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RFI: Promoting Access to Voting

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Promoting Access To Voting

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General Comment

Promoting Access to Voting
I would like to start by thanking NIST for seeking public comment regarding improving access to voting. However, since this NIST RFI was apparently not well publicized, I only found out about it at the last minute and therefore cannot address your queries as thoroughly as I should.
I will attach a short voting-related bio and a compilation of my voting experiences with "accessible" voting systems in Santa Clara County California as examples of some of the barriers to accessibility in voting.
1. Independent testing and reporting about the security and usability of Remote Access Voting (RAV) systems.
2. Development of scanning apps for accessible verification of paper ballots with ballot mark-sensing Optical Character Recognition (OCR).
3. Support and guidelines for different types of mobile voting, including:
a. Bringing ballots and portable voting equipment to senior centers and retirement facilities.
b. "Go-to-Voter" services where election officials bring portable accessible voting directly to individual voters (most Oregon counties provide such service).
4. Improving the accessibility of pre- and post-election related information, more accessible county election websites, and Personalized Election Results (PER) summarizing election results based on the voter's own precinct.
5. From my own experiences in years of trying to vote with "accessible" voting machines, the voting systems are often not set up and ready for voting. I recommend developing procedures to require that accessible voting systems will be fully set up and tested before the polling place is opened.
6. Electronic Ballot Return (EBR) systems do not offer true privacy and independent voting, as voters using EBR must depend on somebody at the central count facilities converting their ballot into the proper ballot form for tabulation, and this process exposes the privacy of their ballot.
I'd like to see improvements to voting accessibility for all voters, especially for those of us with

disabilities, but we can do that without having to trade off security and privacy in exchange for the EBR conveniences desired by a small elite of tech savvy voters.

At a time when we should be working to make our election systems more secure and transparent, we should not be complicating voting systems by rushing to add EBR as a solution for accessibility. I am also concerned that, instead of making in-person voting accessible, counties may assume that some form of remote accessible voting would be an acceptable alternative. Many people with disabilities will never be able to use Internet voting and so will be disenfranchised if in-person voting is not maintained.

Attachments

Noel Runyan's Short Voting-Related Bio - June 2020

Runyan Voting Experiences