

Existing and Emerging Challenges for Election Officials

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U.S. Election Officials plan and execute elections under considerable pressure. This pressure includes deteriorating voting systems, increasingly complex election systems, declining resources, diminishing numbers of poll workers, increased expectations for efficiency, effectiveness, and convenience, and increased scrutiny of election observers and activists.

- In 2002 HAVA established both standards for voting systems as well as funds for states to replace voting systems (specifically punch-card and lever –machine systems). Those systems that were purchased in 2002-2006 are now reaching end-of-life and jurisdictions are struggling with maintenance and replacement of those systems.
- Most election related innovations in the past 10 years have not been in the area of voting systems, but in election systems. Election systems are those systems that create, collect, manage, store and utilize information and procedures related to the administration of elections. Election systems include voter registration systems, electronic pollbooks, ballot on demand systems, online ballot delivery, marking, and return systems, etc. Election systems have no governing design standard, no established testing standards, and are not widely or well understood by voters or election officials.
- Election systems continue to converge and encapsulate manual election procedures, creating increasingly complex systems that create inter-system dependencies. As jurisdictions become more reliant upon automated systems for election administration, election officials are challenged to understand these system architectures and their implications for accuracy, privacy, and functionality.
- The testing and subsequent certification of voting systems has been stagnated by both market and political forces. States and local jurisdictions are finding it more and more difficult to purchase and implement needed innovations in voting systems. Vendors are uncertain how to proceed in light of the stagnation of the U.S. Voluntary Voting System Guidelines (VVSG).
- As part of the testing and certification process for U.S. aircraft, the Federal Aviation Administration also establishes standards for knowledge and skill of pilots, maintenance personnel and air traffic controllers. Election officials face rising expectations regarding their knowledge and skills. There is a growing recognition that establishing standards for voting systems without establishing complementary standards for managers of the system is ineffective. The need for the definition of core competencies of election officials is an important step in furthering the professional development of election officials and election workers.
- Out-of-precinct voting is a growing U.S. trend. Some western states are 100% out-of-precinct, with most of the remaining states headed toward some hybridization of in- and out-of-precinct

voting. Technologies that enable this growth are proliferating without correlating effort to ensure their proper integration with existing voting systems or future end-to-end election systems.

- States and counties have developed and implemented aggressive e-government strategies that offer a broad array of governmental services to constituents with both convenience and efficiency. This rising level of expectations will inevitably spread to elections administration and must be planned for.
- UOCAVA voters and their advocates will continue to escalate their expectations for online services, including voter registration, ballot delivery, ballot return, and information related to voting and elections.
- Accessibility and Disability communities will continue to pressure election officials and voting system manufacturers to improve accessibility, especially in the areas of cognitive disabilities. An aging voting population and increased diagnosis of TBI, PTSD and ADHD will require all election systems to improve their ability to mitigate disabilities.
- Voter Authentication and Voter Authorization must receive a more balanced treatment in the development and implementation of election security models. Authenticating entails determining that the voter is who they say they are. Authorization involves determining which ballot the voter is entitled to. Voter Authorization errors are often undetected and occur with great frequency.
- Auditing elections is complicated and can be expensive without producing meaningful outcomes. The development of auditing programs that support the refinement of processes to ensure the correctness of election procedures is an emerging science and will become a core functionality of future voting and election systems.