

# **Vote Your Mind: Developing an Accessible Voter Education Guide for Individuals with Cognitive Disabilities**

## **Introduction**

Traditional text-based voter guides are lengthy and perplexing for most voters, and can become entirely overwhelming for individuals with cognitive impairments, including dementia, stroke, traumatic brain injury, learning disabilities, and normal aging. Greg Niemeyer, Faculty Associate Director of the CITRIS Data and Democracy Initiative and Co-Founder of the Social Apps Lab, is leading development of Vote Your Mind, an enhanced, interactive supplement to the official Voter Information Guide, designed for mobile devices. Critically, Vote Your Mind takes into account cognitive limitations including attention and memory, and possible visual and/or hearing loss, in order to make the voter education process more accessible and effective. The application will offer a user-friendly and engaging interface with videos, hypertext links, and other enhancements.

This pilot study consists of the design, development and testing of a prototype multimedia voter guide. A usability study will be conducted to evaluate the pilot application with a cohort of adult participants with traumatic brain injury. If successful, the pilot study could suggest a broader-scale application to enhance voter guides for real upcoming elections. Such an app could increase voter participation among not only members of the target group (those with cognitive disabilities) but could also increase participation, confidence, and accuracy among the general voter population, as well.

The research and development team includes Greg Niemeyer, Principal Investigator, Vote Your Mind; Camille Crittenden, Director, CITRIS Data & Democracy Initiative at UC Berkeley; Dan Gillette, independent product designer and Project Scientist at Carnegie Mellon University-Silicon Valley; and Faraz Farzin, developmental psychologist and Post-doctoral Fellow at Stanford University.

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