
Electronic Voting Systems

Posted by Bananaman - 2008/07/16 11:59

Given the fiasco last time round and that there's a by-election coming up, what's the situation in Scotland with regard to 'e-voting'?

What system will be in place for the by-election?

This article is from today's New York Times

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/16/opinion/16wed1.html?ref=opinion>

Re:Electronic Voting Systems

Posted by DoricMan - 2008/07/16 12:08

Bananaman wrote:

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What system will be in place for the by-election?

This article is from today's New York Times

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/16/opinion/16wed1.html?ref=opinion> Whatever the computer/electro-mechanical/Hi-Tech system that we end up with, not to mention the unencrypted CDs that get lost in the post, do we really need to change the way we have always voted? The problem is that we are not going to have any say or even a vote on what we want.

Re:Electronic Voting Systems

Posted by Clare - 2008/07/16 15:15

I'm thinking back to the naive days when I believed no one knew how you voted! I remember my horror on making the connection between my name on the register in front of the person at the polling station and my ballot paper number right beside it and realising the awful truth. A question. Where do all these ballot papers go and who has access to them?

Re:Electronic Voting Systems

Posted by Robin T Cox - 2008/07/16 17:26

I'm far less worried about tracing hard copy votes than the prospects for fraud, identity theft and so forth afforded by e-voting, particularly if the software is provided by a certain US conglomerate based in Redmond, Seattle.

Let's stick to good old paper and pencil. At least that way you can see the thugs standing over you. But give them the keys to your computer and we're all doomed.

Re:Electronic Voting Systems

Posted by LYDIA REID - 2008/07/16 19:49

I share your concerns Robin more because I have so little knowledge.

I spent a wee while trying to find some info and failed

Re:Electronic Voting Systems

Posted by Bananaman - 2008/07/16 19:53

Yeah that worries me too.

They were thinking about e-voting here in Eire 10 years or so ago, but the machines got mothballed (they were bought alright) and are now costing the Irish taxpayer millions of euros in storage costs.

A Dutch group proved that the system used to run them relatively easy to hack as well.

If it ain't broke etc (but I'm not convinced that what we already have ain't broke. that's the trouble)

Re:Electronic Voting Systems

Posted by Brenna1508 - 2008/07/16 19:57

Clare asked: Where do all these ballot papers go and who has access to them?

I found this article from the Guardian which gives some information.

<http://tinyurl.com/6xw3x9>

Re:Electronic Voting Systems

Posted by Bananaman - 2008/07/16 20:05

Land of the Free?

And we're supposed to trust them with mobile phone records etc.

I had to renew my passport recently and my new one has a 'chip' in it so any person with the 'right' equipment can 'ping' it and, without my knowledge, know where I am and access whatever data is connected to the passport office, which includes my birth cert.

Great.

Re:Electronic Voting Systems

Posted by LYDIA REID - 2008/07/16 23:04

Brenna1508 wrote:

Clare asked: Where do all these ballot papers go and who has access to them?

I found this article from the Guardian which gives some information.

<http://tinyurl.com/6xw3x9>

Well found Brenna I think the comments below are as worrying as the article

Re:Electronic Voting Systems

Posted by scunnert - 2008/07/17 02:39

My understanding is that e-voting is to be retained for council election as the system used in those elections is too complicated to do by hand - STV - Single Transferable Vote.

BTW - I was a polling officer in the first European elections and was shocked that votes could be traced using the ballot paper number which was transcribed to the register of voters. Aye - democracy - great stuff init?

Re:Electronic Voting Systems

Posted by Meg - 2008/07/17 09:26

Two experiences that I have had.

First was as an election agent at council elections back in the 90s. When the polls closed, I had stayed at the polling station to see the boxes being sealed and checked how many people had voted etc. I then followed the boxes in the van down to the count. When we got there, there was no reason for the boxes not to be brought straight through to the count as there was a segregated area for the boxes and they were being brought through as they arrived. However when our boxes hadn't come through after 30 mins, I complained to the returning officer and also said that I wanted the count for our ward to take place straight away as I wasn't happy with the way things were being conducted. That may seem a bit cheeky but the count was a bit of a shambles and also I think it is important that these officials who are usually Labour people, don't think you are slow at sticking up for your rights. Anyway, the boxes appeared straight away and the count took place. The local Labour people went bananas at me - it's always good to know you get up their noses. The result was in line with our exit poll so we don't think the boxes had been tampered with on that occasion however there would have been nothing to stop them unsealing the boxes and then resealing them.

Second was at a European election. As we vote on a Thursday and the count does not take place until the Sunday, to keep us in line with when the rest of Europe votes, the boxes need to be stored until then. Nothing to stop them being tampered with. My experience though was locally when the boxes were going to be transported to Glasgow to the count. I happened to be round the back of the building they had been stored in - to go into another building. Some of the boxes had been put in the back of a van but it had been left unattended. I waited there for 10 minutes before anyone appeared (with more boxes) so I could easily have stolen the boxes that were there.

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Re:Electronic Voting Systems

Posted by LYDIA REID - 2008/07/17 10:03

Hi Meg

We listen to the media about Magabe tell me please what is the differnce.

All these boxes should stay within view of all the representatives of all the parties until counted. That in my view is the only way to ensure that no tampering takes place by any party and would be possible if the boxes were transported in buses instead of vans.

I still have many doubts about the outcome of the Scottish Parliament elections, as I am sure do many others. I am also sure this is the reason for not allowing Scotland to run their own elections. It will take people like you being very vigilant to ensure we have fair elections next time round.

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Re:Electronic Voting Systems

Posted by Clare - 2008/07/17 14:25

Meg

Thanks for the information earlier. Interesting stuff. I had this idea that the boxes would be kept by Police personnel of some sort actually.

I think obviously polling station personnel need to know who has been in to vote but there is a way to do that without having ballot papers numbered as we have just now, and the accompanying counterfoil showing the same number thus exposing how anyone has voted in any election. I'm very surprised this wasn't challenged years ago actually. The answer surely is to take the serial numbers off the ballot papers? Given the level of snooping this government is now into we should really be doing more as individuals.

The security side to it is equally worrying. We go on about corruption in other countries when it comes to elections but it would appear our own system is very much open to corrupt procedures.

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Re:Electronic Voting Systems

Posted by Levenax - 2008/07/17 16:20

There have been some dodgy counts in the past and I'm sure it's because a lot of those overseeing the process were Labour toadies. That's not to say they were necessarily corrupt but since most councils were Labour run and by definition mismanaged a bit like your local Co-Op the fellow travellers employed to run the show were seldom very efficient.

My hunch is that there's not much tampering with ballot boxes or voting papers but I am uneasy about the papers being serial numbered and cross referenced to the voter. As far as I know there's been no abuse and anyway why would anybody be interested in what way I voted?

Postal votes are the real danger as has been demonstrated by the Labour fiddles in England quite recently. Immigrants were involved because it's easy to fiddle with their names and addresses and for that reason I think that nobody should get a vote unless they can speak English to a decent standard and photo ID should be required to get a voting paper. If you need photo ID to fly why not to vote? Postal votes should be limited to those who can demonstrate that there is no possible alternative to voting in the normal way.

Re:Electronic Voting Systems

Posted by LYDIA REID - 2008/07/17 21:39

hi Lev

Might they be more interested if a person does not normally vote. If postal voting is used as a scam they would have to have this in before an election and it would surely show up somewhere if the person had already made a postal vote. Hopefully the computer would not print a number for them at a polling station.

Photo ID would be a good idea.

Re:Electronic Voting Systems

Posted by scunnert - 2008/07/18 05:00

LYDIA REID wrote:

hi Lev

Might they be more interested if a person does not normally vote. If postal voting is used as a scam they would have to have this in before an election and it would surely show up somewhere if the person had already made a postal vote. Hopefully the computer would not print a number for them at a polling station.

Photo ID would be a good idea.

How would photo ID help sort out corruption in postal votes?

Re:Electronic Voting Systems

Posted by Meg - 2008/07/18 09:28

Hi Lydia,

If you take a postal vote then your name is marked off the register as not being able to vote in person at the polling station. Often, the amount of people voting by post is nowhere near as many people as those that applied for a postal vote. Maybe I am too cynical but I just think if you have gone to all the trouble of applying for a postal vote then how likely are you not to then use it to vote.

Re:Electronic Voting Systems

Posted by Levenax - 2008/07/18 09:55

The problem with postal votes in Yorkshire came about because bent politicians got members of their community to apply for lots of postal votes. When they got the papers they filled them in on behalf of the gullible types who were too unused to the ways of the UK voting system to realise what was going on. Many votes were stolen from women who spoke no English and therefore knew not what was going on. IMO only those who can demonstrate proficiency in English should be granted a vote and unless somebody can demonstrate that they are a cripple or will be away from home on the date of the election they should not get a postal vote. How can a clerk at a polling station possibly know if a person who turns up to vote is who they claim to be without positive proof of identity? This is an obvious opportunity for fraud and it's one that could easily be addressed by requiring photo ID. That's no big deal because millions of folk fly every year and they have no problems producing the ID airlines and airport security demand. Why should we tolerate lesser security measures for one of the vitally important processes of democracy?

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Re:Electronic Voting Systems

Posted by LYDIA REID - 2008/07/18 20:55

scunnert wrote:

LYDIA REID wrote:

hi Lev

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Photo ID would be a good idea.

How would photo ID help sort out corruption in postal votes?

Not in postal voting but in voting at a voting station surely it would not be so easy for someone else to use your vote. You are not asked for any ID or even your card that informs you where you should vote. If it changed to no card no, vote that might help. It would be a form of ID

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Re:Electronic Voting Systems

Posted by LYDIA REID - 2008/07/18 20:57

Meg wrote:

Hi Lydia,

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That does seem a little strange are you thinking some of the votes are not processed.

Thanks for that info Meg

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Re:Electronic Voting Systems

Posted by LYDIA REID - 2008/07/18 21:04

I had another thought if voting were compulsory with some form of ID it seems many of these problems would be sorted out. No question of whether this person does vote or has voted. If they decided that they did not want to vote for any party a tick in a box could register that.

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Re:Electronic Voting Systems

Posted by Bananaman - 2008/07/31 23:38

More on this from today's NY Times

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/31/opinion/31observer.html?_r=1&ref=opinion&oref=slogin

Given what's at stake its scary or have I just read one conspiracy theory too many?

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