

The preceding bit of economic advice was written less than two weeks before 9/11. Two weeks after that attack, I drafted a proposal about using the Internet to protect ourselves from similar future disasters.

A Modest Proposal—Let's Build a Security Portal Network to Protect Both Our Security and Our Liberty

(September 27, 2001)

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.

A month later, I became a caller on a local talk show, where I lamented the dichotomy between the government's reluctance to use technology to empower people and its eagerness to use it to monitor them.

To hear the segment, click here:

<http://sfm.lpb.org:8080/ramgen/carnivoreonkpcc103101.rm?usehostname>

Carnivore Si, Smart Initiatives No

(October 31, 2001)

... 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

Towards the end of 2001, I ran for a seat on the Los Angeles City Council, in the 2nd Council District. Here's a campaign blog entry from that time.

Virtual Campaign Diary

(September 4, 2001)

With the Labor Day Weekend finally over, I can get back to my efforts to achieve Council District domination, here in the 2nd Council District of Los Angeles, California.

Since my small start-up, Etopia, makes what money it does by selling cities e-government and e-democracy software and hardware, and the basis of my campaign is going to be providing Los Angeles with more and better e-government and e-democracy software and hardware, I figured I should check with the authorities before I get started.

This is easier theoretically than practically. I call the Ethics Commission and try to ask about the rules regulating my rights to simultaneously sell e-government tools and campaign on a platform of having the city buy them. All I can get out of the official I'm talking to is that I can do whatever I want while I'm a candidate, but that once I'm elected, the Conflict-of-Interest rules will kick in.

He accepts my statement that these California State rules must be on the Internet. I make a note to track them down and look them over.

Earlier in the day, I had taught myself how to use the e3 quiz-exam-survey-voting software from Online Access Corporation in Australia by building a survey designed to collect information from Councilmembers' offices about how they serviced constituents and how they decided on issues facing the Council.

Now I call the office of the Councilmember who was vacating his seat after thirty years, making necessary a special election and making possible my elevation to Councilmember status, if I win. I ask a high-ranking staff member if I could have a meeting with whomever was in charge of constituent services, so I could acquaint myself with the common complaints of those I hope to represent, and so I could learn more about how their needs are typically met by the people in their representative's office.

I was as surprised by her tone as I was by the answer itself. In a kind of hostile bark, she told me that there was no way that could happen, because to give a candidate for office the benefit of official paid staffers' expertise DURING BUSINESS HOURS was absolutely and strictly forbidden. I was too terrified to ask if they'd meet with me outside of business hours.

I ask if I could collect this information from the 15 Council offices by using my e3 online survey system. The answer to this was also absolutely not, since that would also involve the work of official staff in support of a candidate's efforts to win office. I asked if I could get this information as a reporter, if I weren't a candidate. She said she didn't want to play games with me.

So now I have a perfectly good online survey and no place to go with it. I called the two local papers, the **Daily News** and the **Los Angeles Times**, and tried to get them interested in this sordid tale of corruption and frustration. I was told I could send a fax to the **Daily News** and did reach an editor at the Times whom I more or less forced to listen to me and take my name and number.

I think I will need to reach the public through this diary and the Web, and not the normal news channels.

I had a productive and enjoyable talk with Harry Druck at PPT, a Pennsylvania-based software company that created the e-government portal software Dynamic Site Framework (DSF) out of the tools it developed to build the State of Pennsylvania's website. He agreed with my point that even neighborhoods could benefit from having DSF-generated portals as their websites. He agreed to send me everything I needed to become an ace portal-maker myself. PPT is the software I want to sell to the City of Los Angeles, and every other city, state, neighborhood and country. I hope I will eventually find out if I can.

I had actually communicated with the **Los Angeles Times** earlier in the day, when I proposed that they run an op-ed piece I'd written a while back in which I suggest that the looming spectre of secession (of Hollywood, the Harbor Area, and, especially, the 1,000,000-strong San Fernando Valley, where the 2nd CD is located) might be undercut if only the city would adopt a serious policy of using e-government and e-democracy to satisfy the strong popular craving for better communications and self-determination that was driving the movement to break up the city.

It was originally 1200 words long and **Times** op-eds are only supposed to be 650. So I boiled it down and, like dried fruit, it was even more tasty (in my opinion) than it had been when full of extraneous moisture. I e-mailed it in. I hope you can think about running for office and publish op-eds at the same time.

Meanwhile, I was shuttling e-mail messages back and forth among an illustrious array of cryptographers, businesspeople, academics, and Internet voting opponents. I offered one mailing list a look at an interesting new approach to assuring ballot authenticity and integrity using smart cards, but someone on the list shot it down. Then one of its original authors let me know he was planning a reply to this nay-sayer. A few minutes later I got it and will read it and maybe it will play an important role in tomorrow's activities.

These refined, mostly-civilized, and sometimes obscure discussions and rants by highly-intelligent and informed technologists stand out in vivid contrast with the often pedantic and stolid obstacles I encounter in the political world.

But it's often this very contrast that makes my effort to inject powerful and sometimes visionary technological possibilities into a humdrum and unimaginative political system so interesting.

More later about the 2nd Council District and my possible opponents. More after I learn more about the place and those people myself.

The Russian actor-martial artists-producers who had asked me to write them a script about Russian actor-martial artists told me that while I was a good writer, “The Russian Treatment,” which I’d written for them, was not exactly what they were looking for. So my plans to identify myself on the ballot as a “Screenwriter” (and therefore some kind of Hollywood celebrity) will have to wait a while longer.

Would “Energetic Technology Visionary” work?

More tomorrow.

One of my opponents, a California State Assemblymember, was receiving massive campaign contributions from the Indian tribes who were themselves receiving even more massive amounts of money by running gambling casinos. The Assemblymember was simultaneously sponsoring legislation in Sacramento that directly benefited those tribes, his contributors. So I set out to investigate. The furthest this investigation got was an interview I conducted with Alex Padilla, a Los Angeles City Councilmember, the President of the Los Angeles City Council, and one of my opponent's biggest supporters.

**Talking to Los Angeles City Council President Alex Padilla
about Conflicts of Interest**

(November 14, 2001)

To hear the interview, click here:

<http://sfm.lpb.org:8080/ramgen/alexpadillaatlacityhall111401.rm?usehostname>

Neighborhood Councils were a ploy used by the City Hall crowd in Los Angeles to blunt the movements for secession of the San Fernando Valley and Hollywood. I attended one of their recruitment meetings, then drafted these proposals to modernize their antiquated procedures. Interestingly enough, these suggestions pre-figure the campaign platform I would run on the following year in the election for secession and reflect my on-going efforts to put the Internet to work as a tool for localized, and direct, democracy.

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

December 1, 2001

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 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:

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 than \$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.

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.

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.

In January, 2002, I put together a short update on the technopolitical political projects I was then interested in, including the “Cyberstan Project,” a plan to up-grade life in that troubled country through solar energy and satellite-based broadband Internet connectivity.

Also included here is a discussion of “e-legislatures,” fully networked organizations that would allow their members to work (and vote) from home, or anywhere else, over the Internet. I’d been proposing this for years, as a precursor for letting voters participate in the legislative process, but it took the threat of anthrax-infected chambers to generate any interest in the concept from those most directly affected. With that threat seemingly receding, discussion of fully-networked legislatures (at least in public) seems to have waned. I’m not privy to the plans that the Homeland Security Department has for protecting legislatures and legislators in the event of terrorism.

Etopian Politics 2002:

(January 26, 2002 to February 9, 2002)

e-Legislatures, Public e-highways,
Smart ID Cards, and Building
Cyberstan

By

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

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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 ensued.

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, 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.

Who Should Provision the Future?

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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 are 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 from 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.

The Latest on "Smart ID Cards" and Their Role in Spreading Digital Democracy

By Marc Strassman

President

Etopia

etopia@pacificnet.net

January 31, 2002

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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&subse
cid=288](http://www.ppionline.org/ppi_ci.cfm?contentid=1369&knlgAreaID=140&subse
cid=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](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.nwsourc.com/html/healthscience/134382084_idcard23.
html](http://seattletimes.nwsourc.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

Building Cyberstan

By Marc Strassman

President

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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.

Many companies 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 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.

On February 22, 2002, I once again got on the same local talk show as a caller, while Connie McCormack, the Registrar-Recorder of Los Angeles County, was on as a guest. I tried to convince her that Internet voting would be good for her, her fellow Registrars, and California voters. She remained unconvinced. Our encounter, annotated with my comments, makes up part of the article below.

To hear our conversation, click here:

<http://sfm.lpbm.org:8080/ramgen/conniemccormackkonkpcc022202.rm?usehostname>

Using Internet Voting to Save California from Electoral Disaster

(February 22, 2002)

Thanks to the ACLU and Common Cause, and U.S. District Judge Stephen V. Wilson, we now have a tremendous opportunity to achieve the implementation of remote Internet voting by March, 2004.

From the Los Angeles Times

February 14, 2002

State Ordered to Replace Old Vote Machines

■Ruling: Los Angeles and eight other large counties must update equipment by the 2004 presidential election, federal judge decides.

By HENRY WEINSTEIN, TIMES STAFF WRITER

A federal judge in Los Angeles on Wednesday ruled that California has to replace outmoded punch-card voting machines by the 2004 presidential election.

U.S. District Judge Stephen V. Wilson's decision is the first ruling in the nation requiring the elimination of obsolete voting machines in the aftermath of the controversial 2000 presidential election. Similar suits are pending in a number of other states.

For the entire article, go to:

<http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-000011395feb14.story?coll=la-headlines-california>

Nine days after the Federal court's decision, the Registrar-Recorder of Los Angeles County, Connie McCormack, appeared as a guest on "Talk of the City," hosted by Kitty Felde on KPCC 89.3 FM, a National Public Radio station broadcasting from Pasadena City College. I gave them a call.

Caller: Thanks for taking my call.

Host: Sure.

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

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

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

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

Note: *For the entire California Internet Voting Task Force report, released on January 18, 2000, go to:*

<http://www.ss.ca.gov/executive/ivote/>

I personally don't know of any "techies" who went into that Task Force thinking Internet voting was feasible and then decided it wasn't. I'd be glad to hear from McCormack who exactly they were.

The Registrar-Recorder claims that "the problem of security is not solvable at this time according to the experts." Well, some experts think it is and some experts think it isn't. There is certainly no consensus on this point. That's why additional tests, demonstrations, and deliberations are required to establish

legitimate standards for secure remote Internet voting and to develop a procedure for certifying systems that can meet these standards.

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

Note: *Of course no remote Internet voting system has been certified. Both agencies referred to by McCormack—the Office of California's Secretary of State and the Federal Election Commission—have refused, despite countless urgings from me and others—to set such standards, at whatever extreme level of security, accuracy, availability, and other criteria they choose, and disallow the use of any remote Internet voting system that fails to meet these standards.*

Guest: I think it's coming in the future. I think that we're going to see this. Why not? I mean, everyone's using the Internet. But as of right now—and I don't think in the next two to three years—but I hope within the next five, Marc's going to be absolutely right and this will be available at, you know, libraries and, by the way, our website is www.lavote.net. If you haven't received your sample ballot and you want to know where to go vote, just go in there: www.lavote.net and click on "Where do I vote?", type in your address, and bingo. It's totally interactive. You can look up your sample ballot. We have 3,154 different varieties of sample ballot depending on where you live.

Note: *This is a breathtaking combination of changing the subject, distorting what I said, and gibberish. In what sense I'm I "going to be absolutely right"? In saying that remote Internet voting will be available within the next five years? That's not what I said. I said we need to implement remote Internet voting **now** as a solution to the dilemma created by Judge Wilson's order and the lack of money at the county level.*

Ms. McCormack is saying we can't do that because remote Internet voting is not secure. The authorities she cites on this point argue that it is fundamentally and intrinsically insecure, that it cannot be made secure by any means. So, if they're right, how will it be possible to allow remote Internet voting in five years, or ten, or a hundred?

*But if it **can** be made secure and the "authorities" refuse to acknowledge this, on account of non-technological biases against remote Internet voting and the*

changes in the social distribution of power and influence it might cause (similar to the opposition of record conglomerates to peer-to-peer file sharing systems), then the problem we face is one of values and interests and not a technologically-based lack of security.

Five years ago people told me that remote Internet voting was a good idea, but not just yet. “Wait five years,” they said. I have. Now the chief elections officer of the largest voting entity in the U.S. is telling me,” You know everything you’re saying, it just sounds so right... I hope within the next five, Marc’s going to be absolutely right and this will be available at, you know, libraries.”

*I’ve heard that before. I think they’re stalling, and playing us for fools. I think we could have secure remote Internet voting now, just six years after I first proposed it publicly in the **Virtual Voting Rights Initiative** in 1996.*

And by the way, I don’t want to be “absolutely right” just about having Internet voting available in “libraries,” where many people already vote in various pre-Internet voting ways. What I, and many others, want is to vote securely over the Internet from our offices, homes, boats, aircraft, backyards, destination resorts, cars (but not while driving), and every other place the Internet now or ever will reach, stationary or mobile, domestic or foreign, on- or off-planet.

Host: Wow.

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

Host: Marc, thanks a lot for the call.

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

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

art modern system or whether we have to transition to a paper system in between is, at this point, not totally determined.

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

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

Host: Got it.

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

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

Guest: Thank you, Kitty.

Host: You bet. This is 89.3, KPCC.

Note: *I couldn't have stated the dilemma any more clearly myself. Nine California counties with 75% of the registered voters in the state need to replace their antiquated punch card voting systems by March 2004. The big counties involved don't have the money to do so. They are hoping that they can get some money from a bond measure coming up for a vote on March 5th and from the Federal Government.*

They are so desperate they may need to revert to even more antiquated voting methods in order to eliminate the now-banned punch cards. This, they worry, will foul things up even worse than the punch cards ever could have. What to do? What to do?

A modest proposal: Put pressure on the Federal Election Commission and the Office of the Secretary of State to develop and issue rigorous standards for remote Internet voting systems. Encourage companies to have their remote Internet voting systems certified according to these standards. Buy, lease, or license these certified secure remote voting systems for use by the Nine Counties. Lobby for changes in whatever laws need to be modified to allow people to vote remotely over the Internet.

Encourage voters to sign up for remote Internet voting. Run plenty of tests and demonstrations to perfect the operation of the system and accustom people to using it. Determine roughly what percentage of registered and/or likely voters plan to vote remotely over the Internet and how many cannot access the

Internet, refuse to use the Internet to vote, or absolutely require the “polling place experience” to feel right.

Then the counties can buy enough expensive touch screen systems to accommodate those who will be coming to the polls. Since the availability of remote Internet voting will greatly reduce this number, a lot of money can be saved, probably more than enough to pay for the remote Internet voting resources employed in the overall voting program.

A final note on security, technology, and government operations. At this moment, the Bush Administration is asking for tens of billions of dollars in additional funding to use the Internet and its related technologies on behalf of what it considers to be its highest priority: electronic surveillance. It’s a foregone assumption of this approach that the data gathered by Carnivore and other high-tech tools will be and will remain secure, protected against foreign and domestic enemies, and available only to the appropriate law enforcement authorities.

Security technologies perhaps not available to the general public, or even voting authorities, have no doubt been developed and are in use by those charged with watching us. Add to this the technologies developed by the Department of Defense to maintain the security and secrecy of battle-field transmissions and top-level policy consultations and it should be obvious that maintaining the security of a mere electronic ballot is child’s play and could be provided on an off-the-shelf basis were the will to do so present.

One can only wonder why tens of billions of dollars will be spent for secure surveillance products and services while the Registrar-Recorders in nine California counties must go to sleep every night worrying where they will find the relative pittance they need to provide the voters in their jurisdictions with the means to vote in a legal, and, maybe, in a remote, way.

What we are facing is a dilemma even bigger than how to obey a District Court order. Technology, security, money, and priorities are what are involved in both moving to remote Internet voting and in coping with terrorist threats. What we need to decide as a society is whether, in simplified terms and a possibly false dichotomy, we prefer to be free or to be safe, assuming for the moment that more electronic surveillance of all our activities is what will ultimately make us safe.

There is no shortage of people, companies and politicians willing to spend and receive vast amounts of money on behalf of the “surveillance-will-make-us-safe” alternative. There are a lot fewer individuals and groups speaking up for the “remote-Internet-voting-will-make-us-free” approach. There ought to be more and they ought to listen to us.

In February of 2002 I put together a wish list for e-government and e-democracy and called it the “California Internet Bundle of Reforms” (“CIBR”)

California Internet Bundle of Reforms

(February 22, 2002)

1. Smart ID Cards to be issued jointly by DMV and Office of the Registrar General, which is hereby established to oversee and provide (either in-house or by out-sourcing) the functionality of a Certificate Authority for the management of the digital certificates and the cards that will hold them.
2. Build a Virtual Legislature platform that will allow remote convening of the Assembly and the Senate, and all County Boards of Supervisors, City Councils, and all other official elective and appointive bodies
3. Establish a Public Broadband Authority to level the “driving- vs.-surfing” playing field
4. Establish a State Distance Learning Network to increase instructional efficiency
5. Build a Security Portal Network for official collaboration and public notification
6. Build e-government systems that allow citizens to transact all city, county, and state business online
7. Legalize and implement polling-place and remote Internet voting
8. Create and maintain a system for the instantaneous online reporting and viewing of all campaign and other political contributions
9. Legalize and implement Smart Initiatives, so that citizens can sign official initiative petitions online at a site to be maintained by the Secretary of State.
10. Create a database wherein residents can indicate their interest or lack thereof in receiving unsolicited commercial e-mails. All such e-mails will be required to check with this list before being delivered. Violations of the stated preferences will be criminalized and/or result in enormous fines to the violators, 80% of which will go to the State’s General Fund and 20% of which will go to the individuals spammed. Users may affirmatively ask to be included on lists to be sold to commercial interests and the funds received from such sales will go to the State’s General Fund.
11. Implement as law the provision that no entity doing business online in California or with California residents shall sell or otherwise use any personal data collected without the express, prior, digital certificate-authorized permission of the person providing the information.

Then I consolidated these proposed reforms and renamed them the “California Internet Bill of Rights” (“CIBR”).

Request to Office of Legislative Counsel for the Drafting of the
“Omnibus Ubiquitous Internet Reform Initiative”

(February 28, 2002)

We, the undersigned registered California voter(s), hereby respectfully request that the Office of Legislative Counsel draft for us a proposed initiative measure that would have the following effect:

1. Provide every California with a “California Smart ID Card” through DMV, these cards to contain biometric authenticators and one or more digital certificates to be used in doing business with State, county, and city governments, and any other entity that chooses to accept them
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 models of CalTrans and the City of Los Angeles’ DWP to provide every Californian with affordable and reliable broadband access to the Internet and, as soon as practicable, access to Internet2
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 and that empowers every state resident with the ability to interact with, retrieve all pertinent information from, and do business with these agencies both informally and securely over the Internet
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 and giving these institutions the ability to interact with, provide all pertinent information to, and do business, both informally and securely, with all of their residents, businesses doing business within their jurisdiction or with residents within their jurisdiction, and owners of property within their jurisdiction, over the Internet, using the secure identification and

authentication capabilities inherent in the California Smart ID Cards called for in (1) above

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, including party affiliation, over the Internet, all using the California Smart ID Card
9. Create, operate, and require candidates and political committees to use a system for the instantaneous reporting and publication over the Internet of all campaign contributions of all types received as part of any public election 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 using the aforementioned California Smart ID Card and/or the digital certificates contained therein.

Shortly after I compiled these lists, Alan Kotok, a free-lance writer on the subject of technology and business, wrote a short piece about them and me that appeared online at:

<http://www.suite101.com/article.cfm/10818/89924>

California e-government on steroids

Author: **Alan Kotok**

Published on: **March 4, 2002**



Much of the talk about electronic or e-government centers on new or innovative applications by public agencies that take advantage of the Web and Internet. A good example of this approach is the federal e-government strategy, announced in late February that lists 24 separate initiatives that address citizen and business transactions with federal agencies, as well as interactions among governments at all levels.

A few innovators, however, take a more holistic and assertive approach to e-government, one that recognizes that far-reaching potential of the Internet to transform the relationship between individuals and governments. The making of government policy at any level involves exchanges of information between citizens and elected officials as well as among officials themselves. Often that process involves reaching consensus; at other times officials or government bodies make decisions based solely on the raw exercise of power.

Bill of Rights and Bundle of Reforms

Marc Strassman is one of those people who sees the larger potential of e-government. Strassman, who has a political research and consulting company called Etopia in Los Angeles, has proposed what he calls the California Internet Bill of Rights. Strassman serves as well as contributing editor to NetPulse, published by PoliticsOnline.

Also called the California Internet Bundle of Reforms (or CIBR, same acronym), the proposal has 11 provisions:

1. Smart ID Cards to be issued jointly by Department of Motor Vehicles and Office of the Registrar General, which is hereby established to oversee and provide (either in-house or by out-sourcing) the functionality of a Certificate Authority for the management of the digital certificates and the cards that will hold them.
2. Build a Virtual Legislature platform that will allow remote convening of the Assembly and the Senate, and all County Boards of Supervisors, City Councils, and all other official elective and appointive bodies
3. Establish a Public Broadband Authority to level the "driving-vs.-surfing" playing field

4. Establish a State Distance Learning Network to increase instructional efficiency
5. Build a Security Portal Network for official collaboration and public notification
6. Build e-government systems that allows citizens do transact all city, county, and state business online
7. Legalize and implement polling-place and remote Internet voting
8. Create and maintain a system for the instantaneous online reporting and viewing of all campaign and other political contributions
9. Legalize and implement Smart Initiatives, so that citizens can sign official initiative petitions online at a site to be maintained by the Secretary of State.
10. Create a database wherein residents can indicate their interest or lack thereof in receiving unsolicited commercial e-mails. All such e-mails will be required to check with this list before being delivered. Violations of the stated preferences will be criminalized and/or result in enormous fines to the violators, 80% of which will go the State's General Fund and 20% of which will go to the individuals spammed
11. Implement as law the provision that no entity doing business online in California or with California residents shall sell or otherwise use any personal data collected without the express, prior, digital certificate-authorized permission of the person providing the information

The breadth of these proposals illustrates how using the Internet can provide individuals with greater and more direct access to decision makers. The provisions, that constitute more of a program of action than an enumeration of new citizen rights, are an attempt to get a more serious discussion of using technology to move ideas rather than the physical delivery of people and paper.

Networks vs. roads

In an e-mail response to questions, Strassman said, "The two main alternatives for moving things around these days are roads and networks. In order to encourage more information, transactions, experiences, encounters, meetings, and pure data to be transferred over networks using electrons and photons, instead of over roads using atoms, gasoline, metal and plastic."

One of the basic enabling technologies, and the first item on Strassman's list, is the Smart ID card, which would be used for Internet-based voting and signing voter initiatives, citizen-generated referendums that appear on election ballots. This card, containing digital signatures, would in Strassman's vision replace the host of identification and credit cards filling up Californians' wallets. "I should be able to use an ID card as a general purpose credit card, medical provider/insurance card, employee ID, cash card, driver's license, charitable contributor, frequent flyer member, etc.," says Strassman.

The proposal to treat high speed Internet (broadband) networks as public utilities, like electrical power or city water supplies, would significantly change the telecommunications landscape. Like the digital ID card, ubiquitous broadband connections would be a powerful enabling technology, giving families a greater ability to interact with public agencies than is possible through dial-up lines.

Where's the security?

But having these powerful technical enablers at one's disposal, would also require a good deal more security and protection of privacy than currently available to individuals. While Strassman says he would require explicit and high security standards, their lack of mention in the proposals seems like a gaping omission.

Strassman is no stranger to these initiatives. He authored a Virtual Voting Rights initiative in 1996, the California Internet Voting Initiative in 1999, and California Smart Initiatives in 2000, although none of them have yet become law. As more Californians and Americans in general turn to the Internet for an increasing number of daily functions, however, the prospect for using technology to conduct everyday business with government authorities becomes more real and less remote. Even in California, the network may replace the road.

Links:

Federal e-government strategy.

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/inforeg/eg...>

NetPulse.

<http://netpulse.politicsonline.com/>

In the March 5, 2002, Primary Election, State Assembly Majority Leader Kevin Shelley was nominated for Secretary of State. Thinking he might soon be elected to replace incumbent Republican Bill Jones in the office that is responsible for elections and therefore Internet voting, Smart Initiatives and other of the reforms had been pursuing, I wanted to know more about his position on these issues. He was kind enough to agree to a phone interview from San Francisco.

A Talk with Candidate Kevin Shelley About Voting, Internet and Otherwise, in California

By Marc Strassman
President
Etopia
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March 22, 2002

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Like the legendary weather in Vermont, one good thing about a democratic political system, especially one with term limits, or a lot of ambitious politicians wanting to move up, is that if you don't like the slate of officeholders in power at any particular time, if you just wait a while, it will change.

This has never been truer, or more significant, than now in California, at least in terms of who is Secretary of State. Bill Jones has been California's Secretary of State since 1994 and while I'm sure it wasn't his highest priority (he often said that removing "deadwood" from the voting rolls was his highest priority), he has been the strongest, most cunning, and most relentless opponent of remote Internet voting in the state. Given his position as chief elections officer for California, he has been very successful in turning back the tide of electronic distance voting.

This year, Bill Jones ran for governor, and lost. In November 2002, a new Secretary of State will be elected. The odds-on favorite to win that election is Kevin Shelley, who, on the strength of his recent victory in the Democratic primary, is now that party's nominee for the office. Shelley is a Member of the California Assembly, and serves as the Majority Leader.

In recent years, he has authored and, in some cases, passed, several bills to modernize California's election systems. He also authored Proposition 41, which passed on March 5th, and which will provide \$200 million in bond revenues to finance the modernization of the state's voting equipment.

Yesterday (March 20th), Mr. Shelley took time out from his busy campaign for Secretary of State to answer some of my questions about voting in California. I was

talking to him from my home office near Studio City, California, while he enjoyed a pleasant walk on what he said was a “beautiful day in San Francisco” and answered my questions through his cel phone.

We started by discussing the abysmally low turnout in the March 5th election, the one where Shelley was nominated as the Democratic candidate for Secretary of State. Only 22 per cent of eligible voters, statewide, voted in that election. Shelley gave me some statistics from previous elections, to put the turnout in this one into context.

“In 1940,” he told me “80% of eligible Californians voted. In 1960, 70% of eligible voters voted. In 2000, 50% of eligible voters voted. In 2000, 20% of 18 to 24-year-olds voted.”

I said that this was not a very impressive record, or trend line, and asked him why he thought turnout was shrinking so drastically.

“We spend a lot of effort teaching people to recycle, to not smoke, and to wear their seat belts,” he said, “but we don’t spend comparable energy urging them to vote.”

I noted that some form of coercion, up to legal sanctions, now accompany all the behaviors he cited as being successfully inculcated in people. Even before I could ask about legally requiring people to vote, as is the case in several countries, he emphatically declared: “I don’t support mandatory voting.”

“But,” he said, “encouraging students to vote needs to be a greater priority of our educational system.”

He had specific ideas about how to do this:

1. Create a Youth Voting Corps (on the model of the Civilian Conservation Corps) and deputize its members to register their peers.
2. Give school credit for registering voters.
3. Include a voter registration form with every high school diploma and every citizenship certificate.

We talked about AB55, Shelley’s bill to modernize voting in California. It has, he said, gone all the way through the Assembly and all the policy committees in the state Senate and is pending in the Senate Appropriations committee. When it passes, it will provide additional funding for voting equipment in the state.

He said it would cost \$375 million to provide touch screen systems for every county. He said that with \$108 million from the federal government (\$6,000 per precinct still using punch cards) and \$267 million generated internally in California (\$200 million

from Proposition 41 and \$67 million from the counties, on a 3-1 matching basis), the money could be found to pay for the necessary upgrades.

Shelley also authored a bill to legalize permanent absentee voting, with no requirements other than wanting to vote that way. He said thousands of people across the state were applying for this status and that up to a million voters would be voting this way for the first time in November 2002. He said it could increase total turnout by five to ten percent.

I suggested that it wasn't only inconvenience that kept people from voting, that sometimes it was a sign of people's alienation from the political system

"It's both," said Shelley. "Inconvenience AND disillusion about politics."

We began discussing Internet voting.

Shelley had written and passed a bill to try out polling place Internet voting in three counties. Governor Gray Davis vetoed the bill. Shelley still strongly supports what he calls "stage two" Internet voting, or voting over the Internet from terminals in official polling places.

He's not ready for "stage four" Internet voting, what he calls "pajama voting," in which voters vote from home, office, or wherever they can securely access the Internet. "Digital divide issues are huge," he said. "Conservatives," he said, oppose remote Internet voting because "they don't trust the system and suspect fraud," while many on the left oppose it "because they worry about excluding minorities and the poor."

As Secretary of State, said Shelley, he would focus on the essential "intangible function" of being an "active, aggressive spokesperson." He also said he would do more to more fully staff up Secretary of State offices around the state.

His priorities, he said, would be:

Voter registration

Youth Voting Corps

New uses of technology in performing the functions of the Secretary of State's office

Right before his staff put an end to his idyllic saunter through the City by the Bay and called him back to the campaign car for a trip to his next appearance, I asked him about Smart Initiatives, certainly a new use of technology to perform the functions associated with the now very expensive and exclusive initiative qualification process. Smart Initiatives involve providing all citizens with digital certificates that they can use to digitally sign initiative petitions, perhaps on a website maintained by the Secretary of State.

“I love the idea in concept,” he told me.

A primary purpose of disintermediating politics and government through the Internet is to disperse and decentralize institutional power. Some examples of what can happen when power is, contrary to this approach, concentrated at the top are discussed in the article below.

Enron Comes to City Hall While We Exit

June 21, 2002

Lately, more than a few previously-highly respected institutions have come under various degrees of extreme criticism for their abuse of power. Included in this list are:

1. Enron
2. The Catholic Church
3. The Red Cross
4. Long distance phone companies
5. the US intelligence community
6. Wall Street in general

While the specifics of this abuse have varied from case to case, what all these organizations had in common was a top heavy, arrogant, bureaucratic, entrenched leadership structure. Their monopoly, or near-monopoly, control of some essential resource emboldened them to exercise power in ways that benefited those at the top while hurting everyone else.

As Lord Acton said, "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely

Here in Los Angeles we have another such organization, one that is top-heavy, bureaucratic, entrenched, and seemingly-invincible. I refer to the incumbent government of the City of Los Angeles.

Fortunately, those of us who are not part of the top leadership of the City of Angels have a simple, legal way to extricate ourselves from the clutches of the Downtown Establishment: secession.

In "Animal Farm," an allegory of revolution gone bad, the oppressed animals are led to freedom by the clever pigs, who, unfortunately, by the end of the story have morphed into the oppressive farmers who previously held them all in subjugation. We need to heed the author's warning. We need to insure that Valley secession does not result in the cloning of the current regime in City Hall with a Valley veneer and the creation of a new government and bureaucracy that are as boring and unresponsive as the original.

Opponents of secession have recently proposed a "borough" system of "decentralization" as an alternative to real secession, as though making Los Angeles more like New York City would be a solution for anything. This "borough" system is a variant of the

“neighborhood council” alternative, also suggested as a means of thwarting secession and now mostly discredited.

Nevertheless, providing for local control and the decentralization of power, when done authentically, is a good way to prevent the concentration of power that has done so much damage in other contexts. But to do it right means giving real, not sham, power to subdivisions of the new Valley City jurisdiction.

What might make sense, in this context, is to establish as “boroughs” each of the 14 council districts envisioned for Valley City. Each of these Districts could be divided into ten Sub-Districts. Each of these Sub-Districts can be divided into ten Micro-Districts. The result would be 1400 political jurisdictions of approximately one thousand residents each.

The basic idea of “Tiered Jurisdictions” would give effective control of each Micro-District to the one thousand people living in it. Using a combination of on- and off-line methods of information distribution, consultation, polling, and decision-making, the one thousand people in each Micro-District would be enabled and empowered to decide for themselves all municipal matters that apply solely to their Micro-District.

Similarly, using on- and offline methods, representatives (and in many cases most of the residents themselves) of each Micro-District will work together at the Sub-District level to make decisions that effect their Sub-District as a whole. Moving up, Sub-District reps and residents will work together to make decisions on matters that impact the entire District

Finally, Councilmembers and the residents of the entire District will work with Councilmembers and residents of all the other Districts to determine Valley City-wide policies and budget priorities.

Because this structure gives so much power to people at every level, it nicely reflects the arguments of secession supporters that the point of secession is to empower the people of the Valley. The campaign for Valley secession, which depends so heavily on the volunteer efforts of thousands of Valley residents, could further its own goals, while laying the groundwork for tiered jurisdictions, by organizing its volunteers in a “tiered campaign organization,” which also gives autonomy and authority to micro-, sub-, and district level groups working to achieve secession.

Once cityhood is won, these organizations could form the basis of tiered government for the new Valley City.

Since Valley City, at 1.4 million residents, would be the eighth largest of California’s 58 counties, perhaps in a few years it will be. Perhaps this system of “tiered jurisdictions” will be adopted in other places. Let’s start the ball rolling by trying it out here first, in the

new Valley City. We have nothing to lose but the right to complain that others are making unfair decisions in our name.

All this writing about e-government, and the presence on one of my mailing lists of someone in Palo Alto whose wife was an international technology consultant retained by NEC in Japan to find someone to explain e-government to some of their employees led to my being hired to fill this need.

To see and hear a video of this presentation, go to:

<http://sfm.lpbm.org:8080/ramgen/eGovernment-1.rm?usehostname>
(first half)

and

<http://sfm.lpbm.org:8080/ramgen/eGovernment-2.rm?usehostname>
(second half)

To open the PowerPoint slideshow used in the presentation, click here:

[Understanding E-Government PowerPoint slide show, 6-24-02.ppt](#)

For a PDF version of the PowerPoint slide show, click here:

[Understanding E-Government, 6-24-02.PDF](#)

Understanding E-Government

(June 24, 2002)

By Marc Strassman

President, Etopia

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June 24, 2002

Los Angeles, California

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by

Etopia Consulting
Marc Strassman, presenter

June 24, 2002

Los Angeles, California

Etopia is the place where EVERYTHING is done online.

Hello. I'm Marc Strassman, president of the consulting company Etopia. Among other things, Etopia is an imaginary place where everything can and is be done over the Internet. This especially includes government and politics. Government and politics in this imaginary Etopia are the purest forms of e-government and e-politics possible. In some sense, they are the Platonic forms, the ideal models, of systems for governing a political jurisdiction through electronic networks.

E-Government means government that is “online, not inline.”

In the real, non-imaginary world, e-government means “online, not in line.” It means the delivery of government services to citizens by means of the Internet and private networks. It can mean using these tools together with bureaucrats or it can mean using these tools, along with databases, artificial intelligence, voice recognition and synthesis, logic tables, and other tools to reduce or even eliminate the need for human bureaucrats in civil administration.

E-Politics is online political campaigning.

Real world e-politics is a process in which Internet technology is used by politicians and parties to pursue their political goals online. Epolitics include fundraising, volunteer recruitment, lobbying, public education, efforts to get out the vote., and every other means to elect political candidates or pass legislative initiatives and/or referendums that can be done over the Internet.

The Internet, like the printing press, the radio, or television, is neutral in terms of the political goals it can be used to advance. Fascists, Communists, Social Democrats, and Anarchists, as well as Democrats and Republicans in the US, the Liberal Democratic Party in Japan, and countless other parties of every political type are now using the Internet to further their political agendas.

The intersection of government and politics is elections, in which the voters make collective choices regarding who will represent them in the government and, sometimes, through the initiative process, which specific policies will become law. The technologies used to carry out elections today range from the very primitive to the slightly less primitive. As you no doubt know, if you followed the 2000 presidential election in the US, the lack of clear and accessible ballots can lead to a lot of problems, even in electing the President of the US.

E-Democracy means using the Internet to empower citizens.

E-democracy, which includes but is not limited to allowing citizens to securely and privately cast their ballots and sign initiative petitions over the Internet, is one way to solve the problems that came to light in Florida in November, 2000. But e-democracy is more than electronic voting over the Internet.

As opposed to e-fascism, e-anarchy, or e-monarchy, e-democracy is a system for implementing by means of the Internet the highest ideals and best promises of popular, consensual decision making by large and small human groups. It is the embodiment of philosophical, political, psychological, and cultural principles that have proven themselves to be, so far, the most just, the most practical, and the most stable way of organizing human societies.

What the Internet offers is the possibility of supercharging these abstract, and until now imperfectly realized values and giving them a chance to show what they can really do in practice. It offers a way to extend and expand these principles to people everywhere in the world and at every level of society.

E-Government + E-Democracy puts people in charge, while machines do the work.

By combining e-democracy and e-government, it should be possible to create a system of government that takes into account the ideas and preferences of everyone, allows for the inclusive formulation of public budgets and plans, and assures the swift, reliable performance of these plans within the jurisdiction being self-governed.

Combining e-democracy and e-government would make it possible for the first time for a city, state, province, country, multi-state community, or even the entire world to have what US President Lincoln described as a “government of the people, by the people, and for the people.” As with every field the Internet touches, combining e-democracy and e-government can disintermediate the decision-making and administrative processes and make “self-government” real.

At a more practical level, such an arrangement can also eliminate a lot of the excess bureaucracy and some of the exclusion from participation in official decision-making that stand in the way of true democracy and truly efficient government management.

While government agencies and departments in the US now routinely have their own web sites, and maintain mailing lists, display press releases, and even allow citizens to download forms for printing out, signing, and mailing in, a lot of what most of them offer represents the very latest in 20th century Internet features.

Of course, this is now the 21st century, and many private companies are offering a whole lot more on their sites. Among the many reasons for this is the fact that there is only one government for any particular jurisdiction, while there are almost always more than one private company competing for customers' attention and business in the private sector.

Government planning, decision-making, procurement and implementation are in many cases so constrained by budgetary and political considerations, lack of imagination, and, above all, by an extremely well-developed reluctance to take risks, that it is almost inevitable that government agencies will usually end up on the trailing, not the leading, edge of new technological developments.

There is also the fact that if a thoroughgoing and complete system of integrated e-government and e-democracy were designed, procured, built, installed and put to use, a very high-proportion of the bureaucracy in question might be completely eliminated. The same goes for the "representatives" who now make our collective decisions on our behalf. Letting us make them for ourselves would render them as redundant as a room full of bookkeepers replaced by a laptop running a spreadsheet.

E-Government could replace workers, or help them to do better work.

Of course, just as companies in the private section don't fire everyone when they install computers, but instead redeploy them in ways that use their unique human talents, government supplemented by the Internet could also mean the redeployment of workers in ways that better use their skills and better deliver services to the citizenry. But computers do let private companies do much more with much less. The reason these efficiencies have not yet been fully exploited in government bureaucracies and the legislative process has a great deal to do with the fact that the decision to do so must be made by the same people most likely to be rendered obsolete by these reforms.

American government is not unitary, so American e-government won't be either.

With this background and these principles in mind, let's take a look at where e-government now stands in the United States.

Since it might help, let me give you a very brief picture of the government structure in the US. First is the federal government, the one with its Capital in Washington, D.C.. It's governed by the US Constitution, written in 1787 and ratified in 1788. The US President, US Senators, and Members of the House of Representatives are the elected officials of the federal government, which also includes the many departments and agencies that operate in Washington, D.C., and throughout the US and around the world.

Each of the 50 American states, like California, Texas, Florida, Minnesota, and so on are also sovereign jurisdictions, with elected officials, courts, departments and agencies. States' rights, involving questions of whether a state or the federal government has jurisdictions of roads, or taxes, or slavery, or abortion, have long been and still are area of controversy.

There is not much question that states have power over the counties and cities within in them, but, especially in times of financial hardship, states and these subdivisions of states spend a lot of time and energy arguing within themselves about who will spend how much on what.

Because American government authority is so divided, e-government is also divided. As we will see, federal agencies, states, and cities all have their own e-government systems. Fortunately, web sites of different jurisdictions increasingly link to other jurisdictions in order to help citizens find what they need. But there is no single e-government approach, or standard, for the varied American governments.

As the Florida election of 2000 showed, elections in the US are also very decentralized. Counties run elections, and there are 3,066 of them in the country. And it's not just elections. Schools are run locally. I was told once, and I don't know if it's still true, that the French Minister of Education could look at his watch (in those days it has to be a man, of course) and tell you exactly what page French students of any particular age were studying, in every school in France. This is not the way it is in the United States.

Americans are a fiercely individualistic people. So there is no "master plan" for bringing e-government to the United States. Even at a single level of government, the national federal level, recent efforts to coordinate the e-government activities of 24 federal agencies have so far resulted in the development of one web site, GovBenefits.gov, which was subsequently held up as a role model for the other 23 agencies to emulate.

<http://www.newsbytes.com/news/02/176391.html>

<http://www.GovBenefits.gov>

Citizens want e-government to provide them with basic but important services.

Now that I've said a little about the theory of e-government, it's time to examine the practice of e-government. But before we examine individual examples of e-government from specific agencies and jurisdictions, let's take a brief look at the big picture, by examining some surveys of where e-government has been and where it is now.

One of the most important, and most complete, surveys of e-government was released in September of 2000, about a year and a half ago. It was called "Assessing E-Government: The Internet, Democracy, and Service Delivery by State and Federal Governments." Darrell West at Brown University in Rhode Island coordinated the study. You can access it in its entirety at:

http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Taubman_Center/polreports/egovtreport00.html

I'd recommend that you go over it in detail yourself. For now, let me summarize what it says.

Professor West undertook this study in the summer of 2000. He asked Chief Information Officers in 50 states and 38 federal agencies about their views on e-government and their experiences in creating it. He and his team examined almost 2,000 government web sites, looking for e-government services, which he defined as ones where "the entire transaction could occur online." And they sent simple e-mail letters to government agencies to see how long it would take to get an e-mail answer.

A high percentage of officials contacted said they thought e-government was improving the cost-efficiency of their operations. But problems remained. They included the "digital divide," the unequal accessibility of the Internet for different socio-economic and racial groups, the only-partially-online nature of many procedures, the lack of what the report calls "democratic outreach" and "accountability-enhancing material such as legislative deliberation, campaign finance information, and ethics reports online," and disparities in quality among state and federal web sites.

The West/Brown Report found that fewer than 10% of government web sites had security policies or privacy policies. That only 15% had disability access. Less than a quarter offered online services. But over 90% were able to respond to simple e-mails.

Overall then, this study, undertaken around two years ago, showed that state and federal agencies were getting started on e-government, but had not gone very far yet.

In mid-2001, the Center for Technology in Government (CTG) at the University at Albany, State University of New York conducted some e-government research of its

own, and it also collected and correlated the e-government research of several individual states. They focused on the specific services that citizens want from e-government.

You can read their report at:

http://www.ctg.albany.edu/resources/htmlrpt/e-government/what_citizens_want.html

Here the list of possible e-government services that most studies asked respondents to choose from:

- ? Renewing a driver's license
- ? Voter registration
- ? State park information and reservations
- ? Voting on the Internet
- ? Access to one-stop shopping (one portal for all government services)
- ? Ordering birth, death, and marriage certificates
- ? Filing state taxes
- ? Hunting and fishing licenses
- ? Accessing medical information from the National Institute of Health

What did people say they wanted?

Renewing a driver's license was typically the first choice. It was followed most often by voter registration, obtaining state park information and making park reservations. Another common theme is the notion of one-stop shopping for government services, or the ability to access specific government information, such as medical or health care data.

In the research report sponsored by NIC (National Information Consortium), citizens were asked which activities on a standard list they would like to perform online. Of the listed services, renewing a driver's license, voting on the Internet, having access to one-stop shopping, filing state taxes, and obtaining state park information were the most popular.

Arizona's GITA asked citizens what activities government should do online. State employees were informally polled first; then a survey was web enabled to gather responses from the general public. The top four responses-- renewing a driver's license; ordering birth, marriage, or death certificates; Internet voting; and making state park reservations -- are consistent with the most common responses generated by other studies.

Having discussed what it is that citizens are looking for in e-government, let's examine some representative e-government web sites to see if they are getting what they want.

Some cities, like Virginia Beach, know how to do e-government right.

The City of Virginia Beach

Not too far from Washington, DC, is the city of Virginia Beach, Virginia. Many e-government specialists believe that Virginia Beach has the best e-government anywhere. Let's take a look at its homepage.

You can find it at:

<http://www.vbgov.com/>

Right away you can tell you've come to the right place. It's a bit busy, but it's clear. Your most frequent choices are right there on the top line. There are clearly indicated navigation aids. And the content features up-to-date links to important information. For example, on the left are attractive icons linked to upcoming community events.

Clicking on e-Gov gives you the option of visiting the **Virginia Beach Citizen Services Guide**. This service allows you to perform the all-important task of finding out which agency you need to contact to do what you need to do. You can search by category, by department, or by keyword.

There's an explanation of how to use the site, an invitation to take online surveys, and a guide to city agencies.

e-Stream allows users to access the same videos transmitted by VBTv, the city's cable television station, online. Live and archived City Council meetings let residents see what their elected representatives are up to.

With EZreg, residents can get PINs and barcode numbers offline and then use them to register and pay for courses at the City's Recreation Department.

I really like this site. It's complete, unpretentious, easy to use, and gets you where you need to be with a minimum of fuss.

Go to:

<http://www.vbgov.com/e-gov/>

and see all the municipal services you can get online:

One is eTickets. Go to:

<http://www.vbgov.com/e-gov/etickets/>

Here, you can access information about your parking ticket and pay the fine with a credit card. Users are charged 10% extra for the added convenience of paying online. As you see, the City goes out of its way to ask for “feedback, comments and criticism.” It also thoughtfully explains how the citizen’s privacy and the security of the transaction are protected. A phone number is provided for users who want to get help from a real person.

This same page provides information for companies wanting to do business with the city, for people looking for volunteer or other employment opportunities, and for those wanting to know what the City Council is doing. People can also be connected to Virginia Beach’s e-Government Commission or the State of Virginia’s e-government services. They can order various municipal services or complain about streetlights, traffic signals, or traffic signs that are giving them trouble. They can report problems with potholes, pavements, and sidewalks.

From the highest policy levels right down to street level, residents of Virginia Beach can interact effectively with their government over the Internet. This is e-government as it ought to be done.

Why does Virginia Beach have better e-government than most other cities? While the “bells and whistles,” the onscreen programming and functionality of their web pages, is obviously modern and up-to-date, using the latest methods of presenting and linking information, it’s not fancy or cutting edge. There are no Flash animations or other fancy programming tricks.

Nor are the applications that the Virginia Beach site delivers anything extraordinary. They are the basic services that municipal government performs, delivered to residents over the Internet.

Really, what sets the Virginia Beach site apart from others is that the people of that city have taken the trouble to study their own needs, commit the time and resources needed to create these online applications, and then gone ahead and done it. There is nothing extraordinary about this site except that one city has chosen to actually build it. This is good news, because it means that what is preventing everyone from having great e-government services like these is nothing technical, but rather psychological, social, economic and political. Every city could, and, I believe, every city should, have an e-government web site as good as Virginia Beach’s.

Some states, like Pennsylvania, do a good job, too.

Virginia Beach is a city of around 435,000 people. What happens when a state, with millions of people, tries to bring e-government to all of them? Let's look at two such states, one on the East Coast, Pennsylvania, and one on the West Coast, California.

Here's the Pennsylvania State web site:

<http://www.state.pa.us/>

In the interest of full disclosure, I should say that my company, Etopia, is an authorized reseller of a product, Dynamic Site Framework that came out of work done by PPT, Inc., a Pennsylvania company, when they built this web site for the State of Pennsylvania. It's a content management tool, which is crucial for big e-government sites that need to allow many departments to independently manage the material they post on their part of a larger site.

The Pennsylvania site is called the PAPowerPort. It's designed to be a gateway, or portal, into a wide array of information and services being provided by the government of the State of Pennsylvania, a state with over 12 million residents as of 2000.

The design of this site is different from that of Virginia Beach, but looking at the PA Navigator in the upper left-hand corner shows that the functions provided are in many ways similar.

"About PA" leads to a page with links for Pennsylvania Tourism, Homeland Security, History, Facts & Fun, and so on.

<http://www.state.pa.us/papower/taxonomy/taxonomy.asp?DLN=29872&papowerNav=|29872|>

The other links at this level provide similar access to items of interest to businesses, citizens, learners, technologists, those interested in government, and more.

In addition to these links, which lead to pages that are mainly informational, the "Citizen Services" section on the right has links that lead to real e-government services that citizens can access online, including a wide variety of these at:

<http://www.state.pa.us/papower/taxonomy/taxonomy.asp?DLN=31199&papowerNav=|31199|>

There's also a link to these same e-services right underneath the left hand side links.

Apparently what Pennsylvania is providing, its residents like. Go to:

<http://sites.state.pa.us/Statistics/cum01.html?papowerPNavCtr=#30266>

to see how Pennsylvania's web site was getting almost 5 billions hits a month, as of December, 2001.

One particularly interesting service available on the Pennsylvania site is the E-ZPass program.

<http://www.paturnpike.com/ezpass/default.htm>

This service lets Internet users/e-government customers register for a system that lets them go through toll sites without stopping, while their passage is registered electronically and they are billed automatically. Using the Net to enroll customers into a system that is itself electronic and automatic is a double use of modern technology to increase convenience and efficiency.

So Pennsylvania has scaled up the same kind of ease of use, wide variety of services and information, and concern for user privacy and security that we saw in the Virginia Beach site, this time for a jurisdiction about 25 times larger.

Some states, like California, still have work to do.

Let's hop into a car with E-ZPass and head out to California, where we already are, and examine how another state, this one the largest in the US, had addressed the e-government challenge.

One of the Objectives of the Governor's Office for Innovation in Government, at:

<http://www.iig.ca.gov/about.shtml>

is to "Lead eGovernment initiatives for technology solutions that encourage online access to government information and services."

One of these is the Vehicle Registration Internet Renewal Program (VRIR), at:

<http://www.iig.ca.gov/projects/renewal.shtml>

There are also a lot more plans. E-California is a plan that includes an Interagency eGovernment Task Force, which will work with "various working groups that will create an eGovernment Blueprint," which itself will include an eGovernment Vision,

eGovernment Implementation and eGovernment Standards and Architecture. Says the site:

eGovernment is more than simply the implementation of new technologies -- It is an investment in the future of California.

<http://www.iig.ca.gov/projects/e-California.shtml>

This pronouncement is followed by links to an Executive Order (D-17-00), a press release from the Governor, and other assorted material, concluding with a link to, of all things, the Center for Technology in Government report we started with that lists the kinds of services citizens want from e-government.

There's also a plan for an online system for getting grants, broken down into four phases.

<http://www.iig.ca.gov/projects/grantsum.shtml>

And while there is an extensive list of grant programs, along with contact information including URLs and e-mail addresses, there are not yet any online grant applications.

Nor does there seem to be much really happening at the e-Business Center, which promises, at:

<http://www.iig.ca.gov/projects/e-Business.shtml>

that:

The portal will provide "one-stop" shopping for all business interactions with government and alleviate the need for the business professional to be an expert on government and its regulations.

But the only concrete programs I could find were:

“One such project, the eLicensing On-Line System, offers services for cosmetologists, registered nurses and unarmed security guards.”

And

“The center will also partner with the Department of Pesticide Regulation to develop the "Intent to Operate" pilot program. This pilot will provide state licensed agricultural pest control advisors, businesses and aircraft pilots the ability to notify any county where they intend to operate, as required by law.”

This is all very promising from the point of view of cosmetologists, registered nurses, unarmed security guards and pesticide sprayers, but these are not programs that will benefit or impact very many Californians.

So far, it seems, the California State web site offers citizens mostly promises, and very little real e-government.

However, at

http://www.dmv.ca.gov/online/vrir/vr_top2.htm

California is offering online motor vehicle renewals to some customers. It is addressing the highest priority listed by customers as set out in the Center for Government Technology report.

It's a start.

FirstGov is the federal government's e-government portal.

We've looked at a great local government site, at Virginia Beach, and at two state sites, one pretty good, Pennsylvania's, and one not so good, California. Now let's see what the United States federal government is doing in terms of e-government.

What they are principally doing we can see here, at FirstGov, at:

<http://www.firstgov.gov/>

This site represents the US Government's effort to bring together in one place all the electronic e-government services it has to offer. As you can see, there are quite a few, and most of these links lead to other sites that also contain multiple opportunities for accessing e-government services.

Let's look at a few of them.

FirstGov's "About Us" page calls the site "the official U.S. gateway to all government information." It's also a central gathering place for many online government services.

It provides Online Services for Citizens, for Business, and for Governments.

Let's say you're a citizen who is moving from New York to Los Angeles and wants to change your address. Go to "Online Services for Citizens" and click on "Change Your Address." This takes you to a United States Postal Service site, where you can arrange to have your mail forwarded to your new address. You can also get advice on moving.

Most of this advice is provided by private companies that are listed in the site's databases.

Also prominent on the site are advertisers, called "featured partners." Clicking on their ads leads to an announcement that you are leaving the non-commercial space of FirstGov and entering the normal realm of e-commerce, where products and services will be offered to you in exchange for money. This is the kind of private-public partnership that some politicians strongly favor.

A typical link under "Online Services for Business" is the "Subcontracting Opportunities" option. This leads the user to a list of small business contracting officers at large companies around the US. But without e-mail addresses for them.

A sample path in "Online Services for Governments" takes you through "Per Diem Rates" to a map of the US and an offer to provide the current rates for each state. But clicking on the map yields no results.

Overall then, FirstGov promises comprehensive access to government information and services. In practice however, the site is filled with ads, has incomplete or only partially useful information, and not all the sub-sites deliver what they promise. And this site is widely-touted as the federal government's premier e-government site.

GovBenefits.gov lets citizens find their entitlements.

But you can connect from FirstGov to GovBenefits.gov, a new site and one that "helps you find government benefits you may be eligible to receive in three easy steps." It's at:

<http://www.govbenefits.gov/GovBenefits/jsp/GovBenefits.jsp>

First, you list the categories you fall into, at:

<http://www.govbenefits.gov/GovBenefits/servlet/Categories>

Then you answer some questions about yourself, at:

<http://www.govbenefits.gov/GovBenefits/servlet/Questionnaire>

Then the application tells you what federal programs you may be eligible for and helps connect you to them.

Mark Forman of OMB is leading the federal e-government initiative.

GovBenefits.gov is the first and most prominent of 24 projects undertaken by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) as e-government initiatives. It was announced with much fanfare on April 29, 2002. An article in Government Computer News quoted Mark Forman, OMB's associate director for IT and e-government as saying that "This is timely and has laid the benchmark for the other e-government projects. This is just a first quick hit with some initial capabilities. We did not try to get it all done at once."

The Labor Department's Chief Information Officer, Patrick Pizzella said, "Mark is using this initial launch to encourage others to launch soon. Once you nail down the first few projects, you can share your approach and best practices with other projects."

Who is Mark Forman and what is this e-government initiative that has already led to GovBenefits.gov and promises 23 more similar projects?

Mark Forman is the federal government's first Chief Information Officer (CIO), in all but name. His actual title is "Associate Director of Information Technology and E-Government" at the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), which is the top executive agency in charge of the financial operations of the Federal government. Here is the citation that accompanied his winning a 2002 Federal 100 Award on March 11th of this year:

<http://www.fcw.com/events/fed100/2002/Forman.asp>

In an interview with leading computer magazine **InfoWorld** on August 2, 2001, Mr. Forman, relying on his extensive experience within the Federal government and his more recent experience in the government consulting area for IBM and Unisys, explained his plan for transforming the Federal government into an e-business enterprise providing services to citizens as consumers of government services.

One week later, on August 9, 2001, OMB began defining specific projects to include in the initial set of reforms. On October 3, 2001, the President's Management Council approved 23 projects for inclusion in this program. These included portals for grants, online access to loans and the establishment of means for conducting secure transactions between citizens and the government. These projects are scheduled to be completed between the middle and end of 2003.

Certain issues are delaying the coming of e-government.

Whether to make someone like Mark Forman the “Federal CIO,” reporting to the President, or the “Associate Director of IT and E-government,” reporting to the Deputy Director of the Office of Management and Budget is one of several major issues involving e-government that are under discussion today in those circles responsible for deciding such things.

Such things used to be called “problems.” Now they are mostly called “issues,” and sometimes they are called “challenges.” But whatever they’re called, they represent conflicts between opposing interests that probably need to be resolved in order for e-government to be successfully implemented to the maximum extent possible.

These issues include:

1. computer and Internet security
2. privacy
3. disparities in computer/Internet access (the “digital divide”)
4. government IT management and funding
5. education of the public and the political leadership on matters relating to e-government
6. federalism

1. computer and Internet security

If e-government transactions can be disrupted by hostile outsiders (“hackers”), then the success of e-government is in doubt. E-commerce and e-banking depend upon the security of customer transactions and, maybe even more importantly, customers’ perception that these systems are secure. In the same way, the willingness of citizens to use e-government services depends upon the fact and the perception that the information they provide to the government over the Internet will not be misused.

This is a big order. Just last month, the database at Experian, one of the three large credit reporting agencies, and the California State Employees database were both violated by hackers. Identity theft, where criminals steal someone’s personal information and use it to fraudulently acquire credit cards, money, services, and products in their name, is one of the fastest growing crimes in the US. The information needed to carry out e-government services is the same as what identity thieves need for their crimes.

Accordingly, it is essential that everyone involved in providing e-government services follow the best practices for protecting the security of e-government information. Governments, and the companies that provide governments with hardware, software,

integration and support, need to focus their efforts and resources on finding practical and effective means of protecting e-government systems from the threat of the malicious individuals and organizations who may try to violate the security of these systems.

2. privacy

Equally important, before most people will routinely use e-government services, they need to know that the data they provide to get these services will not be misused by the very people to whom they are providing it. One advantage of the relative late deployment of e-government applications compared to e-commerce ones is everyone now knows (or should know) just how important privacy is.

Complaints, organizations, and lawsuits have all arisen to secure for customers the right not to have their personal data “re-purposed” by the private companies to which they provide it. As a result, most e-government sites, as we saw for example at FirstGov, prominently feature the privacy practice statements that are now also common on e-commerce sites.

But good practice (or apparent good practice) today, is no guarantee of good practice tomorrow. With more and more government business transacted online by more and more people, the data available to government agencies will certainly increase, and the potential for abuse, either by providing it to commercial entities, or to other government agencies, is bound to increase.

The larger question of the trade-off between civil liberties and the need to fight terrorism comes to a head in the issue of e-government data privacy. No one wants to protect the activities of terrorists, but no one wants to violate the privacy rights of non-terrorists. All the issues involved in more intrusive searches of bags at airports are also present in issues concerning government collection, analysis, and use of data provided through e-government sites.

So citizens and policy-makers alike need to learn about, think about, and express their views on how to establish the proper balance between data privacy and public safety.

3. disparities in computer/Internet access (the “digital divide”)

Without access to a computer connected to the Internet, a citizen cannot avail him- or herself of the convenience and other advantages of e-government. At last count, 54% of Americans were accessing the Internet. This is an impressive figure, but it means that only around half the people in the US are online. When Abraham Lincoln, who was President during the Civil War, said that government ought to be “of the people, by the people, and for the people,” he didn’t mean just for half the people.

Lincoln also said, one day, one week, and 154 years ago, ““A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure, permanently half *slave* and half *free*.” It’s my own belief that for e-government to be universal, everyone must have a computer at home and access to the Internet at home. If not, just as the digital divide will increasingly continue to separate “digital haves” from “digital have-nots” in the areas of education, entertainment, personal finance, and almost everything else, it will also separate them in the area of e-government.

This will mean that in the US, and in any country adopting e-government, access to government services will be easy for those with Internet access and more difficult for those without it. The effect of this digital inequality will be cumulative and exponential, because the inability of many to use information, services, training, and other opportunities offered online will lead to a society that is more and more divided along lines of digital access converging with lines of social class.

This is particularly unfortunate because it is the poor and other disadvantaged groups that have the most pressing need to take advantage of e-government applications.

Government at all levels is attempting to deal with this problem, mainly by setting up various types of “community technology centers,” where people without computers and/or Internet access can receive computer training and access the Web. Here in California, for example, the unemployed can access job data bases using computers provided at their offices by the state’s Employment Development Department.

This is great, but it’s not enough. It’s not fair, it’s not efficient, and it’s not reasonable to let some people use e-government while others are excluded from it. Lincoln’s hope to resolve the dilemma of a house divided was to make it a place where all were free. Similarly, I believe that the only equitable and realistic resolution of the dilemma of the digital divide is to move everyone still stranded on the far side of it over here with the rest of us.

4. government IT management and funding

This issue involves finding the will and the money to properly staff and operate those government departments responsible for setting up and running e-government applications. It also means finding ways to properly integrate the operation of e-government at all levels of government, from the federal through the state and down to the local (county and municipal) levels.

5. education of the public and the political leadership on matters relating to e-government

We will only get as good e-government as we ask for. To ask in an effective way, we need to know what is possible, what needs we want addressed, and how we can get it. A better-informed public will mean a more motivated set of elected government officials who can then work with the public to deliver state-of-the-art e-government on an accelerated timetable that will allow its benefits to be realized as soon as possible.

6. federalism

I have to admit that I am not fully informed about the vertical division of government authority in Japan, about the divisions and distribution of power in the central government, the prefectures, and the cities and towns. But here in the United States, as I mentioned before while discussing “states’ rights,” there has been a long, elaborate, and ongoing discussion about which jurisdictions are entitled to do what things, and about who should pay to have them done.

Disputes about such matters have ranged in importance and ferocity from the debate over whether states could sanction slavery, which eventually led to the Civil War and the conclusion that they could not, to matters regarding the right of the federal government to withhold highway funds if states did not lower their maximum speed limits or their drinking age.

“Diagonal e-government” cuts across jurisdictional lines.

Now along comes e-government with its ability to cut “diagonally” across governmental jurisdictions with the click of a mouse. When citizens can find information, forms, and transactions on their computers without the need to travel to local, state, or federal offices, the distinctions and divisions between this part of government and that part of government may come to seem archaic and arbitrary.

The most important transactional power that the Internet provides is, in my view, that of disintermediation, the ability to eliminate the middle person. E-government is no exception to this rule. Using the Internet to get information online means you don’t need to rely on elected officials or bureaucrats to provide it for you, on their timetable rather than on yours. Using the Internet to conduct transactions online means you don’t need to rely on postal workers, envelope makers, or bureaucrats to get the forms you need, or to file them, or to get information about your options in such transactions.

All of these disintermediations add up to the fact that you can interface directly with the government, to get what you want or to report what you’ve done. But having these new

powers creates a new issue, one that was hidden before the arrival of e-government. This is the issue of “What exactly IS the government?”

Of course, the old answer to this question has been that the government is the people whose salaries are paid by it, the elected representatives who make policy on behalf of their constituents, and the bureaucrats at various levels who implement it. But the ability of e-government to substitute computer code that performs various defined functions in place of the work of bureaucrats who have performed these functions until now undermines this definition.

In its place there emerges a more precise and up-to-date definition of democratic self-government, namely, the totality of the rules and regulations according to which we govern ourselves. And, as we’ll see below, the procedures by which we determine what these rules and regulations will be.

This new definition changes somewhat but does not eliminate the issue of federalism, the question of which jurisdiction (that is to say, which group of people) is entitled to make decisions (e.g., collect taxes and spend them) in a particular geographic area or in a particular sphere of activity.

Virtual e-government

Since such “virtual e-government” makes it possible for lines of computer code to administer or carry out government programs, instead of requiring people to do so, it almost demands that government departments and agencies be subject to the same transformations that have reshaped small businesses and giant corporations alike over the last ten years.

Done in the name of enhancing shareholder value, these changes have meant (in some cases at least) better customer service, faster innovation, lower costs, higher efficiency, and the creation of more “agile” organizations able to react more effectively to internal and external pressures.

Now that top government administrators have adopted in principle the values that their corporate counterparts have been using for some time, we ought to be able to expect that the same or similar consequences of implementing this approach in private industry will begin to appear in the government sector as well.

But government is not quite the same as business, and the dynamics driving e-government are not quite the same as those driving e-government, even if Mark Forman at OMB wants to make the US federal government into a big e-corporation.

One important difference is that while profit (now called “shareholder value”) is the prime mover of corporate decision-making, there is a multitude of factors that determine government decisions.

E-government is not yet a political issue.

One factor that apparently doesn't drive government decision-making about e-government is politics. Even though I spend a lot of time looking at the issue of e-government and the activities of politicians, I have yet to find a single case where an elected official or candidate for public office has made any aspect of the entire e-government world we've been talking about here today an important, or even a noticeable, part of his or her political platform or agenda.

And I certainly have never once heard the word "e-government" spoken on the evening news.

But all the studies we've examined, and I'm sure many we haven't, all indicate that most citizens would like to see more and better e-government.

I think the explanation of this paradox is that politicians simply have not yet identified e-government as an issue they can raise a lot of money about or get a lot of votes by talking about. Therefore, the best way to accelerate the adoption and expansion of e-government is to make it an issue around which competing candidates and parties wage "bidding wars" to see who can most effectively persuade the electorate that he or she will deliver more and better e-government sooner.

But since voters have not yet indicated their enthusiasm for e-government, no politician is willing to take the lead on the issue. But some soon may, and then it's likely that we'll see a faster and more complete deployment of it.

E-government, as I said earlier, is not e-democracy. And the e-government literature is in total agreement with this position. E-government applications and writing about e-government are absolute in the purity of their inattention to Internet voting and to Internet-based political campaigning.

This even though many important issues cut across the "e-government/e-elections divide." Given that elections decide who is to be in charge of a government, concerns about the security of ballots is even more important than the security of any individual e-government transaction. The privacy of one's ballot is equally or more significant than the protection of one's e-mail address from uninvited marketers. And the protection of personal information, such as a Social Security number, is no less urgent when it plays a part in one's identification as a voter as when it performs a similar function in a loan application.

For all these reasons, the technology of security in e-government is closely related to similar technology in Internet elections, and efforts to improve, refine, and implement methods for the secure and private authentication of voter/citizens in one realm would certainly help to do the same in the other.

The same issue of the digital divide, which stands in the way of a universal and thus more efficient deployment of e-government services, is also of the essence in the Internet

voting area. Every step taken to bring the poor and otherwise disadvantaged groups into the community of Internet users for purposes of e-government is also a step to include them in the community of people who can vote over the Internet.

Disintermediation

Let's go back to the idea of disintermediation. The Internet makes possible not only the elimination of bureaucrats routinely carrying out a limited number of functions within a strictly defined hierarchy of authority (a good definition of the function of bureaucrats), but it can also eliminate the need to have elected representatives making decisions on behalf of constituents (a good definition of an elected official).

Just as e-government allows for the delivery of public services over the Internet by means of coded instructions on servers, e-democracy allows for the making of public decisions by means of similar coded instructions on servers. E-government reduces or eliminates the need for the mediation of bureaucrats. E-democracy allows for the reduction or elimination of the need for the mediation of elected politicians.

E-government + E-democracy synergy

Combining e-government and e-democracy would allow for the public determination of the rules and procedures, taxes and spending, and public preferences and priorities combined with the automated implementation of these decisions over the Internet.

Of course, it would be unfair to use such a system unless everyone could participate. Hence the need to do everything possible within the public, private, and non-profit sectors to speed the universal ownership of computers along with establishing public agencies on the model of Los Angeles' Department of Water and Power to facilitate the delivery of broadband Internet connectivity through a public utility.

Obstacles to such a plan include the resistance of the disintermediated, jurisdictional issues as discussed in the context of federalism, and the expense of implementing it.

E-gov + E-dem/E-commerce synergy

But the results would repay the necessary investment many times over. Not only can the technical upgrades necessary to thoroughly implement e-government facilitate the operations of e-democracy, but everything done to support either or both of these operations will also pay hefty dividends for e-commerce.

What's done by government to secure transactions for e-government and e-democracy are immediately applicable for e-commerce and will lead to more private economic activity, which could, through taxes, generate additional public revenues, which could be used to expand e-government and e-democracy, to pay for improvements of a jurisdiction's physical plant, or to reduce taxes.

Broadband Internet access for all is needed to maximize e-government efficiency and value (“network externalities”).

And the impact on e-commerce and its beneficiaries is less than the benefits that would result from eliminating the digital divide. Just as making sure that everyone has air, water, and food (and maybe medical care) makes them more productive workers, consumers and citizens, bringing that half of the population now outside the charmed digital circle of the Internet inside of it would mean a tremendous improvement in the literacy, employability, education, health, and recreation levels of these newly digitally-enfranchised individuals.

The government already pays for physical roads, why not information roads?

Anyone who thinks that it's socialism to spend public money to provide those without the essential tools of modern living these bare electronic necessities should consider how many billions of local, state, and federal dollars are spent every year building and maintaining public streets, roads, and highways, all for the public convenience and necessity. With some exceptions, like the toll highways of Pennsylvania we talked about earlier, access to these roads is free to everyone, and the result of these public subsidies is hundreds of billions of dollars in private economic activity and, therefrom, much of the tax revenue relied upon by government.

Spending comparable or lesser amounts to give everyone similar access to the Information Streets, Roads, and Highways of the Internet would return an even larger dividend.

E-government is here, but it is not yet fully realized.

Before we wrap up, I want to take a look at the likely future of e-government over the next few years. To do that properly, we should start by briefly summarizing the most important aspects of e-government as it exists right now.

1. E-government is now established as a standard aspect of government operations. Almost every jurisdiction, from small town to the US Government, is committed to providing information and services to citizens online.

2. Many jurisdictions, especially large ones, like the US Government and the State of California, are working on major overhauls of their e-government operations, with a view towards providing extensive and integrated networks of e-government services.
3. Certain obstacles remain to the wider use of e-government, including:
 - a. concerns about security
 - b. concerns about privacy
 - c. funding limitations
 - d. unequal access to the Internet (“digital divide”)
4. E-government is generally well-accepted and has not been undermined by any major scandal regarding its misuse or the compromise of private information.
5. E-government remains outside the realm of issues that political candidates and/or parties run on or fight over.

Projecting these trends into the near future, we can expect to see a steady increase in the deployment of e-government at all levels, with increasing efforts to integrate these different levels with each other. This, in turn, will probably lead to some confusion and difficulties regarding the separation of powers between and among different levels of government.

This could, conceivably, lead to increased public discussion and debate regarding the proper division of authority and functions between and among government agencies and jurisdictions, possibly resulting in new Web-centric arrangements built around functional areas more than agency or even jurisdictional prerogatives.

What this means for suppliers of the hardware and software that power e-government is not clear, but if the issues arising from this confusion of levels, as well as those of privacy and security, can be resolved, opportunities for e-government suppliers ought to increase, possibly substantially.

If an effective remedy to the problem of the “digital divide” can be found, the use of e-government should expand considerably, and the opportunities for providing the means to implement this expansion should also increase significantly.

E-government controversies could result in more e-government.

Resolving the issues of overlapping levels, security, privacy, and the digital divide are not yet “political” issues in the sense that they are widely discussed and debated by candidates for office, by the political parties, or by the “political class” of journalists and commentators. If they were, these issues would get more news coverage, become more the subject of public debate, be focused on more by academics, evoke more efforts to deal with them and find new and innovative solutions for them, become the focus of corporate research and corporate problem-solving generally.

We can help by educating others and ourselves about e-government.

All of us who care about the growth and development of e-government, as a means of providing ourselves and others with a more efficient and more responsible public sector, can help bring about that growth and development by focusing the energy and resources of our companies on the issues preventing the full development of e-government. We

should do whatever we can to encourage making it a priority on the public agenda during the next few years.

With the new information you've been exposed to today, I hope you will all be able to assume leading roles in doing this at Nexsolutions, in Japan generally, and, indeed, throughout the world.

Thank you for your time and your participation.

Six Things Excellent E-Government Should Be

- 1. Comprehensive**
- 2. Integrated**
- 3. Ubiquitous**
- 4. Transparent/Easy to Use**
- 5. Accessible**
- 6. Secure**

Six More Things Excellent E-Government Should Be

- 7. Private**
- 8. Re-engineered**
- 9. Continuously evolving**
- 10. Fun to use**
- 11. Interoperable**
- 12. Be linked to Internet voting, Smart Initiatives, and Constituent Polling Systems**

A Dozen Things Excellent E-Government Should Be

1. Comprehensive

To the greatest extent possible, citizens should be able to do everything they have to do or want to do with their government through one e-government portal.

2. Integrated

All e-government applications should be integrated with each other, so that citizens can avoid the need to provide the same data over and over and governments can save time and money by not needing to re-enter data.

3. Ubiquitous

Access to a jurisdiction's e-government portal and its connected sites and applications should be available to users/citizens from any Internet-capable connection, including PCs, PDAs, smart phones and other Internet appliances.

4. Transparent/Easy to Use

E-government sites should be designed and operated so that the most novice of computer users can readily find the information they need, provide the information requested by the government agencies with which they are dealing, and otherwise perform all e-government transactions.

5. Accessible

The design and operation of e-government systems should, from the ground up, take into account the special needs of the disabled, and make it possible for them to use these systems as easily as the non-disabled.

6. Secure

E-government systems need to protect the confidentiality of data provided by citizens, the records created and stored by government, and the content and existence of citizen-government transactions performed over the Internet. Smart cards, with or without biometrics, along with digital certificates, can provide this necessary security.

7. Private

Data about citizen-government transactions, and the content of those transactions, needs to be fiercely protected by the government. Under no circumstances should governments unilaterally give, sell, or trade electronic information about their citizens to private entities eager to advertise to them, nor should the government itself be allowed to use this data in any way not allowed by law and explicitly approved by the citizens.

8. Re-engineered

It's not enough to replicate electronically the administrative processes and procedures currently in place. It's necessary to thoroughly re-evaluate the overall mission of the jurisdiction and then design a digital structure that creates a government-citizen interface that simplifies and streamlines each transaction individually and the entire process of government administration generally.

Re-thinking the entire organizational structure of the jurisdiction, allowing the citizens and representatives to consider and approve a new form of organization (through a popular referendum, convention, or other means), and then designing a digital network to implement these new forms is also a possibility.

9. Continuously evolving

Based on citizen usage patterns and explicitly expressed preferences (in online surveys and online focus groups, as well as in individual e-mails), e-government sites need to be continuously upgraded, updated, and modified to suit the citizens' needs, the structure and agenda of the government, and the latest technology in data processing and network design, construction, operation, and access.

10. Fun to use

All else being equal, e-government portals/networks should be entertaining, aesthetically satisfying, and fun to use.

11. Interoperable

An excellent e-government site is one that provides appropriate (and up-to-date) links to other e-government sites, at its own and other levels in the government hierarchy. All e-government sites need to work together seamlessly, so that a citizen applying for a Federal grant involving a State program under County administration for use in a City program will be able to complete a single, short, clear form online and get an answer in Internet time.

12. Be linked to Internet voting, Smart Initiatives, and Constituent Polling Systems

E-government systems can just as easily implement democratic, totalitarian, or even monarchical government policies and procedures. To ensure that our e-government is democratic e-government, the Internet must serve not only as a means of administration, but also as a primary tool of collective and democratic decision-making.

Fortunately, the power and ubiquity of the Internet make possible a wide range (or a pastiche) of means for group decision-making. By adding these tools for democratic self-governance to what e-government can provide in terms of government administration, the technology of distributed data processing and communications can become the instrument of advanced self-government and a prime means for the achievement of some of mankind's highest aspirations.

Secession

For years, activists in the San Fernando Valley, which constitutes a large part of the City of Los Angeles, worked to separate it from the larger City. By the summer of 2002, their efforts resulted in the placement on the November 5, 2002, ballot of Measure F, calling for the “re-organization,” or “secession” of the Valley. The possibility of living in a new city without even moving was very intriguing, and I decided to run for Mayor there as a way of gaining a new audience for my technodemocratic reforms.

Even before I entered the race for Mayor, I was appalled at the hypocrisy of the “Commission on the Morality of Secession” created by moral paragon, pedophile facilitator, and master politician Roger Cardinal Mahoney, Archbishop of Los Angeles, at the urging of former Mayor Richard Riordan, and constituted by a self-appointed ‘Council of Religious Leaders.’ While the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles was spending hundreds of millions of dollars to build a monument to itself in the form of a huge cathedral, and Valley secession was primed to take hundreds of thousands of poor Hispanic immigrants with it when it left, the ecclesiastical authorities, many closely linked to the City’s business elite, were whining that secession was principally motivated by a desire to abandon the poor.

Shut Down the “Morality of Secession Commission”

(May 21, 2001)

If it weren’t so important, the “Commission on the Morality of Secession as Seen by the Self-Appointed ‘Council of Religious Leaders’” would be laughable. Since it is, it’s tragicomic.

What moral standing to discuss anything, let alone the situation of the poor, can be held by an organization, like the Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles, that is spending ONE BILLION DOLLARS to immortalize itself in steel and stone, when millions of its parishioners, many of whom contributed to the building fund on the basis of lies and manipulations, lack the basic necessities of a dignified human life?

Didn’t the founder of this group, Jesus, admonish the high net-worth individual who asked how he could follow him to “Sell what you have, and give it to the poor?” I don’t think he suggested TAKING from the poor to build an edifice to memorialize wealth and power, although that’s what Roger Mahoney is doing. And then he claims the right to pontificate about the morality of giving the poor more say over their own lives.

The meetings of this group are being held in secret. Isn’t this a violation of the Brown Act? Doesn’t it directly contradict the expressed intent of the group to do something on behalf of the people who are being systematically excluded from its deliberations?

Besides, on what basis should it be assumed that “religious leaders” are any more qualified to make moral judgments than are doctors, stay-at-home moms, film producers, or ordinary people?

As pointed out by Valley Vote leader Richard Close, all these “religious leaders” need to do to see the disingenuousness and inaccuracy of Bill Violante’s claims about the poor and secession is to visit the areas of mass poverty that are the direct result of the indifference and selfishness of those who now run a unified Los Angeles.

Deputy Mayor Bill Violante says that “keeping Los Angeles together is the best way to help all residents, in part because a larger city is more effective at getting grants to help with issues such as poverty, homelessness and public safety.” Maybe it can get grants,

which is nice for bureaucrats, but getting grants is not the same as doing something about “poverty, homelessness and public safety.”

If the residents of Bel Air, Brentwood, and Pacific Palisades wanted to do something about conditions in Sylmar, North Hills, and Van Nuys they would have done it already. Having ignored these places and the people who live there except as sources of domestic staff and minimum-wage employees for their businesses, they have forfeited any moral claim to prevent their political secession.

These arguments from Mahoney, Riordan and Violante are like a claim from the Pharaoh of the Exodus that the Hebrews have no right to leave, since, as a mighty empire, Egypt is in a better position to get grants to alleviate their slavery. It would have been a spurious argument then, and it is a spurious argument now.

We're all better off because the Hebrews left town/gained their independence, and we'll all be better off when the Valley, Hollywood, and the Harbor leave town/gain their independence. The Hebrews may have ended up spending 40 years wandering in the wilderness, but they eventually reached the Promised Land and so will the people of these liberated districts.

And speaking of religion, morality, and Los Angeles, even a cursory glance at the history of the Catholic Church in the Americas will show that this organization's primary function has long been to provide "moral" arguments in support of the "civilizing"—read exploitation and genocide—of the indigenous population. The cross has long been the partner of the sword, the church the partner of the state, in these efforts. The Mahoneys in every age have always worked with their contemporary Riordans to build, preserve, and protect their own, shared, power.

These ploys of the Archbishop and the Mayor to maintain their kingdom at the expense of their subjects' expressed desires are unseemly in a democracy. As hundreds of millions of dollars are spent to refurbish City Hall and a billion is spent to build a monument to the Church's arrogance, we should all seriously consider whether these projects are the best ways to spend money that could be put to purposes more practical than testifying to the grandeur of the men who are presiding over them.

And speaking of democratic self-governance, which is what the secession issue is all about, one should note that now going on in Rome among the top Church "Fathers" (not really fathers, it's just what they call themselves, to intimidate people) are some preliminary discussions about what they call "collegiality." This is code for "democracy," in the eyes of the Church, a sin that dare not speak its name.

Lest anyone forget, the Catholic Church is no democracy. It is a monarchy which claims the highest possible founding and operating authority: God Almighty himself. The same person, Jesus, who evicted the futures traders and derivatives creators from the marketplace, and who recommended a one hundred percent divestment of worldly goods with the proceeds going to the income-challenged, is claimed as the Church's founder, on the basis of having reportedly said, "On this rock I will build my Church," referring to the later-canonized aquaculturalist Peter.

Whatever else this statement might be, it's certainly a nice pun, either by Jesus or the narrator of the text, since Peter's name is close to the Greek work for rock (as in petroglyph, petroleum, etc.) and this statement is considered by some to be a statement about how Peter himself might have few fish short of a loaf. In any case, the Church now, as always, claims its authority, rests ever so firmly on a direct transmission of divine authority originating in the tripartite Godhead, represented on earth by Jesus, who passed it on to Peter (in the comment above) and through him to both the eternal and contemporary Catholic and Apostolic Church of Rome.

It's nice work if you can get it, but what does it have to do with the creation of new cities in the Valley, Hollywood, and the Harbor area, under the direction of the State of California's Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO), through procedures involving the collection of signatures, the drafting of a feasibility study on the economics of separation, and a citywide vote to approve or reject independence for these districts?

And what does it have to do with democracy, where authority derives from the consent of the governed, not from some group's particular concept of God? And what right does a group run by top-down command from Rome, based on its own claim of divine right and power, with no provision at all for democratic participation by its 800 million members, have to tell us about the morality of how we should be making decisions about how we govern ourselves, here in our city of barely six million residents?

And what does it have to do with the United States Constitution, which is the political authority under which we live and not the authority of the Roman Catholic Church?

When the Catholic Church has put its own house in order, in terms of democracy and self-governance, when it has become a shining exemplar of how power can be shared and resources allocated according to principles of equality and justice, then maybe it can be allowed to help others find the way to the same conditions for themselves. Until then, the operative principle should be the one cited by Jesus when he admonishes us not to criticize the speck in the other person's eye while ignoring the beam in our own.

All these difficulties, if I'm not mistaken, are why the separation of Church and State are mandated in the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. All of these contradictions are reasons why we shouldn't spend public money on so-called "faith-based initiatives." And they are all good reasons for shutting down the Church's Commission on the Morality of Citizen Self-Determination.

Deputy Mayor Violante also says, "'In a divorce, nobody wins, no matter how you divide things up.'" Has he read the statistics? Mostly, men win in divorces, with their net assets rising after a break-up. But women, although often worse off financially, can win too. They can free themselves of the overbearing, oppressive, exploitative, and morally deadening control of their husbands/masters/overlords.

Maybe the Valley, Hollywood, and the Harbor can benefit that way, too, and end up better off better as well.

Letting a bunch of hypocrites connive in secret to prevent independence for those parts of the city that want it is neither moral nor legal. It's a travesty, and it ought to be put out of its misery, rather than let it continue to keep us in ours.

And if all this is just a cynical ploy by out-going Mayor Richard Riordan to use his good friend Archbishop Mahoney to further his own political agenda and career, then he ought to be ashamed of himself. If that kind of behavior isn't a mortal sin, it ought to be. Perhaps if he confesses it and sincerely repents, the Archbishop can absolve him. What happens politically will still need to be left to the voting citizens of Los Angeles.

In June, 2002, I wrote an article suggesting that e-democracy and e-government might make it unnecessary for the Valley to secede at all.

Avoiding Secession Through E-Government

(June 8, 2001)

A spectre is haunting Los Angeles: secession.

A million residents in the San Fernando Valley, another 200,000 in Hollywood, and a few more in the Harbor area may secede. Those in the Harbor area have set out what they want and expect from secession:

- * increased citizen involvement
- * providing excellent quality public services
- * fiscal restraint commitment
- * economic viability
- * equitable access to all
- * clear accountability to the voters
- * simple and efficient processes
- * policies based upon the priorities of the citizens
- * solid long-term planning.

Most of these demands can be successfully addressed by a state-of-the-art combination of e-government and e-democracy. If the top leadership of the City of Los Angeles is serious about shutting down the movement for secession throughout the City, it therefore needs to begin immediately to design, build, and implement a world-class e-government and e-democracy network for ALL its citizens.

The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) had, over many years, managed to turn one of the nation's premier school systems into a morass of inefficiency and academic failure. There were constant cries to break up the LAUSD. Faced with this challenge, and urged on by the incumbent Mayor, the citizens elected several reformers to the Board of Education. The reformers, in turn, hired a dynamic new Superintendent (former Colorado Governor Roy Romer) and launched an ambitious plan to decentralize, but not break-up, the district. A few years into this effort, the results are not yet in, but the break-up effort seems stalled, at best.

Now, having come into office when many, especially the secessionists, feel that previous downtown governments has done to City of Los Angeles what the LAUSD board did to the school district, the new Mayor and the new City Council might very well choose the same approach to undermining the municipal secession movement that the school board took to thwarting the movement to break-up the school district: some form of centrally-administered decentralization.

In fact, the City of Los Angeles has already launched a program of neighborhood councils, designed to more fully involve local residents in the management 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.” It will be the responsibility of the new Mayor and the new Council to see that it is properly implemented and to accept the credit or blame for the results.

But the kind of civic participation offered by neighborhood councils may or may not be enough to satisfy Valley, Hollywood, and Harbor residents looking for even more local control. Issues of cash flow in and out of the proposed new cities may turn out to be more important than issues of non-financial decision-making. A recent report declared that the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s office could patrol the Valley for much less than it now costs to have LAPD do so. This, and other such reports, could be crucial for many of those who still need to make up their minds about secession.

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 a 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. But so could implementing a serious system of e-government and e-democracy.

The core complaint underlying most of the secessionists’ displeasure with the City of Los Angeles is that the City is out of touch with them, and that they cannot easily communicate with it.

Given the horrendous level of traffic congestion on most Los Angeles freeways and surface streets at most hours, is it any wonder that needing to drive 20 or more miles from the Valley to City Hall to fill out a form would fill any resident with thoughts at last as extreme as secession as a way to avoid such a requirement?

But e-government, which would allow the same resident to fill out the form from his or her desktop (or laptop, or PDA, or, soon, smart phone) in a few minutes, then digitally sign it with a smart card and digital certificate, with the input data slipping smoothly into the appropriate database for later use, 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 aggravation avoided by putting citizens “online, not inline.”

But there is still the e-democracy element to consider. Citizens are alienated from decision-makers. Even though the recent election resulted in the election of an unusually distinguished group of intelligent, energetic, and reform-minded people, they were elected in a balloting involving only one-third of the REGISTERED voters, which is

itself a subset of the total ELIGIBLE voters, a number I've failed for years to find out, despite frequent inquiries to the Elections Department.

Many of the races were close, with the winner capturing not much more than 50% of the votes. On average then, the new crop of politicians has been elected by one-half of one-third of a subset of the eligible voters. Figure that about one out of ten of those now represented by these new officials voted for them.

These figures, and this fact, are NEVER broadcast on the local news channels from which most residents get most, if not all, of their political news. But, since so many of them know themselves they haven't registered and/or didn't vote, they sense it. They know that these men and women up there doing the governing may formally "represent them," they also know that they don't really represent them in any serious way. These facts and these feelings strongly motivate City residents towards apathy, or secession, or both.

E-democracy, within which every citizen has a chance to have his or her voice heard, and, beyond that, to participate in decisions that affect him or her, to have an impact and an influence on those decisions, could, if implemented immediately and massively, overcome and defeat these feelings of exclusion, disenfranchisement, and political irrelevance that lie just under the surface of the burgeoning movements for secession.

Taken together, the implementation of e-government to deliver information and services to citizens rapidly, cheaply, 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 and subverting the large and growing movement to break up the City. And it would do that in a legitimate way, by giving the people what they say they want.

The choice may be as stark as e-government and e-democracy or secession and break-up. Let each of us weigh these alternatives and proceed accordingly.

The immediate implementation of e-government and e-democracy, along with serious decentralization, is not only the best way to stave off the break-up of Los Angeles. They are also the best way to make it worth keeping together.

Fifteen months later, as the election approached, I wrote a shorter version along the same lines.

Replacing Secession with E-Government and E-Democracy

(September 4, 2002)

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.

The main point of my campaign was to use the platform afforded by news coverage of the secession vote to proclaim my message of municipal uplift for the new city-to-be through the applied high-technology tools of e-democracy and e-government. Getting my ideas covered became my highest priority. I feel that, to a large extent, I succeeded.

Titles and URLs of “Strassman for Mayor” Coverage
in the November 5, 2002, Secession Election
(April 21 to November 6, 2002)

1. Proposed Valley City jobs draw interest, Los Angeles Daily News, April 21, 2002
<http://www.dailynews.com/news/articles/0402/21/new02a.asp>
2. Valley city drive opens, Los Angeles Daily News, July 26, 2002
<http://www.dailynews.com/Stories/0,1413,200%257E20954%257E757612,00.html?search=filter>
3. Valley City Filing Rush, Los Angeles Daily News, July 27, 2002
<http://www.dailynews.com/news/articles/0702/27/new01.asp>
4. Nearly 90 file for council or mayor in new Valley city, Los Angeles Daily News, August 3, 2002
<http://www.dailynews.com/Stories/0,1413,200%257E20954%257E772941,00.html?search=filter>
5. Richman Charting His Own Course, Los Angeles Times, August 5, 2002
<http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-richman5aug05.story>
6. WHO'S RUNNING, Los Angeles Daily News, August 9, 2002
<http://www.dailynews.com/Stories/0,1413,200%257E20954%257E786185,00.html?search=filter>
7. 142 to Run on Hollywood, Valley Ballots, Los Angeles Times, August 10, 2002
<http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-secede10aug10.story>
8. Valley Council and Mayoral Candidates Mingle at Rally, Los Angeles Times, August 11, 2002

<http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-secede11aug11.story>

9. Secesionistas inician campaña de movilización, La Opinion, August 11, 2002

http://www.laopinion.com/archivo.html?START=1&RESULTSTART=1&DISPLAYTYPE=single&FREETEXT=Strassman&FDATED12=&FDATED13=&SORT_MODE=SORT_MODE

10. LA breakup bid lures slew of diverse candidates, Fresno Bee, August 11, 2002

http://www.fresnobee.com/state_wire/story/3924995p-4950521c.html

11. Just Plain Folks Run for Mayor, Los Angeles Times, August 20, 2002

<http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-mayors20aug20.story>

12. The Laptop is More Powerful than the Lawn Sign, The Weekly PoliTicker, August 23, 2002

<http://www.politicsonline.com/politicker/view.asp>

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"The laptop is mightier than the lawn sign...one person with no money and no help can get himself elected..." - Marc Strassman, a candidate for Mayor of the prospective Valley City in California that will be created if the San Fernando Valley is allowed to secede from Los Angeles this fall.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-mayors20aug20.story?coll=la%2Dheadlines%2Dcalifornia>

*Registration Required

13. Candidates Favor a Valley Police Force, Los Angeles Times, August 29, 2002

<http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-mayor29aug29.story>

14. Secession Camps Face Rising Odds, Los Angeles Times, September 8, 2002

<http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-campaign8sep08.story>

15. Spinning a political web, Guardian Unlimited (UK), September 5, 2002

<http://politics.guardian.co.uk/openup/story/0,11872,786841,00.html>

16. New City, New Politics? E-Government Bulletin, September 9, 2002

<http://www.headstar.com/egb/about.html>

17. Richman wants to add new city cops, Los Angeles Daily News, September 13, 2002

<http://www.dailynews.com/Stories/0,1413,200%257E20954%257E856251,00.html?search=filter>

18. Valley mayor hopefuls split over boroughs, Los Angeles Daily News, September 19, 2002

<http://www.dailynews.com/Stories/0,1413,200%257E20954%257E867773,00.html?search=filter>

19. Valley Candidate Floats Boroughs Plan, Los Angeles Times, September 19, 2002

<http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-secede19sep19.story>

20. 10 who dare for valley mayor or else, LA Daily News, September 22, 2002
<http://www.dailynews.com/Stories/0,1413,200%257E20954%257E873692,00.html?search=filter>
21. Secessionists Fear Gap in Leadership, Los Angeles Times, October 2, 2002
<http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-katz2oct02.story>
22. Would-be mayors talk transit, Los Angeles Daily News, October 2, 2002
<http://www.dailynews.com/Stories/0,1413,200%257E20954%257E896626,00.html?search=filter>
23. Richman's fund raising for Valley mayor in high gear, Los Angeles Daily News, October 7, 2002
<http://www.dailynews.com/Stories/0,1413,200%257E25178%257E909659,00.html?search=filter>
24. Valley city could push LAUSD, Los Angeles Daily News, October 10, 2002
<http://www.dailynews.com/Stories/0,1413,200%257E25178%257E914194,00.html?search=filter>
25. Valley a 'clean money' town?, Los Angeles Daily News, October 18, 2002
<http://www.dailynews.com/Stories/0,1413,200%257E25075%257E932526,00.html?search=filter>
26. An E-Mayor for Virtual L.A. City, Wired News, October 22, 2002
<http://www.wired.com/news/politics/0,1283,55911,00.html>
27. Valley Mayoral Foes Attack Richman, Los Angeles Times, October 23, 2002
<http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-secede23oct23.story>
28. 10 Seek Job That May Amount to Nothing, Los Angeles Times, October 27, 2002

<http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-mayor27oct27011225.story>

29. Just in Case, Breakup Foe Runs for Office, Los Angeles Times, October 27, 2002

<http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-trank27oct27011225.story>

30. League of Women Voters/Smart Voter Voter Information Webpage

http://www.smartvoter.org/2002/11/05/ca/la/vote/strassman_m/

31. Valley Mayoral Candidates Offer Proposals, Endorsements, Los Angeles Times, October 31, 2002

<http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-secede31oct31.story>

- 32.

http://netpulse.politicsonline.com/content.asp?sname=IN+THE+STATES&issue_id=6.15

CALIFORNIA CANDIDATE MAKES TECHNOLOGY HIS CAMPAIGN PLATFORM

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...

- 33.

http://netpulse.politicsonline.com/content.asp?sname=IN+THE+STATES&issue_id=6.18

POL CONTRIBUTING EDITOR FIRES UP THE WEB OUT WEST

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](#).

34. http://currentissue.telephonyonline.com/ar/telecom_talk_broadband_economy_25/

E-LECTION COVERAGE

by Jason Ankeny, Telephony Magazine, November 4, 2002

35. http://users.rcn.com/justpat/2002_11_03_archive.html

“it also looks as if [Marc Strassman](#) is off the hook,” Patrick di Justo’s weblog for 11-6-02

The centerpiece of my campaign was my campaign platform, which called for all the things I'd been calling for over the preceding eight years.

Strassman for Mayor Platform

(August 29, 2002)

To view the PowerPoint slideshow version of the official platform, click here:

<http://sfm.lpbm.org/sfmSlides.pdf>

To see the PDF version of the platform, click here:

[PDF of SFM PowerPoint 4.1, 8-29-02.PDF](#)

A while later, I put out a shorter version of the platform.

Concise Version of “Strassman for Mayor” Campaign Platform

(October 10, 2002)

If elected mayor of the new Valley City, I intend to pursue the following projects:

1. Universal access to broadband Internet connectivity
2. Universal access to stationary and/or mobile computing devices
3. Using the Universal Access Network to provide comprehensive e-government services to all residents
4. Using the e-government system to upgrade or eliminate bureaucrats
5. Eliminating the digital divide will open up e-learning, e-commerce, e-medicine and other digital opportunities to all residents
6. Deploy “mobile e-government” and other mobile e-services “anytime, anywhere” via broadband and other wireless networks
7. Employ Open Source methods and products, including the Linux operating system, to maximize transparency and security in the Universal Access and Internal Municipal Networks
8. Deploy e-democracy tools, including Internet voting, Smart Initiatives, Instant Online Recall, and Instant Online Polling, allowing all residents to “pre-vote” on matters coming before the City Council
9. Research, develop, and deploy the maximum feasible amount of photovoltaic electricity-generating equipment to provide non-polluting renewable energy to the Valley
10. Increase the percentage of vehicles in the new city that run on renewable/sustainable energy sources, especially electric cars
11. Institute a system of government-public-private cooperation in which the City provides guidance and funding, community groups organized online provide principles and priorities and private companies and city agencies actually implement the agreed-upon policies
12. Valley City agencies, companies, and individuals can provide products, consulting, and outsourced services modeled on our own to other jurisdictions
13. Establish a Municipal Webcasting Network (MWN) to create and distribute live and archived video coverage of municipal and community events

14. Organize a combined online and offline effort to draft and secure approval for a new charter for Valley City, making Valley City a Charter City rather than a General Law City
15. Build on the presence in Valley City of its many Spanish-speaking residents to position Valley City as the premiere interface for trade in physical goods and intellectual property between North and Latin America, thereby creating jobs, business opportunities, and revenue for Valley City
16. Build a great public-private Valley City University for education and research, economic development, and cultural enhancement
17. Build an e-democracy and e-government network that delivers these services “at the speed of thought” and provides government “of the people, by the people, and for the people”

I made a list of the adjectives the media used to describe me.

Media Adjectives Applied to Me During the Secession Campaign

(August 11th to September 9th, 2002)

1. “quixotic” and “fast-talking” Los Angeles Times, August 11, 2002
2. “creative” Fresno Bee, August 11, 2002
3. uno de los candidatos “mas reconocidos” La Opinion, August 11, 2002
4. internet entrepreneur and e-democracy expert E-Government Bulletin, September 9, 2002

Since I'd never held elective office, I felt I needed to address the issue of my experience.

Am I Experienced?

(October 10, 2002)

I'd like to say just a word or two about experience.

I've been a government bureaucrat, in New York City, in Washington, D.C., and even right here in Los Angeles. My bureaucratic experience at the General Accounting Office's Military Claims Division, in Washington, gave me an indelible impression of the triviality, the worship of procedure over accomplishment, laziness, an arrogant disregard for the public and inefficiency that too often characterizes government agencies. I have been trying in the 26 years since I resigned from the GAO to re-cast government as the opposite of what I experienced there.

I've been a teacher, in Connecticut, in Palo Alto, and in Santa Monica, so I know how important it is for the generations to exchange information about their worlds and their hopes for the future.

I've been a reporter, where I've investigated, researched, and written about science, technology, culture, business, and politics and asked candidates, office holders, and others tough questions, then published their answers.

I have experience running for office. Twenty-two years ago, in 1980, I ran for Congress in the 12th District of California, Silicon Valley. Even then and even there traffic jams were already becoming unbearable, so my campaign slogan was, "Compute, don't commute." I called for the use of renewable energy, especially solar, and the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment. I was outspent in that Democratic primary election 100-to-1 by my opponent, but, thanks to getting the endorsement of the district's leading newspaper, the **Palo Alto Times**, I won 40% of the vote in nearly every precinct and in the entire district.

I've been a community organizer, co-founding and building the Cable Communications Cooperative of Palo Alto, Inc. to the point where a rag-tag group of citizens could defeat the best efforts of Pacific Bell, Viacom, and William Hewlett's son and win the cable franchise for the Greater Palo Alto Area, including Stanford University, with a plan that gave ownership and control of the cable system to the residents of the area and the subscribers to the system.

I've started a dot.com, which was actually a dot.net, to commercialize Internet voting.

I worked as Director of New Business Development, Political Jurisdictions, at another Internet voting company, where I was partially responsible for the only legally-sanctioned Internet voting ever to take place in the US, in the Democratic Primary in Arizona in March, 2000.

I've produced and hosted hundreds of interview shows on cable television, interviewing hundreds of authors of new books, conducting discussions about art, the future of television, women in comedy, and wireless communications.

I've been a pioneer in the use of the Internet for the distribution of substantial and worthwhile content, conducting audio interviews with authors at BookRadio in Venice in 1999 and then starting my own author interview website, NewBookChat.com, in 2000.

I'm currently the producer and host of "Talk of the Valley," an online video talk show that covers secession and other Valley topics.

In my role as an Internet consultant, I recently gave a presentation about e-government to a visiting group of Japanese technology executives and engineers from NEC.

I've been working since 1996 to bring the power and speed and distributed participation of the Internet to politics, elections, and government, areas where speed and real participation are often scorned, while power for incumbents is pursued mercilessly. My efforts to do this have brought me into close proximity with lying, scheming, and shameless politicians in both parties. Those experiences have convinced me of the need to re-cast politics, elections and government in a totally different light, one that puts people first and politicians last, one that gives democratic power to every person, not just those who have the money, or the ability to get the money from corporations and the rich.

The danger of money in politics is that it's used to hire professional image manipulation consultants who then shape a campaign based on the purchase of space and time in media outlets, some supposedly licensed to serve the "public convenience and necessity," that will sell candidates all the paid advertising they can afford while only superficially, if at all, using their monopoly platforms to investigate and explain the issues at hand and the ideas and abilities of the candidates to address these issues effectively.

After all these experiences I am wary, informed, and still motivated. I have real ideas for the transformation of the Valley that I am qualified by experience to speak about and qualified by my previous efforts to implement.

Here are some types of experience that I don't have:

1. raising hundreds of thousands of dollars from the big corporations and the rich and earning their continuing support by delivering public positions, legislation, and backdoor maneuvers to repay them for their financial investments in my career
2. speaking political gibberish to hide the truth about issues and actions I take
3. changing my position on issues I say I care deeply about when the political winds shift or my "investors" change their minds
4. treating voters as a means to an end, rather than ends in themselves
5. scheming with other politicians to gerrymander legislative districts to the point that no incumbent ever loses, no one without serious money is ever nominated or

elected, and the voters are so disenfranchised that not voting becomes the only way they can “vote” at all

In these areas, I have very little experience.

But in terms of knowledge about the areas that government must deal with, the ability to investigate, analyze, describe, interpret, and educate, being able to create innovative and effective solutions to old and new problems, to communicate with people, to help people organize themselves into groups they can use to solve present, ongoing, and future problems, I think I’m more than sufficiently experienced and ready to apply my experience to transforming the San Fernando Valley into a much more pleasant place to live in for all its inhabitants and into a paragon of progress, civility, culture, and prosperity in the eyes of the rest of the world. I’d sure like a chance to try.