office of Homeland Security that they
create a "Security Portal Network" of localized websites in each of
the country's 3,066 counties and use this network to mediate
discussions among all the federal agencies involved with security and
all the local agencies with responsibility for related functions in
each particular area.

These discussions would be secure and not available to the general
public. But a second part of each of these 3,066 websites would be
open to the public, and would contain the latest and most accurate
data from federal and local authorities on issues of concern in the

security area.

Of course these Security Portal Websites could be directly linked to the Neighborhood Council sites, giving residents an obvious and reliable place to turn to for all the security-related information they need, customized for their own specific area.

Sincerely,

Marc Strassman
Founder
EuronaCUEE

From: virtualorange@yahoo.com
Date: Wed Nov 21, 2001 11:27 pm
Subject: When Does Institutionalized Conflict of Interest Slide Into Fascism?

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Dear EuronaCUEE mailing list subscriber,

I've been working since 1994 to create an e-Congress of distributed
representatives living in the districts they represent, since 1996 to
allow remote Internet voting, since 2000 to introduce Smart
Initiatives legally signable over the Internet, and since the
beginning of this year to give citizens better self-government through
e-government.

Whether dismissed as "visionary but premature" or "provocative but
impractical," elected officials and bureaucrats have uniformly and
consistently refused to take any of these ideas seriously or to put
them into practice.

Fed up with this, I decided to become an elected official myself. I
entered the race for the vacant Second District seat on the Los
Angeles City Council. My campaign slogan was "Technology, Ecology,
Empowerment" and my agenda was to use my position on the 15-person
City Council to help build a city centered around sustainability and
the broadest possible use of the Internet and related technologies to
empower people and make the city bureaucracy work more efficiently.

I got a surprising amount of support from people I talked to, many of
whom enthusiastically supported my goal of building a wired ecotopia.

The only problem was that I didn't have enough money to run a viable
campaign and was forced to withdraw a few weeks after I began.

One of my opponents, though, had plenty of money. He'd raised more
than half a million dollars in his last campaign for the California
State Assembly. He was prohibited by the state term limits law from
running for a fourth two-year term in 2002, so he contemplated a run
for Secretary of State, raising $600,000 while he thought it over.

He finally decided to run for City Council. He's still running, and
he's got plenty of money to run with.

I did some research on the Net to find out where he was getting his
money. The results of this research, some thoughts on the
implications of what I found, and links allowing you to follow in my
virtual footsteps are included in the article below, which is called,
"When Does Institutionalized Conflict of Interest Slide Into Fascism?"

The electro-democratization of politics and government that the
Internet makes possible must necessarily be carried out under the
terms and conditions imposed by the existing systems of politics and
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government. So many millions of people who, like me, realize how much better we could govern ourselves using the tools I'm using to communicate with you now, also feel that the existing political system is antiquated, corrupt, boring, and irrelevant, and these perceptions drive many away from politics in any form, including efforts to implement better, electronically-upgraded forms of politics, elections, and government.

As a result, we have a continuing upward curve for performance, results, and satisfaction for spreadsheets, video games, and programming languages, but an equally steady decline in the accessibility, responsiveness, efficiency, and performance of politics and government. The relative pleasure we get from hedonistic electronic toys and unresponsive non-electronic government leads many logical people to spend more time gaming and less time politicking, which is absolutely fine with the small elite that controls the government.

These people, their agents, and their companies have no problem making money from selling video games or tv shows or movies about vast conspiracies directed from secret agencies that exercise universal control. In fact, these themes are increasingly the stock content of video games, tv shows, and movies. As long as the real distribution of power is not disturbed those in control are happy to tighten their control by accumulating more money by selling games whose simulated worlds grotesquely parody a social and political reality that may be all too true, and increasingly so.

If we are to break out of this trap, we need to know its dimensions and more about the flow of money and power within it. The article below is intended to spark some discussion about the nature of our imprisonment and incite some brainstorming about how we might break out.

Further inspiration may perhaps be found in Act II, Scene 2 of Hamlet:

HAMLET Denmark's a prison.
ROSENCRANTZ Then is the world one.
HAMLET A goodly one; in which there are many confines, wards and dungeons, Denmark being one o' the worst.

Our current situation is perhaps no worse than that faced by Prince Hamlet. Let us strive, therefore, to achieve a more satisfactory outcome to our predicament than he was able to forge.

All of you are vigorously invited to submit responses, long or short, attacking, praising, or otherwise commenting on this article, for the perusal of other list members.

Please send your text to: EuronaCUEE@yahoogroups.com

Those of you living in what appear to me sitting here on the Western Edge of North America as the less-benighted realms of the European Union are especially invited to submit material comparing and contrasting the prospects for electronic political evolution and transformation and how they are effected by campaign contributions and other anti-democratic forces at work in your own countries and in the

EU generally.

Thank you all,

Marc Strassman
Moderator
European-North American Citizens United for Excellence in E-Government

When Does Institutionalized Conflict of Interest Slide Into Fascism?

By Marc Strassman
President, Etopia
etopia@pacificnet.net

November 21, 2001

The text for today's sermon comes from a comment made by one lawyer to another on Steven Bochco's fictional-but-realistic new television drama, "Philly." They're talking about how a new judge, played by Veronica Hamel, got her job.

"I guess she made the necessary pay-off." Pause. "I mean contribution."

Just as one person's "terrorist" may be another's "freedom fighter," to some people what others, including the government made up of recipients of them, call a "contribution" is, to them, actually a "bribe."

This semantic conflict is central to the discussion which follows.

None of the calls I made to the Indian tribes which each gave Tony Cardenas $25,000 for his last Assembly campaign were returned. I re-called the Agua Caliente Tribe, and was told by the secretary to the Chairman, Richard Milanovich, that, "We don't make comments about how we spend our money or how other people spend theirs."

Using Google on the Internet, I was able to track down Barry Brokaw, former California Legislature staffer and now a lobbyist who represents the same Agua Caliente Tribe that wouldn't talk to me. He argued against the proposition that Tony Cardenas is a "rent-a-politician" on the payroll and under the control of the Agua Caliente. Citing what he said was Cardenas' "strong support" for Indians, Brokaw claimed that the Assemblyman's work on behalf of his (Brokaw's) clients began before Cardenas had received any money from them at all.

He further argued that the Indians were merely helping their friend and supporter. Asked about the possibility of dubious relationships arising in cases where private organizations give large sums of money to elected officials and these officials act in ways beneficial to their interests, Brokaw asserted that, "It's legal conduct." This made me think of how the tobacco companies, through their lobbyists,

are always pointing out that selling tobacco is also lawful behavior.

Possibly his phrasing had the same effect on Brokaw himself, because he immediately added, presumably as further support for his argument, that the next step down this slippery slope would be the regulation of "fat content."

According to Brokaw, then, the money Cardenas gets from the Indians is a reward for his previous service, not an incentive to continue delivering the goods. Let's ignore the most fundamental principle of behaviorist psychology, namely, that if you reinforce a behavior, you get more of it, and move on.

This dynamic, or at least this argument, obviously can be applied to the whole universe of privately-funded elections, at the local, state, and especially the federal, levels, where the most money is at stake.

When House Members and Senators, mostly Democrats, suggest that it may be excessive to turn over hundreds of billions of dollars to rich people and big corporations, other House Members and Senators, generally Republicans and often Trent Lott or Phil Gramm, generally respond by accusing their colleagues from the other side of the aisle of conducting "class warfare."

This dispassionate term, presumably Marxist in origin and most clearly exemplified in the history of the last century in the execution by the Bolsheviks of the Russian Czar and his family in a Siberian basement and the dumping of their bodies down a well, can apparently be used without irony by Republican leaders to excoriate anyone daring to argue against the massive transfers of money and influence to the top few percent of American families under the Reagan, Bush, and Bush administrations, which administrations were, not incidentally, brought to power in campaigns fueled by the "contributions" of these same rich and the corporations they run and control.

The class-based and government-spearheaded re-distribution of wealth favored and implemented by succeeding Republican administrations and legislatures is NOT class-warfare, but a "carefully-targeted investment incentive program," designed to stimulate the economy, or fight terrorism, or get things moving again. Arguing against it on the grounds that it will do nothing to stimulate the economy, fight terrorism, or get anything moving again is, in the eyes and words of the Republicans, "class warfare," presumably on the order of what was done to the Romanovs.

While the immediate results of essentially stealing from the poor to give to the rich are bad enough, if we go back to Tony Cardenas and his relations with the Indians and compare his situation with that of elected representatives in general, we arrive at a far more terrifying prospect. Sorry, a far more ominous prospect.

We already have a government of the rich, by the rich, and for the rich. This is because they use the money they have to buy politicians who will, acting in their official capacities, and under the cover of a money laundering system that converts bribes to contributions by the simple expedient (some would say magical act) of posting numbers on the Web, give them a very respectable return on their investments.

Now, with this system in place, and the horrendous and tragic events of September 9th as a background and an excuse, Bush and the Republicans are attempting a second coup as a follow-up to the theft of the 2000 election. In this one, hundreds of billions of dollars, including the utterly shameless rebating of tens of billions of dollars in Minimum Alternative Tax payments to major corporations, enough money is being turned over to a small enough proportion of the population that it will have no trouble at all, operating under the current campaign finance laws, using this additional income to elect more Republican Representatives, Senators, and Presidents to ensure both the continuation or the gutting of campaign finance laws and the passage of laws turning over more and more of the nation's wealth to the wealthy benefactors whose completely legal financial support of those whose passion and disinterested commitment to the highest possible principles and values makes this further concentration of wealth possible.

Combine this with the Bush-Ashcroft plan for the gutting of civil liberties in the name of patriotism and security, the publics' avid support for this plan, and the further wave of support for the President likely to be occasioned by the "victory" in Eastasia (sorry, I meant Afghanistan) and even the mildly-paranoid could start to believe that there might soon be something out there that we might not, eventually, like.

Vis a vis the willingness of Americans to sacrifice civil liberties in general as long as they don't believe doing so will cause them any personal pain beyond longer waits in airports, I usually like to cite the statement of a pre-World War II German intellectual who lamented, "When they came for the Communists, I was not a Communist, so I did nothing….And when they came for me, there was no one left to help me." But I think it would be more pertinent at this point to quote the statement Winston Smith, the protagonist of Orwell's 1984, used to prevent his torturer from releasing a huge rat upon his immobilized face: "Do it to her," he screamed. "Do it to her."

Republicans in Washington want to give hundreds of billions of dollars to the people and organizations (the rich and the corporations they control) about whom they care most deeply, passionate and sincerely. Possibly, like Tony Cardenas, many members of the US Congress worked very hard for the interests of their present benefactors even before they received a single dollar of their campaign contributions.

I haven't checked, but I'd guess that more than a few Republican Congressmembers worked tirelessly and without pay as members and officers of their college Republican organizations and the Young Republican organization and the Republican Party itself. In fact, these organizations are essentially the farm teams from which potential Congressmembers are recruited, not incidentally on the basis of their perceived ability to articulate and manipulate on behalf of the Republican agenda, whatever it currently is.

At every stage in their pre-contribution-receiving careers, these politicians spoke out on family values (anti-feminism), energy security (cheap oil), and a lean government (no subsidies to non-Republicans). When the pick of the litter had been picked,

however, they DID get their contributions. Under the current system of campaign finance, getting their contributions is the core, and the end-all and be-all, of running for office.

Now that they are in office (where they have approximately 90 % chance of being re-elected), incumbent Representatives regularly and without much comment, receive massive contributions from people and companies whose bidding they do from day to day. In fact, that is the essence of what they do. They get money from people and companies with business before them as the elected government of the country, and they give (or try to give) these people whatever they ask for or want ("give them their money's worth").

Democrats are not fundamentally different from Republicans in this regard. Many rich people are Democrats and many corporations hedge their bets by giving pay-off (sorry again, contributions) to both parties and candidates in both parties, so they'll have "access" to the winner whoever he or she is.

It may be argued that there is no alternative to this arrangement. Campaigns cost millions of dollars. We can't have the government paying for it because then ALL the incumbents will be re-elected. Television advertising costs a lot. Running a campaign to get your message out to the people costs a lot. Etc.

Political campaigns cost a lot for several reasons. I'd say the two biggest ones are the high cost of television adverting and the growing apathy of the public when it comes to politics, which is largely fueled by the public's view that politics is deeply corrupt and that the main source of that corruption is the system of campaign finance that claims its legitimacy from the need to break through the encrusted apathy that it is itself largely responsible for.

As for television advertising, while this is not true for cable, broadcast stations are private corporations making money through the monopoly control of spectrum space granted them by and from the public, through its government. If it weren't for incumbents' fear that providing free television time to all candidates might undermine their own incumbency, arrangements would have been made long ago for such a use of the public airwaves. You can be sure that in the science-fiction event that Congressional elections were being won by 90% of challengers instead of 90% of incumbents, the rationale and reality concerning free airspace would change 180 degrees faster than you could say, "Edward R. Murrow."

Of course, there's always the fact that hardly anyone is complaining about any of this. I found in an informal poll I recently took that most of the people flying American flags on their cars (including SUVs which contribute so much to eliminating the need for carpet bombings to defeat enemies partly financed by petro-dollars provided in abundance by their drivers) to show their patriotism are proud to be Americans but feel very strongly that politics and politicians are blood-sucking perverts we'd all be better off without. Most people not flying American flags, incidentally, felt the same way.

George W. Bush is no Mussolini, let alone Fuhrer, but a country of frightened people who believe in their country above all else but

despise and loath the political class are nothing if not a classic soil for the planting of the seeds of fascism.

I'm hesitant to invoke the so often-cited admonition, "If we do such-and-such, then the terrorists will win." But even some members of the Bush administration, whose titular head has characterized Osama bin Ladin, al-Queda, and all their ilk as "the most evil people there are" have acknowledged their skill and cunning in carrying out their murderous activities. I could be wrong, but I suspect their abilities and perceptiveness go beyond mere cunning.

Maybe they knew consciously or maybe only unconsciously, but someone these killers must have known that given the fundamental nature of American society and the values and loyalties of its leaders (bin Ladin had, after all, been a partner of the President-to-be [#43] in the Arbusto oil company) that a monstrous attack on America might be able to push it over the brink into fascism. That indeed would be a satisfying victory for a theocratic fascist whose most-sought-after legacy has for some time been "the man who destroyed America."

As we all know from countless horror films, vampires and zombies can retain the outward appearance of who they once were, even after becoming transformed or dead within. An America festooned ten layers deep in red, white, and blue pieces of cloth, where a few families own everything worth owning, where the poor are snacks, and what was once the middle class can hang onto its gadgets and rituals only at the whim of Unaccountable Power might still seem to those lobotomized by television and the omnipresent iconic image of Brittany Spears' mammaries to be the real thing, but like the actual, as opposed to the mythical, Statue of Liberty, such an existence would be hollow to the core. The clanging of the wretched within would be an echo of the emptiness in our hearts and the death knell of democracy reverberating into a long future history that will sorely miss what we will have destroyed.

Coda

What was once and famously said by an American military commander of a certain village in Vietnam, "We had to destroy it to save it" was self-serving gibberish when it was spoken in the 60s and would be just as ominously silly if the "it" referenced in it referred to American democracy itself. But karma is karma and what goes around comes around. So we ought to remember that little village when we consider burning down our own country at the suggestion of the spiritual descendents of those who ordered the thatch-roofed huts in a distant land obliterated with fire from the earth and fire from the sky.

From: AlanKotok@cs.com
Date: Thu Nov 22, 2001 5:57 am
Subject: Re: [EuronaCUEE] When Does Institutionalized Conflict of Interest Slide Into ...

Marc, et al.

A little practical note here: the House of Representatives is eight signatures shy of the 218 needed for a discharge petition to bring the Shays-Meehan bill (campaign finance reform) to the floor, bypassing the committee and Speaker that have bottled up the legislation. The Senate has already passed the bill, known there as McCain-Feingold, and there is little likelihood that President Bush would veto it if it passed.

Americans now have a choice: you can light a candle or curse the darkness. This opportunity to make a fundamental change in the way campaigns are financed and conducted may not come again for many years. Now is the time to get busy and let your members of Congress know how you feel. Better send faxes or e-mail; they're a little nervous about postal mail these days.

Alan Kotok
AlanKotok@cs.com
http://www.technewslit.com/
Editor, <E*Business*Standards Today/>, http://www.disa.org/dailywire/
Editor, Techno-Politics, http://www.suite101.com/welcome.cfm/us_techno_politics

From: virtualorange@yahoo.com
Date: Mon Nov 26, 2001 11:17 pm
Subject: Let's Incorporate "Civic Space" into E-Government Worldwide

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Dear EuronaCUEE subscriber,

After all the talking I've done about using modern interactive
technology to facilitate the democratic process, it was very
gratifying to see that San Francisco public television station KQED
has just carried out a public event focused on the subject of how
interactive and Internet-based tools can help build an informed and
involved public.

You can learn more about it at:

http://www.kqed.org/insidekqed/civicspace/eventone/summary.html

Let's work to implement and propagate such empowering tools worldwide.

Sincerely,

Marc Strassman
President
Etopia
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From: virtualorange@yahoo.com
Date: Fri Nov 30, 2001 2:31 pm
Subject: Empowerment vs. Disempowerment via Government Use of the Internet

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Dear EuronaCUEE subscriber,

A few weeks ago I had a chance to appear as a call-in guest on the
local National Public Radio station's public affairs program, "Talk of
the City." I recorded my moment on audio tape, re-recorded it to a
MiniDisc player, processed it in RealNetwork's RealProducer, and
uploaded it to a web site, from which you can download it by clicking
on the link below:

http://64.70.255.231/users/thebook/KPCCcarn.html

It focuses on the contradiction between ruling out use of the Internet
as a tool for political empowerment while proposing to use it as a
means of political surveillance.

Sincerely,

Marc Strassman
President
Etopia
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Here's the text of this audio segment:

… I've been working since about 1995 to convince the government to use the Internet and related technologies to empower people, so they could vote over the Internet, so they could sign initiative petitions over the Internet. These were designed to take money out of politics and give more power to the people to decide how their government would make policy. I've been recently working on trying to convince the City government to provide websites for all the Neighborhood Councils in Los Angeles. I've spent almost ten days trying to get an e-mail through to the Office of Homeland Security, which doesn't seem to have a phone number or a web address, to convince it that it should build websites in all of the counties in the country to provide a means for people to get authoritative and up-to-date information about things that bother them. I haven't heard from them. It's been very difficult.

On the other hand, we see here that the Government, [through] Carnivore and related systems, they're poised, they're ready, they've been prepared, they're taking advantage of the situation to implement systems to use technology to surveil people, to sort of disempower them. And I'd like to get more listeners' comments on this paradox: that the Internet is not viable, it is not acceptable to use to empower people but it is acceptable for the government to use it to disempower people.

Recorded October 31, 2001, on "Talk of the City" with Kittie Felde on KPCC, 89.3 FM, Pasadena, California

From: Virtual Orange <virtualorange@yahoo.com>
Date: Fri Nov 30, 2001 11:49 pm
Subject: DSF Plus Proposal for IT at DONE

Dear Etopia Group list subscriber,

Ricardo Reyes is the IT director at the Department of
Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE), the Los Angeles city
agency responsible for facilitating the creation and
operation of the City's Neighborhood Councils.

Today I sent him the e-mail below, in hopes that he
will work with us to provide web sites for all the
aspiring and certified Neighborhood Councils.

Stay tuned.

Regards,

Marc Strassman
President
Etopia

Dear Mr. Reyes,

I'm the Chair of the Electronic Outreach Subcommittee
of the Outreach Committee of the Valley Village
Neighborhood Council Organizing Committee.

My company, Etopia, is an Authorized Re-seller of
Dynamic Site Framework software from PPT, Inc., of
Lancaster, Pennsylvania. DSF software is a packaging
of the tools PPT used to build the State of
Pennsylvania's web portal.

You can visit Pennsylvania's PAPowerPort at:

http://www.state.pa.us/PAPower/

You can learn more about DSF at:

http://www.dsfsolutions.com/dsfsolutions/site/default.asp

Etopia is integrating JeevesONE into the DSF system,
in order to provide users with the ability to easily
access all the information at the site through
questions asked in normal language.

We are also integrating Vivarto into the DSF system,

which will provide survey, discussion, and voting functionality for stakeholders/users, to complement the chatroom capabilities already built into DSF itself.

Etopia has been working with Gemplus and Online Assessment Corporation, of Silicon Valley and Australia, respectively, to integrate smart cards and digital certificates with online surveying and voting. Adding the combined capabilities of these companies' products would allow Angelenos to securely vote on issues of interest to them.

All of this could be provided for less than what it now costs for the City to duplicate and mail the 2,500 paper flyers it is now authorized to spend per Neighborhood Council in two months.

If we want to empower our neighborhoods and the "stakeholders" in them, we should do so, using the best tools available. The integrated Etopia Suite of E-Government Tools outlined above would be a way of doing this.

I hope we can speak soon about mustering the political will to move ahead expeditiously in this direction.

Sincerely,

Marc Strassman
President
Etopia

From: Virtual Orange <virtualorange@yahoo.com>
Date: Sat Dec 1, 2001 4:48 pm
Subject: Let's Move All of the Neighborhood Councils into the 21st Century, While Saving Postage

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Dear Etopia Group subscriber,

Below is my latest effort to convince the City of Los
Angeles to equip their Neighborhood Councils with the
tools they need to do the empowerment the City says
it's trying to create.

I'm sending copies of this piece to you, to all the
City Council members' offices, four City newspapers,
one television station, and the IT director of the
Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE).

I hope they get the message.

Regards,

Marc Strassman
President
Etopia


Let's Move All the Neighborhood Councils into the 21st
Century, While Saving Postage

By Marc Strassman
President
Etopia
etopia@pacificnet.net

December 1, 2001

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reserved.


Last Thursday night, at the second meeting of the
Valley Village Neighborhood Council Organizing
Committee, one of the organizers addressed herself to
Matthew Fitzgerald, Project Coordinator with the
Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE), the
city agency responsible for facilitating and financing
the Neighborhood Councils. She said she wanted to
produce and distribute a flyer for purposes of
"outreach," one of the core requirements and
priorities in the certification process. She assumed
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that DONE would pay for the production and mailing of 2,500 flyers.

Her statement occurred within the context of an unanswered question: what level of response does the City require from those outreached to? Is a good faith effort to outreach to people, businesses, and organizations sufficient or is a certain level of response from those outreached to necessary? What about underrepresented groups?

After the meeting, I approached Mr. Fitzgerald to get more specific and definite information about the level of support the City is providing for not-yet-certified groups in their efforts to do the required community outreach by means of flyer mailing. He told me that DONE indeed had a policy of accepting flyers from emerging groups, making 2,500 copies of them, and mailing them to a list of specified addressees, all at no cost to the group, as long as the master flyer was received at least three weeks before the event being promoted on the flyer.

I asked how much doing this costs the City. Mr. Fitzgerald didn't know. I asked how often the City was prepared to do this for the organizing groups. He said once a month. I suggested to him, as I have so many times before, that spending the same amount of money now going to flyers, most of which had no impact at all, on building and promoting a web site for each group, might be a more cost-effective way to do outreach and, subsequently, facilitate the operation of the NCs and empower citizens.

He wished me luck in getting the City to do this.

Later that night I called Kinko's to get an estimate of the cost of printing 2,500 one-sided flyers on colored paper. They gave me a figure of $182.00. Not counting the cost of stuffing the envelopes, the cost of mailing 2,500 flyers at $0.34/each comes to $850.00. So printing and mailing 2,500 flyers will cost the City a bit more than $1,000. Mr. Fitzgerald has said that the City is prepared and willing to spend $1,000 per month for every emerging Neighborhood Council in the City to help them do outreach-by-mail.

My company, Etopia, has it on good authority from PPT of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, that they could provide the City with the means of constructing 150 state-of-the-art web sites using their DSF technology and getting them operational, including training content managers and site administrators to run them properly, for $250,000. This comes to, rounding upward, $1700 per site, for functionality for each NC roughly equivalent to that now enjoyed by the State of Pennsylvania on its web portal, at:

http://www.state.pa.us/PAPower/

This represents less than two months of flyers, at the
rate the City has already publicly acknowledged it is
willing to pay, and has paid already.

For an additional cost, it would also be possible to
add the "Ask Jeeves" functionality of natural language
question asking to each and all of the NC sites. This
would be provided by the JeevesONE product in a manner
now on display on the State of Washington's web
portal, with its "Ask George" system, at:

http://access.wa.gov/

In brief, for less that $2,500 (two-and-a-half months
of flyers) each Neighborhood Council could have, for
its exclusive use, a web portal equivalent to the
State of Pennsylvania's and an automated query engine
similar to that now being used to popular acclaim by
the State of Washington.

And it could use these tools both to organize itself
towards Certification and to operate for years
afterwards as it carries on its work, constantly
building its information resources and capabilities,
through e-mail lists, chat rooms, archives of past
meetings, links to local businesses, and possibly
advertising revenue, not to mention the possibilities
of doing additional outreach and community-based
education through streaming audio and streaming video.

These are not within the capability of even two-sided
flyers, of any color.

I haven't seen any of the lists to which these paper
flyers are being mailed, but it's my guess that 2200
or 2300 of them end up in wastebaskets, unread, and
that very few of the others will move their recipients
to action. Given the flood of paper most people
receive in the mail, most of it junk mail, sending out
pieces of paper announcing meetings is not a very
effective way to "outreach" to anyone about anything,
especially given the rampant negativity regarding any
form of political activity that is currently so
widespread and which the NC project is now attempting
to overcome.

On the other hand, the individuals and groups who are
most likely to get involved in an effort such as
organizing a Neighborhood Council for their locality
or participating in one once it's been certified are
demonstrably those who tend to be online, to use
email, to visit web sites and to be interested in

exchanging political information through the Internet.

Spending $2,000 or even $2,500 of City money to build
a website for an emerging NC and to publicize its URL
on City sites and through earned and paid media is
therefore a much more cost-effective and powerful way
of doing outreach and it will also, as discussed
above, give the NC and its members powerful tools for
carrying out other functions for their group.

Of course, if the point is to go through the motions,
and to simply be able to say, "We sent out 2,500
flyers, so we must be doing outreach," then there's
not much incentive to use a method that can actually
find and involve community members in the real work of
building an NC. The choice between using 19th Century
"handbills" (flyers) or 21st Century URLs is therefore
a choice between wasting money on show or spending it
carefully on something with real impact.

What about communities with low or very low Internet
penetration rates? One way to manage such areas is
to simply send out flyers and not bother to build a
web site for local residents. But mailed paper flyers
are no more likely to be effective in a low-income
area than in a high-income area, and it's possible
they'd be even less successful. Constructing a web
site as a means of politically organizing residents of
low-income, low Internet penetration, can focus
attention, inside and outside the area, on the need to
increase Internet diffusion in that area.

It can also serve as a wake-up call to encourage
Internet usage at schools, public offices, and other
community-based public spaces and to increase Internet
penetration and usage throughout the area through
public expenditures, private contributions, and other
community-based efforts.

Leveraging increased Internet accessibility in order
to facilitate the creation and operation of NCs can
serve to improve not just the political status of
community members, but their personal, educational,
and economic access, thus benefiting an area in
multiple ways.

The Citywide Alliance of Neighborhood Councils is an
organization that describes its mission as: "to foster
communication between the diverse array of groups
forming and operating Neighborhood Councils across the
far flung communities of Los Angeles." You can find
it at:

http://www.allncs.org/

It currently features a list of communities that have

already filed their Certification papers and another
list of what it calls "forming Neighborhood Councils
around LA." Most, but not all, of the NCs on either
of these two lists appear on both of them.

Some of the sites are pretty impressive. Some have
very little information. And seven of them, more than
a third, were built using Neighborhood Link, a
rudimentary piece of free software that lets users
establish a web presence but not do much more.

Some simple facts emerge from an overall examination
of these sites. One, people organizing NCs know that
a web site on the Internet is a powerful tool for
building and operating their Neighborhood Council.
Two, left to their own devices, without government
support, people in well-to-do areas will provide
themselves with cool tools and people in less
well-to-do areas will have to make do with cheap
substitutes or nothing at all.

An article in the October 9, 2001, edition of the
Metropolitan News-Enterprise says:

More than 100 advisory councils may eventually seek
certification and, with it, city funding and
administrative support. Most are believed to be in the
earliest stages of organizing, but at least a dozen
were expected to file this fall.

Read the whole article at:

http://www.metnews.com/articles/nchx100901.htm

I haven't heard anything said by anyone in or out of
government about one the functions of Neighborhood
Councils being to reduce the drastic inequalities
between some parts of Los Angeles and others. But it
seems like simple common sense that DONE ought to be
assuring that residents in every part of the City at
least have access to the same tools for organizing
themselves into Neighborhood Councils.

If the City of Los Angeles, through DONE, were to
provide every one of the hundred or more groups
organizing, or trying to organize, their communities
into Neighborhood Councils for the purpose of
empowering themselves and giving themselves a voice in
City affairs, with the means and training to use its
own web site for these purposes, it would have gone a
good part of the way towards fulfilling its mandate.
And saved a lot of postage as well.

From: Virtual Orange <virtualorange@yahoo.com>
Date: Sun Dec 16, 2001 1:52 pm
Subject: Internet Voting Redux and the First Global Meeting of EuronaCUEE

Dear EuronaCUEE subscriber,

Attached please find (in PDF format) my latest effort
to build a case for Internet voting. If you don't
already have the free Adobe Acrobat Reader that you
need to read this document, you can download it at:

http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html

On a more practical note, I have recently become
associated with a company that provides web-based
voice conferencing services. I am in the process of
convincing them to let me use their system to convene
the First Global Meeting of the EuronaCUEE.

For more information about this company, Anywhere Web
Conferencing, go to:

http://www.anywherewc.com/

For more information about the company that makes the
web conferencing platform we'd be using, go to:

http://www.centra.com/corporate/index.asp

I am writing to invite you to this meeting. To
determine when we convene it, I am asking you to send
me e-mail listing the dates and times that would work
best for you. I expect 30-60 minutes should be enough
for this first meeting.

Please convert your preferred local times to Pacific
Standard Time, which is what we use here in Los
Angeles. I will aggregate the responses and try to
pick a date and a time that is best for the most
people ("optimized cyber-utilitarianism"). I hope we
can convene this event as soon as possible, so please
submit the earliest time you can conveniently attend.

When I've done that, I will notify each of you of the
selected date and time and also send you the user name
and password you'll need to gain entrance to the
meeting. When we meet, we can talk about whatever you
like, hopefully including a bit about e-government
where you are, who you are, and other topics of mutual
interest. In fact, when you send in your preferred
date and time, why don't you list two or three local

and/or global topics you'd like us to consider.

Please send your e-mail stating preferred date(s) and time(s) to me at:

etopia@pacificnet.net

This might also be a good time for you to reach out to friends, co-workers, or neighbors whom you think might be interested in joining our group. Tell them to send an empty e-mail to:

EuronaCUEE-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

If they sign up, we'll be glad to include them in our first meeting. Ask the ones who do join to send e-mails to me with their preferred meeting times and dates, as well as subjects they'd like us to discuss.

I believe that this and other web conferencing tools can do a lot to speed the adoption and practice of e-government and e-democracy, as well to provide distance learning and related opportunities. I hope that if you feel that way too you will work with me to introduce this technology wherever you are involved with e-government, e-democracy, e-education, or even e-entertainment.

I would be interested in working with you to make its introduction into your city or country a matter of profit for you as well as using it to develop the infrastructure and practice of e-democracy at every level. If you are already interested, or become interested after you've participated in our web conferencing demonstration, in working with me on either the business or government side of this, or both, please contact me at etopia@pacificnet.net.

What I'd really like to build with you is a global network of activist-entrepreneurs doing good by virtualizing and expanding democratic participation in government while doing well by providing the tools for this participation to the governments and other organizations in a position to buy and deploy them. I hope we can talk about this at our upcoming meeting.

Regards,

Marc Strassman
President
Etopia

23 Internet Voting Redux--Yet Another Modest Proposal to Revive an Etopian Dream from the Last Century.pdf

From: "virtualorange" <virtualorange@yahoo.com>
Date: Sat Jan 26, 2002 11:50 pm
Subject: Moving Legislatures Into Cyberspace to Protect Them in the Age of Terror


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Moving Legislatures Into Cyberspace
to Protect Them in the Age of Terror

By Marc Strassman
President
Etopia
etopia@pacificnet.net

January 26, 2002

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Eight years ago, on January 2, 1994, I spoke to the National
Information Infrastructure Task Force, meeting at the University of
Southern California, and said:

"Why can't the members of Congress vote from their home districts
while watching the debate on C-SPAN? Why can't they participate in
the debate from their home districts, or any other place in the world,
through video teleconferencing? Why can't constituents throughout a
congressional district participate in digitally-mediated town halls
and instruct their representative on how to cast his or her vote on
the Virtual House Floor? Why can't the people vote on the issues
before the country directly?"

Shortly after September 9, 2001, I concluded that it would be a good
idea to build a network of websites in every US county, as a place for
federal, state, and local co-operation in anti-terrorist planning and
as a one-stop spot for county residents to get up-to-the-minute and
authoritative anti-terrorist information. No one was interested,
least of all the Office of Homeland Security run by Tom Ridge.

But then US Senators were locked out of their offices in the Hart
Senate Building for weeks because of anthrax-laden letters sent to
offices there. Legislators moved to makeshift quarters all over
Capitol Hill. Disarray ensured.

Now that President Bush has announced his desire to spend tens of
billions of additional dollars for anti-terrorist planning and
protection, I think some of that money should be spent to build a
fall-back "e-legislature" capability for the federal Congress, for
every state legislature, and for local city councils and county boards
of supervisors.

The purpose of these e-legislatures should be to make it possible to
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instantly convene legislatures in cyberspace, letting members of an
elected assembly meet online from anywhere they are that has an
Internet connection, dial-up or broadband, mobile or land-based.

These e-legislature platforms, using Web conferencing software for
interactive meetings, digital certificates and smart cards to
authenticate members as entitled to participate in these meetings, web
site building programs such as Dynamic Site Framework to generate
multiple individual web sites for members and committees, and advanced
storage systems to preserve and make accessible records of all
legislative transactions, would provide all the functionality enjoyed
now by legislatures meeting in physical space, and, conceivably, a lot
more.

Incidentally, the current possibilities for maintaining and enhancing
the democratic legislative process by creating e-legislatures in
cyberspace, based on the best possible technologies now available,
will pale in comparison to the possibilities available to us as
broadband becomes ubiquitous, processors attain 2gigahertz speeds,
mobile and wireless networks expand, and "the Internet" and
"computers" are integrated into and disappear behind all manner of
everyday objects.

Of course, putting legislatures into cyberspace in order to maintain
their seamless operation in the event of some terrorist attack or the
well-founded fear of a terrorist attack will make it much easier to
transmit the day-to-day operations of the body to the citizens, who
will be able to access them over the Internet.

Although I'm reluctant to mention this, putting legislatures in
cyberspace will also make it much easier for common, ordinary
citizens, even those who don't use auditors, to participate in these
bodies' deliberations, should the elected representatives decide that
they are willing to allow common, ordinary citizens, even those who've
demonstrated their disdain for democracy by not making any "campaign
contributions" to any of the elected officials who "represent" them,
to participate in their own self-governance.

Further, having a Plan B for the operation of every state legislature
and local council should give additional pause to potential terrorists
who might hope to destroy democracy by rendering the physical space
where it is enacted uninhabitable. Knowing that legislatures will be
able, without missing a beat, to carry on the work of democracy over a
network first developed to allow the national government to function
in the event of nuclear war, should give all such miscreants serious
pause and all of us an additional measure of protection, as well as
reassurance.

From: "virtualorange" <virtualorange@yahoo.com>
Date: Sun Jan 27, 2002 8:07 pm
Subject: Who Should Provision the Future?

Who Should Provision the Future?

By Marc Strassman
President
Etopia
etopia@pacificnet.net

January 27, 2002

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Imagine that all our roads disappear. Interstates, highways, byways.
How would we get around? Do business? Get stuck in traffic? Or
imagine that all our roads are privatized, and we need to pay a toll
to drive across town or up the coast, or wherever. Few people, except
those who own the roads, would be very happy with that situation
either.

Closing, or privatizing, our roads would be such a big disaster
because they are absolutely essential to the way we live and do
business. So let's ask some basic questions about these critical
paths between and among the places we have to be.

1.
Who builds and maintains the roads?
2.
Who owns the roads?
3.
Who benefits from their existence?
4.
Who profits most from their existence?

To give equally short and direct answers to these questions, we can
say:

1.
With rare exceptions, roads and built and maintained by governments.
2.
?The people,? on whose behalf governments rule, own the roads.
3.
Everyone who drives for free on the roads benefits from them.
4.
Many businesses profit from the existence of free, publicly-owned
roads, especially businesses reached by road, and the oil and
automobile industries, who earn revenues in the billions for providing

the means for people and businesses to use the free, publicly-owned roads to satisfy their own personal and commercial desires.

During 2001, while private, investor-owned utilities in California were ratcheting up their prices by orders of magnitude, imposing ?rolling blackouts? on their customers, and heading down a steep slope to bankruptcy, the taxpayers and other residents of the City of Los Angeles were enjoying stable energy prices and reliable supplies of electricity from the publicly-owned and operated Department of Water and Power.

The people and elected officials of the City of Los Angeles had decided to supply themselves with power and water from a municipal utility, and that proved to be a wise decision. There were no cries of ?socialism? and no calls to privatize the DWP as it supplied reliable energy at stable prices to the people of Los Angeles while all around the state rate-payers ?served? by private, investor-owned energy companies were hit with escalating bills and rolling blackouts.

Outside the United States, for many years, another crucial means of transportation, airlines, was often handled by the national government. Of course, it was often a monopoly as well, about which more below. But national governments, charged with public health, national defense, the establishment of a legal system, and the protection of the currency, proved themselves also able to establish and run a modern airline, with on-time, safety, and profit levels no worse, and sometimes better, than their private, investor-owned competitors.

Another entity that seems to be working quite well without being owned by investors is the Internet. This ?network of networks? is not even owned by any government agency. It is an almost-unique institution that was established and is maintained by a diffuse network of individuals and groups that in many ways mirrors the electronic network that it supervises. As with a public road, people and businesses are not charged for using it. But just as access to the road system is restricted to those capable of paying private companies for the vehicles and fuel needed to navigate it, access to the Internet is mediated by privately-owned and operated Internet Service Providers (ISPS) who sell people and companies the means to enter and roam the Internet.

Until now, most of that access has been of the type called ?dial-up.? Dial-up Internet access is a method by which a computer user connects his or her computer to a "Point-of-Presence" (POP) by "dialing up" that POP's phone number, using a built-in or added-on modem. Most of today's dial-up modems connect Internet users at 56kpbs, fast enough to get and send e-mail and visit most Web sites, but not fast enough to get the high-quality multimedia content (such as streaming video) that holds so much promise for expanding education, culture, and the profits of the companies that produce it.

So a slow rush is on to provision the masses with "broadband" Internet connectivity. "Broadband" refers to such technologies as DSL and cable modems, methods that, using the telephone networks and cable system, respectively, can deliver information from the Internet at

speeds in excess of 20 times faster than can dial-up connections.

Great fortunes are at stake in the transition from dial-up to broadband. Every large telecommunications company is deploying its technical, administrative, financial, and political resources to capture as large a share of this important market as it possibly can.

As a result, legislators and regulators in Washington, D.C., are endlessly barraged with press releases, calls from lobbyists, and campaign contributions, all designed to secure a regulatory climate most favorable to those doing the publicity, lobbying, and contributing.

The results have not been the best. Prices for DSL hover near the $50/month level, as do those for cable modem access. Authentically humorous commercials have been created and broadcast on television urging computer users to sign up with a phone giant. Color brochures are designed and mailed by the cable company offering low rates for the first three months (to be followed by higher rates thereafter). But broadband penetration remains low, and the cornucopia promised for a world where everyone has broadband continues to slip further and further over a constantly vanishing horizon.

Being able to use the broadband information superhighway is apparently not as easy as being able to use the regular one.

Maybe that's because, unlike the asphalt highways, the government is not building or maintaining them.

Maybe they should.

Maybe, just as European countries long ran public airlines, just as most cities provide water to their citizens as a matter of course, just as some cities (like Los Angeles) provide electricity to theirs, just as every jurisdiction provides publicly-owned and freely-useable roads to drivers, maybe state governments ought to provide broadband Internet connectivity to all their citizens.

There are, in fact, entire countries where the provision of medical care is handled by the national government. In some cases, this leads to inferior care, in others to average levels of care much higher than the average level of care in the US. What works and what doesn't, and how well it works, are, of course, matters determined by the complex interaction of a country's national character, history, environmental conditions, and so on. But publicly-run health care is an actuality of many advanced countries (in all of them, in fact, except the US).

Be all that as it may be, the provision of broadband access to the Internet is not as complicated a matter as caring for the physical and mental health of people. It is an engineering project. In California, for example, CalTrans is a state agency responsible for spending billions of dollars to build and maintain the state's extensive freeway system. Surely such an organization, with its proven ability to plan, build, and maintain a network of roads as complex as the one it manages would be equally able to plan, build and manage an equally complex but in many ways similar fiber optic broadband network.

Here are pre-emptive answers to two obvious objections:

1.
Won't dealing with a CalOptics agency be formidably and depressingly
difficult, given the well-known propensity of government bureaucracies
to be ridiculously hard to deal with?

2.
With no competition, won't technology and service stagnate, while
prices rise?

Answers:

1.
Dealing with the phone company and the cable companies, with
interminable holding times and non-responsible "customer care
representatives" can often be indistinguishable form dealing with a
government bureaucracy.
2.
Letting the state provide broadband access need not mean that private
companies are put out of business. They can think of
publicly-provided broadband access as more competition, something they
claim to thrive on.

Given the realities of "free-market capitalism" as revealed by the
Enron debacle, is it really fair to say that services provided by
government (like security checks in airports provided by U.S. Customs
agents) are necessarily worse than those (like security checks in
airports provided by unqualified workers whose low wages allow for
higher stockholder dividends and executive salaries)?

What should be obvious is that "business" and "government" are often
very closely linked. The Pentagon orders $20 billion dollars in
"smart bombs" and an aerospace contractor or group of them builds it,
but only after contributing regularly to the campaigns of the Senators
and Representatives who legislated the purchase, after wining and
dining the generals who picked them to build them, and after spending
millions on advertising to convince the country that the bombs are
needed at all, maybe in spots featuring the generals and the
politicians.

How is this "private enterprise"? It's the direct use of public tax
money to provide technology that the national elites believe will
maintain their control and, possibly, serve the public functions in
whose name it has been justified.

It reflects a system based upon the socialization of risk and the
privatization of profit.

It's hypocritical to say we can't spend public money to build the
world's best broadband network and let people use it, paying fair
market prices or no more than they now pay to use most roads, because
it's socialism, because it undermines American competitiveness,
because it interferes unfairly with the workings of the market, when
billions and billions of public, taxpayer dollars are spent in ways

that contribute only to the well-being of the already very well-off, but contribute nothing, or less than nothing, to the lives of ordinary people and millions of private businesses that would benefit from the creation of a ubiquitous broadband network.

It's as hypocritical as saying we need to refund hundreds of millions of dollars to giant corporations like Ford and Enron from the "alternative minimum taxes" they've paid, having skillfully dodged the need to pay anything else on their billions of profit. It's as hypocritical as cutting the taxes of the super-rich so they can spend their additional money on the campaigns of politicians promising to cut their taxes further, and so on.

Already, high-tech billionaires are lobbying for massive tax-credits that will encourage the adoption of broadband more widely, while ensuring the profits of corporations long smug and adamant in their opposition to "government interference" (apparently only as long as this meant "regulation" not "windfalls"). Rather than grant billions in tax-credits to giant tech corporations, why not let a government at least temporarily charged up with a commitment to public service build these broadband networks itself, with a budget on the scale used to build the Interstate Highway System as a weapon in the Cold War?

A publicly-built and operated broadband network would do us all at least as much good as that network of asphalt ever did in making this country a better place to live and defending it against its enemies.

From: "virtualorange" <virtualorange@yahoo.com>
Date: Tue Jan 29, 2002 6:18 pm
Subject: Making the Case for E-legislatures

Dear EuronaCUEE subscriber,

As part of my effort to get e-legislatures adopted, I sent a copy of
the e-mail I sent you all on January 26th to my Member of Congress,
Henry Waxman, a leader in the effort to call the Bush Administration
to account in the matter of Energy policy.

In the interest of full disclosure, I'm sending a copy of that letter
to everyone on this list, along with the slightly revised version of
the original e-legislatures article.

Incidentally, I am also in the midst of an effort to create a
worldwide alliance of progressive political organizations and
individuals who might want to buy as a group and then share the use of
one or more Web conferencing platforms.

Web conferencing systems (see an example of it at:
http://www.horizonlive.com or at http://www.interwise.com) can be used
to run staff meetings, solicit funds, speak to the public, give
virtual press conferences, and to store and archive all of the above
for later posting on the Web.

It now costs around $30,000 to get the use of such a system for one
year. Few of us have that kind of money. But if each of us put up
$1,000, we'd all have the use of the system, 24/7, and could easily
arrange for its usage according to who needed it the most at any
particular time.

Having it would make it much easier to conduct interesting meetings,
with voice and video, with participants in every corner of the
Web-connected world.

Major global media conglomerates already have this capacity, but they
rarely use it in the interesting and provocative ways we know we could
if we had the chance. For $1,000 each, now we can.

E-mail me at <etopia@pacificnet.net> if you're interested.

Regards,

Marc Strassman
President
Etopia

Dear Representative Waxman,

I'm writing to ask if would draft and carry a bill to create a back-up "e-legislature" capability to provide continuity for the Congress in the event that a catastrophic event, or the threat of such an event, renders Capitol Hill uninhabitable. Such an e-legislature platform would let Representatives and Senators convene from any Internet-connected computer anywhere and carry on the normal business of the people, only in cyberspace.

Below is an article I recently wrote that elaborates on this subject. I hope you can look it over and let me know if we could work together to formulate and pass legislation to implement such a plan.

As it used to do and could do again, California might set the national agenda on this by proceeding expeditiously to create such an e-legislature for itself, leading the way for other states and the Federal government to do the same.

Besides preserving and protecting representative government, my only interest in this project is to see that my tiny consulting company, Etopia, becomes the lead contractor in the construction of the California e-legislature and the provider of similar systems for the other states and the Federal government, since this was originally my idea and, right now, I am the only person in the world who cares enough about it to be writing to you or doing anything else on its behalf.

This is something I hope for even though, unlike Microsoft, IBM, Sun Microsystems or Cisco Systems, Etopia cannot afford and does not have an army of high-paid lobbyists deployed around the Capitol, nor do we spread monetary largesse on both sides of the aisle come election time and year-round.

Having not given you (or anyone else, for that matter) a single penny in campaign contributions at any time, I hope to avoid even the suspicion of a conflict of interest. Thinking back to a news story I saw years ago showing how Rep. Thomas Downey found time both to play basketball and lobby ferociously on behalf of his constituent Grumman to win a fighter plane contract, I can only conclude that it is legitimate, legal, and completely proper for Members to work on behalf of policies the practical result of which is to give money to the businesses owned by their constituents and/or located in their districts.

I distinguish a situation where a useful idea that benefits everyone and some especially is adopted and pursued by a Representative who has not been paid off to do so from the usual case where they have.

One often gets the impression, although not in rare cases such as yours, that delivering legislature bonanzas in exchange for ?campaign contributions? is fundamentally ALL that Representatives (and Senators) do. It is also my impression that they usually only listen to and bestir themselves for their campaign contributors. As someone who would like to eliminate or reduce this nefarious dynamic by, among other things, granting free television time (over the publicly-owned and licensed airwaves) and subsidizing Internet space for all candidates, I also feel that it should be the power and utility of an

idea, not the amount of money behind it, that determines whether or not it becomes policy.

In fact, if we are to replace money as the determinant force in politics and government, which is a dim but non-zero probability in light of Enron, we'll need to replace it with something else. For years, I've been suggesting that we replace it with the search for good ideas and the full empowerment of the people to consider and decide on the ideas they prefer, most likely facilitated by the power and reach of a ubiquitously deployed and accessible broadband Internet.

For all these years, only a few were persuaded. Now, after September 11th, using technology to enhance security has become an unquestioned good. My hope now is that we will apply the technology we already have to build e-legislatures and simultaneously protect ourselves against losing our governments due to the perverse and diabolical machinations of our enemies while making possible all the extensions and deepening of the democratic process that I have been seeking to implement even before these cataclysmic threats cast a shadow over our system of government and way of life.

For those reasons and on that basis, I feel comfortable asking you to pursue an innovative policy that I stand to benefit from personally. Also, in all likelihood, after I have invested a lot of time and energy, and many carefully-formulated words (such as these) in support of this project, Microsoft and IBM, Sun and Cisco, or others of their ilk, will swoop in with their huge staffs and massive budgets and capture the profits from an idea they wanted nothing to do with when I first proposed it.

If you'd like to discuss this proposal in more detail, you can contact me by phone at 818-985-0251 or by e-mail at <etopia@pacificnet.net>.

Sincerely,

Marc Strassman
President
Etopia

Moving Legislatures Into Cyberspace
to Protect Them in the Age of Terror

By Marc Strassman
President
Etopia
etopia@pacificnet.net

January 26, 2002

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Eight years ago, on January 2, 1994, I spoke to the National Information Infrastructure Task Force, meeting at the University of Southern California, and said:

"Why can't the members of Congress vote from their home districts
while watching the debate on C-SPAN? Why can't they participate in
the debate from their home districts, or any other place in the world,
through video teleconferencing? Why can't constituents throughout a
congressional district participate in digitally-mediated town halls
and instruct their representative on how to cast his or her vote on
the Virtual House Floor? Why can't the people vote on the issues
before the country directly?"

Shortly after September 9, 2001, I concluded that it would be a good
idea to build a network of websites in every US county, as a place for
federal, state, and local co-operation in anti-terrorist planning and
as a one-stop spot for county residents to get up-to-the-minute and
authoritative anti-terrorist information. No one was interested,
least of all the Office of Homeland Security run by Tom Ridge.

But then US Senators were locked out of their offices in the Hart
Senate Building for weeks because of anthrax-laden letters sent to
offices there. Legislators moved to makeshift quarters all over
Capitol Hill. Moderate disarray reportedly ensured.

Now that President Bush has announced his desire to spend tens of
billions of additional dollars for anti-terrorist planning and
protection, I think some of that money should be spent to build a
fall-back ?e-legislature? capability for the federal Congress, for
every state legislature, and for local city councils and county boards
of supervisors.

The purpose of these e-legislatures should be to make it possible to
instantly convene legislatures in cyberspace, letting members of an
elected assembly meet online from anywhere they are that has an
Internet connection, dial-up or broadband, mobile or land-based.

These e-legislature platforms, using Web conferencing software for
interactive meetings, digital certificates and smart cards to
authenticate members as entitled to participate in these meetings, web
site building programs such as Dynamic Site Framework to generate
multiple individual web sites for members and committees, and advanced
storage systems to preserve and make accessible records of all
legislative transactions, would provide all the functionality enjoyed
now by legislatures meeting in physical space, and, conceivably, a lot
more.

Incidentally, the current possibilities for maintaining and enhancing
the democratic legislative process by creating e-legislatures in
cyberspace, based on the best possible technologies now available,
will pale in comparison to the possibilities available to us as
broadband becomes ubiquitous, processors attain 2-gigahertz speeds,
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everyday objects.

Of course, putting legislatures into cyberspace in order to maintain
their seamless operation in the event of some terrorist attack or the
well-founded fear of a terrorist attack will make it much easier to
transmit the day-to-day operations of the body to the citizens, who
will be able to access them over the Internet.

Although I?m reluctant to mention this, putting legislatures in cyberspace will also make it much easier for common, ordinary citizens, even those who don?t use auditors, to participate in these bodies? deliberations, should the elected representatives decide that they are willing to allow common, ordinary citizens, even those who?ve demonstrated their disdain for democracy by not making any ?campaign contributions? to any of the elected officials who ?represent? them, to participate in their own self-governance.

Further, having a Plan B for the operation of every state legislature and local council should give additional pause to potential terrorists who might hope to destroy democracy by rendering the physical space where it is enacted uninhabitable. Knowing that legislatures will be able, without missing a beat, to carry on the work of democracy over a network first developed to allow the national government to function in the event of nuclear war, should give all such miscreants serious pause and all of us an additional measure of protection, as well as reassurance.

From: AlanKotok@cs.com
Date: Mon Jan 28, 2002 3:09 pm
Subject: RE: [EuronaCUEE] Who Should Provision the Future?

Marc, et al.

Excellent points, but let me offer another model to consider, which may
be a little more appropriate than the highway analogy. The Internet
(itself a creation of government action to a large extent) and the
World Wide Web are thriving because of a decentralized approach to its
development. Instead controlling access through gatekeepers, the
Internet and Web set open freely-available standards that organizations
or individuals use as targets for connecting devices and developing
services.

Can we apply this model to broadband connectivity? Rather than assuming
a finite resource for connectivity, establish the performance criteria
that would establish additional high-speed capacity. The more we think
of the resource in terms of existing technology, the more that those
parties already controlling that technology can control it further. If,
however, we define the resource in terms of minimum speed and other
criteria, then we encourage the creative juices in our technical and
business communities.

Here is an historical example: when we considered the telephone as a
voice communications device, we had the centralized AT&T running
things. When we began considering the telephone as a device for
communicating information of all kinds, the pressure to decentralize
telecommunications became unstoppable.

Government still has a job however, to keep the process open and fair.
Government does that job well (when the Enrons of the world don't get
in the way), and we should leave the development of new and innovative
services to the business people who do that stuff well.

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Editor, Techno-Politics:
http://www.suite101.com/welcome.cfm/us_techno_politics

From: "virtualorange" <virtualorange@yahoo.com>
Date: Tue Jan 29, 2002 8:32 pm
Subject: E-Legislatures, Web Conferencing Co-op, and a Speech from the Last Century

Dear Subscriber,

The E-Legislatures Project is for those interested in furthering the
cause of developing and deploying electronic systems that will allow
Congress and all of the state legislatures to operate in cyberspace.

To join, send an empty e-mail to:

E-Legislatures-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

The Web Conferencing Cooperative will collect money from individuals
and groups and use it to provide access for them to Web conferencing
platforms and related supporting products and services.

To join, send an empty e-mail to:

WebConCo-op-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

As an added bonus, so this post doesn't seem to be solely a shameless
plug for these two new discussion groups, I'm attaching a copy of a
speech I made eight years ago, and which I've been citing lately as an
early appeal for the very modern and 21st century concept of what I'm
now calling "E-Legislatures."

Read it, and see how far we've come in all that time.

On January 2, 1994, the National Information Infrastructure Task Force
came to the University of Southern California to address the issue of
universal service. Spokespeople from Pacific Bell rambled on for
hours about what they were doing in this area. Professor Tracy
Westen, of the Center for Government Studies, also spoke at some
length to a panel that notably included Larry Irving, then the Clinton
Administration's point person on such issues. During the afternoon
session, as panelists and audience alike were nodding off, I was given
2 minutes to speak and managed to get part of this presentation out to
an audience that was paying absolutely no attention.

Address to the Universal Service Conference at
the University of Southern California, January 2, 1994

My name is Marc Strassman. I'm the President of Transmedia
Communications, a network content provider. I'm also a candidate for

the U.S. House of Representatives from the 27th District of
California, which includes Burbank, Glendale, Pasadena, and the
Foothill Communities to the North. The centerpiece of my campaign is
a promise to give the 27th District a new identity as Pacific Hills, a
cybercommunity on the order of Singapore and Northern California's
Smart Valley, where every household is connected through broadband
links to all the electronic and economic resources promised by the
Information Superhighway. This connection must extend to every
household, so that the benefits and responsibilities of civic and
commercial life will belong to everyone in Pacific Hills.

Some here today have already and others will continue to make the case
for universal service. I applaud and support their efforts. But I
want to focus on a special application that requires universal service
and will be of particular importance for our future. After the system
is up and running, after everyone has shopped electronically until
they drop, interacted with every imaginable hedgehog, plumber, or race
course, studied Greek mythology, macroeconomics, and Sanskrit at the
Virtual University, and finished a hard day or night's or afternoon's
work telecommuting or teleputing or whatever we call it, what will be
left to do with this terrific tool/toy?

There's a hint in the Report of the National Information
Infrastructure Task Force. The Net, says the report, can be used to
"access government services" more easily. Indeed it can; indeed it
should. From filing income tax returns electronically, to getting
social security payments deposited automatically. Also, citizens will
be able to use this system to access information that the government
has generated and holds: materials in the Library of Congress, census
data, etc. And the information won't only go one way: the President,
the Vice-President and a few forward-looking members of Congress have
already made themselves available for input on the Internet.

But I'm talking about electronic democracy, where thee tools are used
to create a system where the citizen-voter-netusers directly make
decisions over the network.

In the 18th century, people and individuals traveled no faster than
they had in Roman times: at horse speed. One of the reasons our
Constitution provides for representative, rather than direct,
democracy, is that it wasn't possible to get everyone together in one
place in 1789. Representatives of the people met in Philadelphia and
created a government form that replicated the representative nature of
their own conclave.

With modern digital communications, everyone can be in one place at
once. Everyone can express his or her view and it can be seen, read,
or heard by millions of other people instantaneously. This idea is
not new. In the late 40's Buckminster Fuller pointed out that with
television and telephones it was already theoretically possible to
have direct electronic democracy. Forty-five years later, CNN and
C-SPAN put the deliberations and the pronouncements of our political
leaders onto our screens as they happen. The House of Representatives
now votes by electronic device. Millions of citizen vote for fat
Elvis or thin Elvis stamps via 900- numbers set up by tabloid tv
shows. Why can't the members of Congress vote from their home
districts while watching the debate on C-SPAN? Why can't they

participate in the debate from their home districts, or any other place in the world, through video teleconferencing? Why can't constituents throughout a congressional district participate in digitally-mediated town halls and instruct their representative on how to cast his or her vote on the Virtual House Floor? Why can't the people vote on the issues before the country directly?

These are some of the issues raised by the advent of technologies that make electronic democracy possible. Whether debates open to all and votes involving the entire electorate will give us better government than we have no is not immediately obvious. What should be obvious is that the more developed these communications technologies become, the more feasible such arrangements will be. In light of the high-stakes and on-going struggle among the cable companies, phone companies, cable-phone companies, etc., for control of the Information Superhighway, it is crucial that we continue to consider the possibilities for and the implications of, this highway as the backbone and forum for our own self-government. Because if we end up using it this way, and in some senses we almost certainly will, as a means of deciding who owns what and who gets to behave how, then we really have to be aware that whoever owns, operates, or controls the Information superhighway is going to be very interested in how it is used to decide issues of ownership, operation, and control of that system, which, to the extent that the Information Superhighway becomes the linchpin and key to our economy, culture, and politics, will be tantamount to deciding who own, operates, and control the world and our lives within it.

These are important issues, and I thank you for giving me a chance to comment upon them here today. Please continue you very important and welcome efforts in a crucial area that concerns us all.

From: "virtualorange" <virtualorange@yahoo.com>
Date: Thu Jan 31, 2002 1:59 pm
Subject: The Latest on "Smart ID Cards" and Their Role in Spreading Digital Democracy

Dear EuronaCUEE subscriber,

Most of my previous efforts to cyberize politics and government
involved the use of powerful identification technologies, based on
the use of smart cards and biometrics. All of these efforts had to
confront arguments about the implausibility of giving everyone such
tools for identification and online authentication.

Now banks, the military, and HMOs are in the process of equipping
their members and clients with just such Smart ID Cards. How much
longer can they use these technologies for securing the interests of
giant corporations and other bureaucratic institutions while arguing
that it's impossible to use these same, soon-to-be-ubiquitous cards
to empower their holders to participate in democratic decision-making,
voting, initiative petition-signing and, in their role as
stockholders, all aspects of corporate governance?

Regards,

Marc Strassman
President
Etopia

PPI | Q & A | January 18, 2002
Frequently Asked Questions about Smart ID Cards
By Shane Ham and Robert D. Atkinson

http://www.ppionline.org/ppi_ci.cfm?contentid=250075&knlgAreaID=140&subsecid=290

Here's the article that jump-started the whole discussion:

PPI | Briefing | June 1, 1999
Jump-Starting the Digital Economy
(with Department of Motor Vehicles-Issued Digital Certificates)

By Marc Strassman and Robert D. Atkinson

http://www.ppionline.org/ppi_ci.cfm?contentid=1369&knlgAreaID=140&subsecid=288

Here are some other current articles on the subject:

Pentagon Unveils 'Smart' ID Cards

By D. Ian Hopper
AP Technology Writer
Monday, Oct. 29, 2001; 5:37 p.m. EST

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/aponline/20011029/aponline173744_000.htm

The same story in Wired News

http://www.wired.com/news/conflict/0,2100,47971,00.html

Medical and Military Smart Cards

http://seattletimes.nwsource.com/html/healthscience/134382084_idcard23.html

TechWeb, December 26, 2001

http://www.techweb.com/tech/security/20011112_security

Why EPIC (Electronic Privacy Information Center)
dislikes "National ID Cards"

http://www.epic.org/privacy/id_cards/

Smart Banking Cards

http://www.1.slb.com/smartcards/news/01/sct_lloyds2102.html

From: Virtual Orange <virtualorange@yahoo.com>
Date: Fri Feb 1, 2002 1:18 pm
Subject: An Omnibus Ubiquitous CyberGovernment Proposal

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Dear EuronaCUEE subscriber,

Attached is a PDF file containing information about my
Omnibus Ubiquitous CyberGovernment Proposal.

If you don't already have the free Adobe Acrobat
Reader that you need to read this document, you can
download it at:

http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html

Regards,

Marc Strassman
President
Etopia


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Do You Yahoo!?
Great stuff seeking new owners in Yahoo! Auctions!
http://auctions.yahoo.com
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From: "virtualorange" <virtualorange@yahoo.com>
Date: Sat Feb 9, 2002 2:20 pm
Subject: Building Cyberstan

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Building Cyberstan


By Marc Strassman
President
Etopia
etopia@pacificnet.net

February 9, 2002

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In light of the present tremendous need for infrastructure of all types
in Afghanistan, it seems reasonable to build this infrastructure from
the inside out, by making the first step in that country's
reconstruction the building of a solar-powered, decentralized,
Internet-based electronic network that can be used to provide
education, training, medical care, economic benefits, cultural
distribution, and the construction of a ubiquitous civic space, all of
which can contribute greatly to the stabilization and development of
that country.

Funding is available, from OPEC, the World Bank, the United Nations
Development Programme, and the many generous donors who recently met
in Tokyo and pledged 4.5 billion dollars to the re-development effort.

The technology do to this is readily available, more or less off the
shelf. BP Solar has already built many kilowatts worth of
photovoltaic mini-generating plants similar to those necessary to
power such installations in cities, towns, and villages too remote to
have either telecommunications links or the electricity needed to run
them. DirecWay satellite systems already provide broadband Internet
connectivity to computer users in remote locales and could be
integrated with servers, wireless Local Area Networks, and
battery-powered laptop computers to bring the Internet to the most
remote spots.

Any number of manufacturers make laptop computers that can be powered
by rechargeable batteries. A village powered by photovoltaics could
build a "batteries en banc" charging station capable of holding and
recharging multiple batteries simultaneously, even providing a start
in the high tech business for entrepreneurial children shuttling
batteries between homes, businesses, and the central recharger.

Using Web conferencing software, the country's (or the world's) best
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teachers in all subjects could interactively instruct students countrywide, with their lessons archived and available at any time to anyone anywhere. The same would apply to practical health education, adult literacy, job training, or any other subject.

A solar-powered, broadband Internet system for Afghanistan would empower individuals to communicate with others within the country and many more people outside it. As it already has to a great extent everywhere it runs, putting the Internet in Afghanistan would facilitate contact between people and between groups, breaking down stereotypes and facilitating the creation of a single nation.

Web conferencing software can also be used to re-create and expand traditional, participatory Afghan political forms, allowing for more public
involvement in decision-making and the forging of a more democratic civic culture and politics.

Finally, in its role as a quasi-television-like medium, the solar-powered, broadband Internet network could also build community by making the best of traditional and modern entertainment available to a nationwide audience, through the use of live and archived streaming video programming.

The telecommunications network needed to deliver broadband Internet to even the most remote parts of Afghanistan need not rely solely on satellites for its delivery. Fiber optic cables, terrestrial microwave repeaters and wireless broadband systems can be also be utilized and integrated with each other and the satellite platform to provide it.

Nor do the solar power stations needed to power the network in remote areas be limited to providing power for the Internet system. Similar, and more extensive, installations can also be used to provide the power needed to refrigerate vaccines, light homes and businesses, run water purification plants and medical clinics, and otherwise provide essential services for cities, towns, neighborhoods, and villages long without them.

Decentralized power generation sources, such as solar, also have the advantage of being more stable, and not vulnerable to the swift and sudden disabling so easy to achieve against more centralized power grids.

The benefits spelled out here need not be limited to one country, such as Afghanistan. By pioneering the creation of integrated solar-powered broadband Internet and other infrastructure systems in this country, valuable experience will be gained that could greatly assist in providing similar installations in other places where much of the population lives far from cities, without power, and often without hope.

In fact, by making it possible for individuals in underdeveloped villages to access the whole world through the Internet while remaining in their villages, it's conceivable that a solution might be found for one of the most pressing demographic challenges of our time, namely, the mass migration of people from the countryside to the

cities, where they often massively aggravate the lack of jobs, resources, space, and other amenities they may have migrated to find in the first place.

By making it possible for villagers to benefit from the aggregated knowledge and experience of the entire human race from the convenience of their ancestral villages, and by helping them use this knowledge to build sustainable, appropriate, renewable, and decentralized systems for food production, health care, education, cultural enrichment, and civic participation right where they already are, their living standards could be raised dramatically, obviating the need to them to leave their homes, thereby avoiding so much of the economic, ecological, and political turmoil generated in and by the slums and favelas created by the waves of internal, or cross-national, immigration that have been characteristic of so much of recent history.

Not only could the creation of one or many such ?cyberstans? set in motion a virtuous cycle of education, development, and ecology on the demographic scale, but providing modern tools to young people now lacking them could also mean that individuals with talent in art, or music, or science, or literature, now facing limited opportunities to develop their talents and even fewer ways to share the fruits of these talents with a world hungry for beauty and truth in all their many forms, could now join in helping to create the world's conversation, going forward.

The art and the scientific and medical breakthroughs that might come out of villages now cold and dark, and cut off from everything but their own isolation and despair, might be the gifts returned to us for our provision to them of access to our own extensive but still-limited intellectual resources.

One often hears, as an echo of the media theorist Marshall McLuhan, the phrase "global village," referring to the way communications has brought "all of us" worldwide as close to each other as the inhabitants of a small village. In many ways this is true, most strikingly through the Internet, which can make it easier to ask someone half-a-world away a question than to walk down the hall to get an answer from a co-worker there.

But in real villages, life is often more circumscribed than this, and when the wider world spills over into the very local one it is too often either in the shape of men with guns or one-way transmissions of radio or television offering no chance for interaction or authentic response.

Providing all the people of Afghanistan (and China, and sub-Saharan Africa, and the islands of Indonesia, and so on) with the means not only to access the terabytes of knowledge accumulated by our species over the course of our journey so far but to add to it themselves, to have access to distant medical specialists, teachers, and performers, to organize themselves democratically, select their governments, and directly make public decisions that impact them and their neighbors, in short, to make it possible for everyone to hear and be heard, would certainly be an effective way to put what we already know to good use and maximize our chances of generating additional valuable knowledge for our own future benefit.

It might even be worthwhile to consider how we might bring these benefits to people who don't live in villages, to people living in the "advanced" and "civilized" parts of the world, far from the villages that all our ancestors originally inhabited.

From: Virtual Orange <virtualorange@yahoo.com>
Date: Fri Feb 15, 2002 2:57 pm
Subject: Proposal for an "Omnibus Ubiquitous Internet Reform Act of 2002"

Dear EuronaCUEE subscriber,

Here is a copy of the cover letter I just sent to
California State Senator Richard Alarcon, who
represents the part of Los Angeles where I live in
Sacramento. In it, I suggest that he introduce and
work to pass an "Omnibus Ubiquitous Internet Reform
Act of 2002." Attached to this post are the two PDF
documents referred to in the letter.

You should feel free to adapt and forward copies of
this letter, along with the attached files, to your
own local, state, provincial, federal, national, or
supra-national representatives, and suggest that they,
too, get to work merging the Internet and government
in useful ways.

Regards,

Marc Strassman
President
Etopia

Dear Senator Alarcon,

I'm writing as a constituent and a citizen of
California to suggest that you introduce and carry a
bill that would:

1. Provide every California with a Smart State ID card
through DMV
2. Create an e-legislature infrastructure to allow
dispersed operations of the Assembly and Senate, by
choice or in emergency situations
3. Establish a Public Broadband Authority on the model
of CalTrans, Los Angeles' DWP, and the TVA to provide
every Californian with affordable and reliable
broadband access to the Internet
4. Establish and fund a State Distance Learning
Network for free or subsidized use by public
educational institutions from pre-school and K-12
through higher education (Community Colleges, State
Universities, and the University of California) and by
private educational institutions at cost or slightly
above
5. Create a Security/Threat Reduction Portal Network

of one website in each county to serve as a means for
officials at all levels to coordinate their
security/emergency preparedness/threat reduction
activities and for all residents of each county to
rely on for up-to-the-minute and authoritative
information about threats to their well-being
6. Create an e-bureaucracy infrastructure to allow
dispersed operations of all state agencies, by choice
or in emergency situations
7. Create an e-legislature infrastructure to allow
dispersed operations of each and every county Board of
Supervisors and of each and every city council in
California, by choice or in emergency situations
8. Legalize and fund systems for polling place and
remote voting over the Internet in all public
elections in California and allow for voter
registration and the updating of voter registration
records over the Internet, all using the Smart State
ID Card
9. Create, operate, and require use of a system for
the instantaneous reporting and public availability
over the Internet of all campaign contributions of all
types relating to any elections at whatever level
within the State of California
10. Legalize Smart Initiatives, under which registered
voters would be allowed to remotely and digitally sign
proposed initiatives over the Internet

We might want to call this bill the "Omnibus
Ubiquitous Internet Reform Act of 2002 (OUIRA-02)."

This is only a summary of the issues I'd like to see
addressed by the Legislature.. To provide you with
some background, I am attaching PDF copies of "OmniUbi
proposal with Internet Voting" and "Digital
Identification and Government Initiative (DIGI)
(2000)." The first of these includes some articles
I've recently written that discuss these issues in
more depth and copies of previous legislation I've
proposed in these areas. The second, a comprehensive
plan for the modernizing of state government by means
of the Internet in the form of an initiative proposal
I drafted in 2000 but never circulated, may be
interesting for the ways in which it both tracks and
differs from this present proposal.

If you don't already have the free Adobe Acrobat
Reader that you need to read these documents, you can
download it at:

http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html

If you or any of your staff would like to discuss any
of these matters with me, I can be reached by e-mail
at <etopia@pacificnet.net>.

Thanks in advance for your time and for your

consideration of these proposals, which are designed
to put California and Californians at the top of the
IT food chain as it develops in the next few years.

Sincerely,

Marc Strassman
President
Etopia

From: Virtual Orange <virtualorange@yahoo.com>
Date: Wed Feb 20, 2002 4:09 pm
Subject: California Internet Bill of Rights (CIBR)

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Dear EuronaCUEE subscriber,

I'm in the process of preparing a "California Internet
Bill of Rights" for circulation, qualification, and
passage by the voters of our state. I've attached
copies of the CIBR in its current form in both Word
and PDF formats.

I'm writing to ask if you could take a few minutes to
critique it from your own perspective and to provide
any additional items that you think would preserve,
protect, and extend fundamental civil and privacy
rights into cyberspace. Suggestions that would
protect Internet users from unwanted commercial
solicitations would also be very welcome.

You can contact me by e-mail at
<etopia@pacificnet.net>.

Thanks in advance for your time and any help you can
provide.

Sincerely,

Marc Strassman
President, Etopia
Executive Director, California Internet Bill of Rights
(CIBR) Association
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