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October 26, 1999

Supplement to
AOR 1999-25
With Enclosures

Honorable Scott E. Thomas
Federal Election Commission
999 E Street, NW
Washington, DC 20463

Re: *The Democracy Network Request for Advisory Opinion*
        (Draft Advisory Opinion 1999-25)

Dear Chairman Thomas:

The Democracy Network ("DNet") respectfully submits these comments in response to questions raised at the October 21, 1999 Federal Election Commission open meeting regarding Draft Advisory Opinion 1999-25, made public October 14, 1999 ("Draft Opinion"). Specifically, Commissioner Lee Ann Elliott requested more information regarding the news magazine, "DNetizen," and asked for clarification of the Draft Opinion's statement (at 3), "Links are also provided to sites with reports of official campaign contribution data for candidates (such as the FEC website) and ballot measures."

DNetizen is a free service of DNet that highlights important news and commentary about the Internet and politics. DNetizen, like DNet generally, is funded by contributions from supporters and foundations and does not rely on advertising or customer fees for its support. DNet was first published on November 12, 1998. It was initially published weekly and then biweekly until May 25, 1999. (See the attached archive list of DNetizen issues and all past issues). There have been no DNetizen publications since May 25 because DNet lacked sufficient resources to devote to DNetizen when it was so busily engaged in creating the new format of DNet for the 2000 election cycle. Biweekly publication will again resume in approximately one month.[1]

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[1]   At this time, during DNetizen's hiatus, DNet users are not able to access past issues of DNetizen by clicking on a link. Past issues remain accessible by going to <www.dnet.org/dnetizen/archive.shtml>, where past issues are archived and may be viewed. DNet users, however, will be able to view and subscribe to DNetizen once publication resumes by clicking on the "Subscribe" button to DNetizen at the bottom of the DNet page. Through either

(Continued...)

Implicit in Commissioner Elliott's question is the issue of DNetizen's entitlement to the press exemption (as differentiated from the "nonpartisan" exemption of 2 U.S.C. § 431(9)(b)(ii)). DNetizen is a periodical publication distributed exclusively through the Internet, and covers topics such as electronic voting proposals, online disclosure of campaign finance information, the public's perception of "Spam," and the effectiveness of e-mail petitions. 2 U.S.C. § 431(9)(B)(i) provides that the term "expenditure" does not include "[a]ny news story, commentary, or editorial distributed through the facilities of any broadcasting station, newspaper, magazine, or other periodical publication, unless such facilities are owned or controlled by any political party, political committee, or candidate." FEC regulations state that "[a]ny cost incurred in covering or carrying a news story, commentary, or editorial by any broadcasting station, newspaper, magazine, or other periodical publication is not an expenditure," 11 C.F.R. § 100.8(b)(2), and that any "cost incurred in covering or carrying a news story, commentary, or editorial" does not constitute a "contribution" for purposes of FECA, *id.* § 100.7(b)(2).

As a review of past issues of DNetizen (attached) clearly shows, it is a periodical publication with news and commentary. DNet is not owned or controlled by any political party or candidate. *See* 2 U.S.C. § 431(9)(B)(i); *see also* FEC Advisory Opinion 1996-16, Fed. Election Camp. Fin. Guide (CCH) ¶ 6197 (1996). DNet should, therefore, satisfy the press exemption requirement. It is irrelevant to this conclusion that DNetizen does not have paid subscriptions or advertisers, because those are not statutory requirements for the news exemption: if they were, public radio would not qualify for the exemption either, a clearly untenable conclusion.[2]

The Draft Opinion's "sites with reports of official campaign contribution data for candidates" language is derived nearly verbatim from the Advisory Opinion Request (at 6). To clarify, DNet will provide links to official government sources such as the Federal Election Commission and state secretary of state and/or election commission sites. In addition, DNet intends to provide links to other entities that have summarized information filed with these offices and/or attempted to make the official information more user-friendly. Examples of other sites that DNet may provide links to include: Campaign Finance Data on the Internet at <www.soc.american.edu/campfin/> and FECInfo—Public Disclosure, Inc. at <www.tray.com>, and their state equivalents.
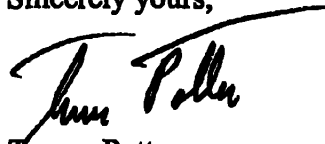

(...Continued)
button a user may become a subscriber, and begin receiving future publications of DNetizen, by simply providing DNet with an e-mail address. There is no charge. When DNetizen issues are being published, users may view past and present issues by clicking on the "DNetizen" link from the DNet page.

[2]   The Commission discussion raised the question whether DNetizen included commentary which "favored any candidate." In fact, DNetizen is strictly nonpartisan, as is DNet, and its content reflects this policy. However, the press exemption would permit periodicals like DNetizen to include commentary that takes positions on candidates or issues.

I trust this information will be useful to the Commission's deliberations.

Sincerely yours,

Trevor Potter
Counsel to Requester Democracy Network,
A Joint Project of The League of Women
Voters and the Center for Governmental
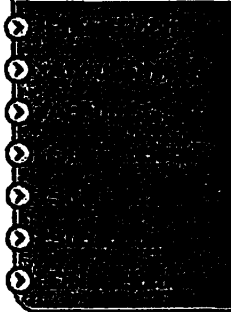Studies

cc. Lawrence C. Noble

The DNetizen

Computerworld
Smithsonian
1999 Laureate

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Archive

Select your state
and go there:

Issue 1.0 | 10/12/98 | The year of the Internet? Think again.
(Campaigns and email)

Issue 1.1 | 10/19/98 | Email helps voters contact officials, not vice versa.
(Campaigns and email continued)

Issue 2.0 | 10/26/98 | Campaign money of the Information Superhighway
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(Online election results)

Issue 4.0 | 11/9/98 | Making sense of 1998
(Reflecting on the Internet and politics in 1998)

Issue 4.1 | 11/16/98 | The Internet and Politics in 1998: Issue Advocacy Groups
(An examination of advocacy group's use of the Internet in 1998)

Issue 4.2 | 11/30/98 | What DNet Tells us about the Internet and Politics in 1998
(A discussion of the national implications of DNet's experience in the election
cycle.)

Issue 4.3 | 12/7/98 | Turning Interested Voters into Informed Voters
(The results of a study of campaign websites.)

Issue 5.0 | 12/14/98 | Can Spam Go Bad?
(A discussion of email and politics.)

Issue 5.1 | 12/21/98 | Readers Respond to Spam
(A discussion of email and politics.)

Issue 5.2 | 1/11/99 | Targeted Advertising: A Palatable Alternative to Spam
(A discussion of email and politics.)

Issue 5.3 | 1/25/99 | Spammer Beware: How to find the origin of your spam
(A how to guide to fight back against spammers.)

Issue 6.0 | 2/08/99 | Online Petitions
(The birth of participatory democracy or a waste of time?)

Issue 6.1 | 2/22/99 | Petition Potpourri
(Four case studies of onlice petitions.)

Issue 6.2 | 3/8/99 | Participatory Democracy
(A new engine for online petitions.)

Issue 7.0 | 3/22/99 | Presidential Primary Primer -- Ready or not, here they come!

(A list of online resource for the Presidential Primary.)

Issue 7.1 | 4/5/99 | Presidential Primary Primer -- Continued
(A list of online resource for the Presidential Primary.)

Issue 8.0 | 4/26/99 | Who's Lobbying Who?
(Elected officials and online advocacy.)

Issue 8.1 | 5/25/99 | If you email, will they listen?
(Responses to "Who's Lobbying Who?".)

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The DNet*izen*

| | DNet | | Mon Oct 25, 1999

Issue 1.0

Letter From the Editor:

Welcome to the DNetizen, DNet's newsletter on the Internet and politics. We have designed this newsletter to bridge the divide between academics and practitioners -- those who study politics and those whose livelihoods depend on it. Free DNetizen Subscriptions available here!

Our inaugural issue is a good example of how we intend to proceed. Jennifer Stromer-Galley, a graduate student at the Annenberg School of Communication at the University of Pennsylvania and research assistant to Kathleen Hall Jamieson, wrote about her experiment that tested how campaigns are using email to communicate with voters. In our next issue, we'll hear from the campaign professionals. They'll tell us how they use email.

We will follow this model in future issues which will include the ethics of links, Latino voters and their growing role in American politics, and online disclosure to name a few of the topics in development.

We welcome feed back from readers. Send your letters to the editor, compliments and criticisms to mwtaylor@cgs.org.
John Howland, Editor-in-Chief

The Year of the Internet? Think Again

By *Jennifer Stromer-Galley* Many political experts predicted that1998 would be the year of the Internet-- that the Internet would decide a race for the first time. Many factors seem to support that hypothesis. The proliferation of Web sites is astronomical. A study conducted by Campaigns & Elections in July and August of this year found that 63% of all campaigns surveyed reported that they had "a Web site already up." Another 21% reported that they expected one to be up "at some point" in the election (p. 23). In a study being conducted at the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania, all but two of the candidates in the ten states being studied currently have Web sites.

Although these candidates have Web sites, the important question is what are they doing with those Web sites? Specifically, are they using their Web sites to open a channel for strategic communication with potential voters? To see how campaigns were utilizing e-mail, I sent out 18 messages to the gubernatorial candidates with e-mail addresses in the Annenberg study. The email included questions on three issues - school vouchers, crime, and taxes. The messages

Select your state and go there:

were sent on September 14 which is important to note because Minnesota and Maryland (two of the states in the study) had primary elections the next day. Sending an e-mail message the day before the election would test the importance campaigns placed on their Internet communications.

In general, the response to my message was dismal. Only eight of the twenty campaigns (44%) have responded as of this date. Of those eight, only two (11%) of the candidates Ellen Sauerbrey (R) in Maryland and George Ryan (R) in Illinois responded "in person." (Of course, one cannot know if they actually responded, or if a surrogate responded under their name.) Both provided answers that specifically addressed my questions. Although they took more than a week to respond, their personal response suggests that they hold their Internet communications as important to their campaigns. Staffers for five (28%) of the candidates responded to my query, although only four provided specific responses to my questions. The campaigns of Jim Lightfoot (R) of Iowa and Parris Glendening (D) of Maryland deserve praise for responding quickly and offering useful information that directly answered my questions.

A staff member for Mark Dayton, a Democratic primary candidate in Minnesota also responded the day of the election. His staff's immediate response to my query – especially on election day - clearly shows that email was a priority in their campaign communication plans. Of all the Minnesota candidates, Dayton was the only one who stood up to the test.

A rival campaign took a very different approach. Two days after the primary, I received an e-mail message from a staff member at Ted Mondale's campaign apologizing for not responding sooner. They continued by scolding me for not writing earlier: "My recommendation would be to not wait until Election Day next time to ask your questions." This is particularly interesting because speed of communication is one of the joys of this new medium. It is entirely reasonable for a potential voter to expect a response to an e-mail message the day before an election. If candidates are to make effective use of the new technology, they must dedicate the resources to meet voters' expectations. A further example of how far campaigns have to go was provided by Dan Lungren's (R) campaign in California who promised to answer my questions through the mail after I sent the campaign my postal address. This response negates e-mail's advantages of speed and ease altogether by processing them as traditional letters. A week later, however, I received a detailed answer to my questions over e-mail. A procedural change may have been afoot.

One campaign did not respond to my questions directly, but instead placed me on their e-mail list. Bill Sizemore's (R) campaign has sent me upwards of ten messages – all from his email list – and made no attempt to answer my questions. Given people's loathing of spam, this is as a dangerous strategy for handling e-mail messages. An undecided voter who had e-mailed Sizemore to get a direct answer to questions but instead received spam might be turned away from the candidate by that action alone.

This test of candidates' e-mail response capabilities shows how unsure candidates still are of this medium. Although 90% of the candidates I currently study have decided it important enough to have Web pages, less than half have come to fully grasp the capabilities of one of the basic elements of this medium – email. Although responding to e-mail messages and updating a Web site can tax scarce resources, the Internet provides direct, unfiltered access to people who have enough passion for the democratic process to e-mail candidates and visit their Web sites. These are the people candidates want to reach the most – those who are most inclined to vote on election day. Not responding at all to e-mail messages creates the impression that the candidate does not care enough about the voter to send a response. This test suggests many candidates have much to learn before the Internet will make the difference in their campaigns.

Special thanks to Jon Stromer-Galley and Heather Ross for their assistance sending e-mail messages. Endnotes

Faucheux, R. (Sept. 1998). How campaigns are using the Internet: An exclusive nationwide survey. (Campaigns and Elections, 19, 22-25). The survey included 270 current campaigns-current as of the beginning of September.

Campaign Quality Project. funded in part by a grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts. The ten states being studied are: Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Maryland, Minnesota, Oregon, and Texas.

The candidates who received an e-mail message were: Paul Johnson in Arizona; Gray Davis and Dan

Lungren in California; Gail Schoettler in Colorado; Buddy Mackay and Jeb Bush in Florida' Glenn Poshard and George Ryan in Illinois' Tom Vilsack and Jim Ross Lightfoot in Iowa; Parris Glendening and Ellen Sauerbrey in Maryland; Mike Freeman, Skip Humphrey, Ted Mondale and Mark Dayton in Minnesota; Bill Sizemore in Oregon; Garry Mauro in Texas.

The DNet*izen*

| | DNet | | Mon Oct 25, 1999

Issue 1.0

Letter From the Editor:

Thanks to all of our readers for making the first issue of the DNetizen so successful. We received a great deal of feedback from our readers. One of the many reader letters we received is included in this issue.

To find out more about campaigns and email, I sent a copy of last week's issue to all of the campaigns mentioned in the article. The two responses we received are included below. I also interviewed two preeminent campaign strategists -- Allan Hoffenblum, a long-time Republican campaign manager, and Darry Sragow, a strategist for many Democratic candidates -- to get their thoughts about email and campaigns. My sincere thanks to both of them for their time and expertise.

We will follow this model in future issues which will include the ethics of links, Latino voters and their growing role in American politics, and online disclosure to name a few of the topics in development.

I hope you enjoy this issue. An as always, we welcome your feedback. Send it all to: mwtaylor@cgs.org. Check back next week when DNetizen examines the future of Latino voters in California and the US.

Remember, Free DNetizen Subscriptions available here!

John Howland, Editor-in-Chief

Email helps voters contact officials, but not vice versa.
By John Howland, Editor, DNetizen

The results are in and there is a clear consensus. Darry Sragow, a widely respected Democratic campaign consultant, sums up the views of most of those contacted for this article. "Email has tremendous potential because of the ease with which citizens can communicate with elected officials and campaigns" but, from a campaign's perspective, "at present, a limitation of email is that it is disconnected from voter history. Until a database has been established, candidates cannot reliably contact voters by email."

Stated differently, email is becoming an important means for citizens and voters to contact elected officials and campaigns, but it is a far less effective tool for candidates to contact voters.

Citizens Contacting Officials Jennifer Stromer-Galley's article demonstrates that most campaigns have staked out a place on the web and that most of those offer an email address for voters to use. Further, we learned through her study that many campaigns have created email lists to keep their supporters up to date about events and developments in their campaigns. Her study shows that campaigns are committed to offering voters to ability to contact them via email even though they have not perfected their use of the medium.

A recent story in the San Francisco Chronicle also shows that email is becoming an important tool for elected officials. (The article can be found at: http://www.examiner.com/980803/0803email.shtml.) Many members of Congress witnessed an increase in their email traffic with the publication of the Starr Report on the web. The Congressional Record and C-SPAN are full of references to constituent email messages. Email clearly is beginning to rival faxes and letters as a means for citizens to contact officials and campaigns.

Using Email to Reach Voters However, candidates are struggling to find ways to use email as a campaign tool. One reason is that there is a fundamental incompatibility between the virtual world and electoral politics. The guiding principal for all elections is locality; where a person lives determines nearly everything about her ballot and an email address cannot tell a campaign where she lives or if she's registered to vote.

"The bottom line in a campaign is determining what the message is and communicating it to a targeted group of voters" says Allan Hoffenblum a veteran of many Republican campaigns. "While email is cheaper than postage, its use is restricted to people who have accounts. Everybody has a mailbox but everybody does not have a computer."

In a campaign, candidates must reach registered voters. To increase the chances of reaching those people, campaigns use voter registration records and voter histories to "target" voters who they believe are likely to vote for them or who are "persuadable" based on a number of factors including party affiliation, age, gender, etc. Direct mail, one of the primary electoral tools, is sent to a specific group of people with definable characteristics gleaned from the lists of registered voters.

It's impossible to know if someone is eligible to vote in an election from an email address. Sragow mentioned two other factors that inhibit the use of email. "For the foreseeable future, those who use email are a thin slice of eligible voters — more upscale, younger and better educated." Also, "the negative view of spam" makes candidates reluctant to sent out unsolicited emails to a large audience. This reluctance seems appropriate since the attempt to distribute an email slate in a California primary election was abandoned in response to opposition from online anti-spam groups.

So what have we learned from all of this? Email is a very effective means for voters to contact officials. In addition, the Internet will continue to be used by campaigns to reinforce their message because as Hoffenblum notes "the easiest way to get your message across is to use multiple mediums" and email and websites are cost effective ways to reinforce campaign themes.

But we also learned that email and the Internet will remain a secondary feature of campaigns until someone figures out a way to bridge the divide between the virtual world of the web and the terrestrial world of politics.

Email from the Poshard for Governor of Illinois Campaign:

T hank you for the notification. We found it very interesting, and are pleased that organizations are studying the use of email and campaign websites.

Poshard.com is a 100% volunteer organization, built and maintained by unpaid workers who believe in Glenn. The only cost of the site is the payment to the webserver. We make a good faith effort to respond to every email, but as we state on our front page, we cannot guarantee a response to every query, as all our web volunteers have other responsibilities on the campaign as well.

We have focused the resources we do expend on the site on keeping it constantly updated with the newest campaign information, to give our volunteers in the field the latest goings-on in the campaign. Our main use of email, beyond responding to questions and coordinating sign requests and literature drops, is a weekly emailing that gives the latest update on the campaign. We now have a subscriber list in the hundreds for this service. This is one area where we are confident we are beating George Ryan in the Internet war, as we are subscribed on his email newsletter as well, but he has used it a total of twice in the past several months.

There are of course, many intriguing potential uses for email, including possible "targeting" of message to certain areas, judging from Internet service providers, or encouraging citizens to set up email chains of their own — "friend-to-friend" networks through the Internet. We have not ruled out trying these methods as the campaign tightens in the home stretch.

Sincerely,
Poshard for Governor

Email from the Ryan for Governor of Illinois Campaign:

We put up press releases and position papers on our web page in addition to bios. We communicate directly with voters via e-mail. We get over 20 e-mails each day offering support and asking questions.

DNetizen reader email from Jonah Seiger:

I found this piece very interesting and good fodder for the ongoing discussion about the impact of the Net on the 1998 elections. Hats off to you for doing it and to Mark and the CGS crew for putting together this publication.

While I agree with the thrust of the piece -- that most candidates are not yet fully using the real power of the net or applying a strategic vision of how the medium can be used as part of an overall campaign strategy -- I am not sure that the methodology of sending email to campaign web masters right before an election allows one to draw the conclusions drawn in this piece.

I can tell you from personal experience that it is very difficult to respond to detailed questions by email. I much prefer to address these kinds of questions in person or on the phone. In addition, the days leading up to an election are, as you can imagine, a crazy time for underpaid and over tasked campaign staffers. Given a choice, I would suspect that a campaign would be much more interested in responding to an inquiry from a prospective voter first. This may explain why the response rate was so low.

On the point about Bill Sizemore adding you to their email list: while I agree that this doesn't suffice as a satisfactory answer to your inquiry, I do not believe that the use of the word SPAM is justified in this context.

SPAM is generally meant to refer to unsolicited, mass posts of email - not to campaign mailing lists. Though I would say that the practice of adding people to mailing lists w/o explicit prior consent is not so kosher, calling this SPAM clouds the issue and confuses the term. SPAM is a real problem that could doom the political potential of the Net. Campaign mailing lists are, as you say in this piece, important examples of "open a channels for strategic communication with potential voters". Candidates who have mailing lists should be given credit for doing something, not criticized as SPAMers, IMHO.

Again, it's good to see you and CGS adding to the knowledge pool. I look fwd to future DNetizen posts. In the mean time, I hope you don't mind this constructive criticism.
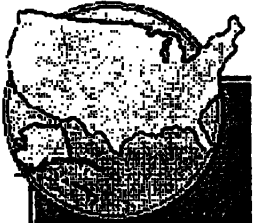
Best,
Jonah

The DNet*izen*

Computerworld
Smithsonian
1999 Laureate

|| DNet || Mon Oct 25, 1999

Issue 2.0

Letter From the Editor:

Our issue on Latino politics has been postponed so that we can bring you this story on Electronic Campaign Finance Disclosure. We thought it would be useful in the last week of the campaign.

Two other new features will debut on DNet this week. DNet is posting background information on all of the statewide referendums and ballot initiatives for the twenty-two states that have them. This information was provided by the Initiative and Referendum Institute in Washington DC.

DNet is also providing video archives of short debates provided by the Alliance for Better Campaigns. The first debates will be from California. You can find them later this week at DNet CA.

In case you missed it, DNet was highlighted in the "Cyberspace" section of Monday's Los Angeles Times.

I hope you enjoy this issue. As always, we welcome your feedback. Send it to: mwtaylor@cgs.org.

Remember, Free DNetizen Subscriptions are available here!

John Howland, Editor-in-Chief

Campaign Money on the Information Highway: Electronic Filing and Disclosure of Campaign Finance Reports in 1998
By Craig B. Holman, Ph.D. Project Director, CGS and Robert M. Stern, Co-Director and General Counsel, CGS

Each year since 1996, the Center for Governmental Studies has surveyed jurisdictions throughout the United States and Canada regarding electronic filing and disclosure of campaign finance reports -- and each year we are astounded

Select your state and go there:

by the rapid pace of development of electronic reporting systems. With a few notable exceptions, this year is equally astonishing.

It has often been said that technology has a life of its own. This is certainly true in the field of electronic filing and disclosure of campaign finance reports. The movement toward permitting candidates and committees to file their financial reports electronically, through either diskette, modem or the Internet, and to disclose these reports to the public and press electronically, is a North American phenomenon. The movement appears to have caught hold in Canada and the United States – and it has caught hold with a fury.

US Trends The era of computer systems and the information highway has catapulted almost all American states toward digitizing their systems of campaign finance reporting – all within the last few years. While only four states – Georgia, Nevada, South Dakota and Utah – indicated in 1996 no interest in developing a system of electronic reporting, only one state (Nevada) today still does not appear interested. Georgia is studying the issue; South Dakota now provides summary information through electronic means; and Utah is in the process of launching a complete electronic filing and disclosure program.

Trends in Canada In Canada, one province (Ontario) has developed a fully operational system which includes both voluntary electronic filing via diskette and Internet access for the public. Federal elections in Canada and elections in British Columbia and Manitoba have nearly operational systems, while Alberta is studying the issue.

Rising Use of Internet A revealing trend of how quickly elections agencies are moving toward electronic reporting is the rising use of the Internet to file reports. In early 1996, no jurisdiction permitted candidates to file their reports through the Internet for security reasons; in 1998, 21 jurisdictions in the United States and Canada provide or plan to provide filing services through the Internet. Some 37 jurisdictions provide or plan to provide public access through the Internet. Clearly, filing and disclosure of campaign finance reports through the Internet is becoming the preferred method of electronic reporting, replacing all other methods such as diskette and direct dial modem.

Move Toward Mandatory Electronic Filing Another significant trend over the last two years is that provinces, states and localities which are developing electronic reporting systems are increasingly moving toward mandatory rather than voluntary systems. In 1996, only about 20% of the jurisdictions that had pending or active electronic reporting systems made electronic filing mandatory for candidates. This year, fully half of these jurisdictions have made electronic filing mandatory. And for good reason: jurisdictions with voluntary systems generally have had miserably low rates of participation by candidates, usually with 7% or fewer of candidates filing electronically. Voluntary systems also permit those candidates with the most questionable fundraising activities escape the timely scrutiny by elections officials and the public which electronic filing provides.

Best of the Net '98 The most developed electronic reporting systems to date – which include such features as mandatory electronic filing, filing through the Internet, and public access to campaign finance statements through the Internet – are in Hawaii (www.hawaii.gov/campaign/) and the City of Seattle (www.ci.seattle.wa.us/ethics/). Oklahoma would have joined in this category, except the legislature intervened this year and made the state's system voluntary rather than mandatory. California is expected to jump into the forefront in the 2000 election cycle when its system of mandatory electronic reporting goes on-line. Two intermediate sites are already available. California's Secretary of State has Late Contribution Reports online at their web site (www.ss.ca.gov) and the California Campaign Contribution Database lists all contributions of campaigns that participated in the voluntary pilot program at (ca98.election.digital.com). Tremendous progress in developing comprehensive electronic reporting systems has also been made this year in New Hampshire (www.state.nh.us/sos/filings), Illinois, Utah and Wisconsin.

One point is very clear: the notion that "there is not much out there" in the area of electronic reporting is a myth.

Editor's note: Electronic filing is one of the key issues in California's race for Secretary of State. Find out more at our Digital Debate.

The DNet*izen*

**Computerworld
Smithsonian
1999 Laureate**

| | DNet | | Mon Oct 25, 1999

Issue 3.0

**Select your state
and go there:**

Over 500,000 hits as of 5 PM

Not to toot our own horn too loudly, but DNet has received over half a million hits today (Monday) as of 5 PM. More proof that an increasing number of people are turning to the Internet for election information!

Full text of Campaign Finance study online at DNet!

Last week's DNetizen covering campaign finance information generated a lot of requests to see the entire text of Craig Holman and Bob Stern's study, "Campaign Money on the Information Superhighway." So, we put it online. The URL is: http://dnet.org/1/edisclosure.shtml. Thanks to Craig and Bob for allowing us to make it available on DNet.

Comment or Suggestions?

Send them to John Howland, Editor-in-Chief, at mwtaylor@cgs.org.

Remember, Free DNetizen Subscriptions are available here!

And the winner is? Now, you can be the first to know, thanks to the Internet!

In the not-too-distant past, you had to wait for the 11:00 news to find out who won the big race. You'd have to wait for the morning paper to find out who won the down ticket and district races.

Well, not any more.

Most states will have election results online. Over 20 states will offer "live" election night returns on Tuesday. Beginning minutes after the polls close, these sites will post the results for each office and update them regularly throughout the evening. Some websites go farther and present county by county breakdowns as well.

To find out if your state is among those with live election night results, there are

two places to check:

Web White and Blue
(http://www.webwhiteblue.org)
As part of their nation-wide public awareness campaign, the Markle Foundation
and the Shorenstien Center at the Kennedy School have created a page on
Web White and Blue with links to election returns websites.

The Democracy Network
(http://dnet.org)
Each state page will feature a link to election results for that state.

Election Site Overview In general, election night sites aren't flashy. The
presentation is simple and straightforward and the graphics are minimal, in most
cases.

These sites come in two standard models: one is a single page with a long list of
all of the races being covered and the tallies for those races. The second is a
page of links to subpages with the results for a particular race. In both cases,
the results are typically presented in a spreadsheet format with totals and
percentages.

Some examples of these sites are included at the end of this article.

And then there's California California's Secretary of State's website
(http://www.ss.ca.gov) offers the most comprehensive coverage of any state
election office reviewed. It provides the results of every state and federal race in
California and also has subtotals by county. Sure, that sounds like the standard
site. But wait, there's more. . .

Maps and graphs are used throughout. For example, if you look at the
Governor's race, you'll see the results displayed in numeric form and in full color
graphs. Wonder what the breakdown is in Yolo County? Click on any county in
the California map and you'll see the results in both text and graphics.

Alfie Charles, spokesman for California Secretary of State Bill Jones, points out
two new features added for tomorrow night's election coverage. The site allows
you to select the races you're interested in and then watch a continuous display
of real-time results scroll across the your screen like a stock ticker. "The site will
also have a legislative race scorecard for the state legislature so users can see
the current balance of power at-a-glance."

Charles stated that the Secretary of State's Office has doubled the server
capacity to meet the high volume of traffic expected.

The result of all of this is an easy to navigate site with up-to-the-minute results
presented in a clear and graphically appealing format. It is far and away the best
of the election result sites that we've seen. It is the standard by which others
should and will be judged.

Other impressive "live" results sites include: Florida:
http://enight.dos.state.fl.us -- results will be available after 7 PM

Georgia: http://www2.state.ga.us/elections -- Statewide totals and county by
county results for all federal, statewide and state legislative office will begin to
be posted at 7:30 PM and will be updated every 10 minutes.

Ohio: http://www.state.oh.us/sos/98gennight.html -- Statewide race results will
begin to be posted at 8:30 PM and then updated every 5 min. Other races will
be available after all ballots are counted.

Texas: http://www.sos.texas.us/enr/ -- site will begin posting results for all races
at 7 PM. Results will be updated every 5 minutes.

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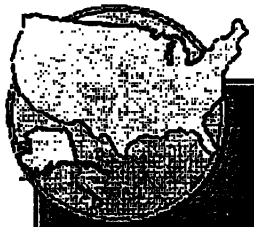
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Issue 4.0

Making sense of 1998

No matter how you interpret the results of the elections held last Tuesday, one thing is certain – the Internet played a larger role in our political life than it has ever before.

More people – citizens and candidates, pundits and politicos – used the Web as a tool this election cycle. From the prurient revelations in the Starr Report to the daily updates at www.jeb.org and countless other candidate websites, the Internet changed the tone and tactics of campaigns across the country.

Now here's the real question: what does this all mean? Did the Internet emerge as a rising star or was it relegated to a small bit part in a larger drama?

The truth is probably somewhere in between and it will take a while to figure out exactly how the Internet affected the elections and politics in 1998. However, some very knowledgeable web-watchers are already saying that the Internet made the difference in at least one race this cycle.

Key Election Results Rebecca Rainey, Cybertimes reporter for the New York Times and one of the nation's leading journalists on the Internet and politics, suggests that Jesse Ventura's upset victory in Minnesota's Governor's race was made possible in part by the successful use of his campaign website (http://www.jesseventura.org) and email lists. Steve Clift and Phil Noble are quoted in the story. Here's the link.

Are there other races where the Internet made the difference? Here's one possibility – Wisconsin's Senate Race. Russ Feingold, made a household name by the McCain-Feingold Campaign Finance Reform bill, refused to accept PAC money in his reelection effort. His excellent use of his campaign website (http://www.feingold98.org/) to reinforce his campaign message and motivate his supporters certainly could have contributed to his narrow margin of victory.

Do you know of another race where the Internet made the difference? Let us know at dnet@cgs.org.

To see how others interpret the election results, consult our resource list below. If you know of other resources, email us at dnet@cgs.org.

Select your state and go there:

Internet and Politics Resources NETPULSE: GREAT SOURCE FOR ELECTION STATS

Phil Noble & Andy Brack's website, Politics Online, and newsletter, Netpulse, are invaluable sources of information for anyone who is interested in the Internet and politics. The recent edition of Netpulse has stats and links to numerous articles and studies on the Internet and politics.
http://www.politicsonline.com/news

CAMPAIGN WEB REVIEW ELECTION WRAP-UP

Campaign Web Review, which comes out of Mindshare Internet Campaigns, will release its election wrap-up on November 17th. When the results are in, they'll be posted here.

WEB WHITE AND BLUE ONLINE USER SURVEY

Web White & Blue (http://www.webwhiteblue.org) released the results of its online survey which included the finding that 84% of the respondents used the Internet to find information about candidates for the first time in 1998.

POLITICAL CANDIDATES ARE FLOCKING TO THE WEB

George Washington University Graduate School of Political Management conducted a study which found that 81% of candidates in close house or senate races had web sites. They also found that challengers were more likely to have sites than incumbents. Read up on all the study's results here. Find out more from ZDNet's Campaign '98 Special section.

Coming Soon:

Kathleen Hall Jamelson, Dean of the Annenberg School of Communication at the University of Pennsylvania and a highly regarded expert on political communications, has been studying the affect of the Internet on politics this cycle. We're all anxiously awaiting her findings.

ONLINE ARCHIVE

DNetizen archive available now! You can find copies of all DNetizen issues at: http://dnet.org/dnetizen/archive.shtml

Question of the week:
IS CAMPAIGNING HAZARDOUS TO YOUR HEALTH?

Is it just us, or was this a particularly dangerous election cycle for candidates?

Most of you have probably already heard about the State Senate Race in Tennessee where one candidate was arrested for murdering his opponent and Los Angeles Sheriff Block's posthumous run for reelection. But did you know that both candidates for Yakima County Coroner in Washington State died in the course of the campaign? We're wondering who signs the death certificates!

TELL US ABOUT INTERESTING RACES THIS CYCLE!

As you look back over this cycle, which race stands out in your mind and why? We're especially interested in good stories about the Internet and Politics.

Send your suggestions and any comments or letters to dnet@cgs.org.

Remember, Free DNetizen Subscriptions are available here!

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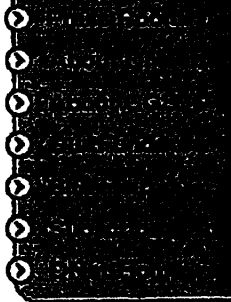| Computerworld Smithsonian 1999 Laureate |

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Issue 4.1

The Internet and Politics in 1998: Issue Advocacy Groups

Editor's Note

In 1998, more candidates and voters than ever before used the Internet as a political tool. Issue advocacy groups also used the Internet in novel ways this cycle. The California League of Conservation Voters was one of the most active groups in the 1998 election cycle in California and the Internet was a significant tool in their voter outreach.

We thought DNetizen readers would be interested in hearing directly from the CLCV on the ways they used the Internet this cycle.

DNet and the Center for Governmental Studies present this information as a service to our readers; the views expressed are those of the author alone. Publication herein does not represent endorsement by DNet or CGS.

Do you know of similar efforts by other non-partisan or issue advocacy groups? Let us know at dnetizen@dnet.org.

The California League of Conservation Voters Internet Strategy: A Description
By: Teresa Schilling
California League of Conservation Voters
tschilling@ecovote.org

The environment emerged as a defining issue in many of California's hotly contested races, including California's gubernatorial and U.S. Senate races, as well as a number of ballot measures. From television ads to stops along the campaign trail, candidates wooed the green vote and the California League of Conservation Voters (CLCV) ran its biggest campaign ever for pro-environment candidates and issues.

The environment became such a high profile issue that nearly every candidate tried to appear "green." As battling TV ads hit the airwaves, the Internet became a resource for helping voters to distinguish sound bytes from sound support. CLCV's website, Ecovote Online, provided visitors with a great deal of information about environmental issues and the voting records of elected officials.

At www.ecovote.org, voters could look up the environmental voting records of state legislators and learn more about where candidates stand on the environment from a non-partisan source. CLCV also provided recommendations for voting.

The CLCV added an improved interactive voting record feature and detailed information on some California candidates that the CLCV identified as anti-environmental.

"We do the research so voters can get beyond the campaign rhetoric and know who the real environmental choices are," said Sam Schuchat, executive director of the California League of Conservation Voters. "We pushed to get this

information online, and we heard from a lot of voters that our website helped them make better choices when they stepped into the voting booth."

Additional Features of Ecovote Online: 1) A full interactive version of the 1998 California Environmental Scorecard, an annual report that grades each member of California's legislature on key environmental votes. Voters can find out how their representatives voted on the year's most important environmental issues and review Scorecards.

2) *Dan Lungren vs. the Environment*, a CLCV report documenting Dan Lungren's environmental record while in Congress and as Attorney General. Available instantly online, the report was downloaded by reporters and the public.

3) Voting recommendations for local, state and federal candidates, as well as environmental ballot initiatives. CLCV's endorsements are based on extensive candidate research, including voting records, written questionnaires and personal interviews.

4) Ask Matt Fong, a special interactive feature giving voters the ability to ask U.S. Senate Candidate Matt Fong about his environmental positions and get answers immediately based on quotes compiled by the CLCV from public statements.

Throughout the year, Ecovote Online also posts timely news about environmental legislation in the California Legislature and Congress, and helps visitors get involved in efforts to protect the environment.

CLCV is the nation's largest non-partisan environmental electoral organization. It campaigns for environmentally responsible candidates and, through its annual California Environmental Scorecard, holds them accountable for their votes on environmental issues.

Net News of Note from DNet

Tomorrow, Wednesday, November 18, 1998 from 8:00 am - 11:00 am EST, watch a live webcast of: 'Campaigning on the Internet: The Future of American Politics?'

This National Press Club event will be webcast live from the D.C. Orbit Network Site.

The event is sponsored by the American University and the D.C. Orbit Network (http://www.dcorbit.com), the exclusive Internet provider of choice for this live and on-demand Webcast.

AU's Center for Congressional and Presidential Studies will host a panel of election experts, political consultants, and members of the media to discuss these key questions:

- How was the Internet used during the November elections?
- What does the future hold for the Internet and elections?

Scheduled participants include James A. Thurber, Director, Center for Congressional and Presidential Studies; Phil Noble, President, PoliticsOnline; Dr. Don Goff, Research Associate, Center for Congressional and Presidential Studies; Kathryn Coombs, President, Washington Web Works; Ron Faucheux, Editor and Publisher, Campaigns and Elections Magazine; David Haase, Washington Correspondent, Indianapolis Star & News and author of Plugged In Politics, an Internet column; Lynn Reed, President, NetPolitics Group.

Here's the link: http://www.dcorbit.com/docs/elections.html

Tell us about other Interesting Uses/Users of the Internet in the '98 Elections!

As you look back over this cycle, which race stands out in your mind and why? We're especially interested in good stories about the Internet and Politics.

Send your suggestions and any comments or letters to dnetizen@dnet.org.

Remember, Free DNetizen Subscriptions are available here!

Next Issue of DNetizen: 11/30/98

Have a happy Thanksgiving!

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Issue 4.2

What DNet tells us about the Internet and Politics in 1998

Three key lessons emerged from the experience of running DNet — a national non-partisan public affairs and election information website — through the 1998 election cycle. We wanted to share some of our initial findings with you.

1) Voters will seek out and use a non-partisan source of information
It is clear from our experience this year that voters desire and will use high quality information if it is available to them. A record number of voters turned to DNet for election information this year. DNet garnered over 5.5 million hits in the general election cycle — over 1,000,000 hits just in the 48 hours preceding the election. Over 225,000 pages of information were displayed. DNet's site traffic increased over 2000% from early October to Election Day.

The experiences of other non-partisan websites, like Project Vote Smart and the traffic experienced by the "Web White and Blue" national election awareness site sponsored by the Markle Foundation and the Joan Shorenstein Center at Harvard University, also show that more and more people are seeking non-partisan political information on the web.

DNet received overwhelmingly positive response from DNet users. Users thanked DNet for collecting detailed candidate information in one place, presenting it in an easy to use format and taking a balanced and unbiased approach. DNet's coverage of the ballot measures was especially appreciated. Many voters reported sitting down with their voter pamphlets or absentee ballots and filled them out while using DNet as a resource.

One of the most beneficial aspects of our site, according to the feedback we received, is that DNet brought all of the information together in a single site.

2) Candidates are using the Internet more and more to communicate with voters. Several studies have found that more candidates than ever before are using the web. One of the most commonly cited studies is the Campaigns and Elections survey that found that 83% of the candidates who responded had or planned to have a website during the course of the election. Other studies confirmed the finding that more candidates had websites than ever before and that was especially true for competitive elections. Our experience with DNet supports these findings.

DNet enjoyed very high levels of candidate participation in the 1998 election cycle. In the nine "full-feature" DNet states, an average of 84% of statewide candidates provided issue statements for voters to review and 93% provided biographical and/or contact information. Candidate participation in each state ranged from a low of 60% to a high of 100%. Nearly 100% of the major party candidates for statewide offices covered participated.

3) DNet can improve the quality of political discourse. As a result of its national, state and local trials, DNet has begun to accumulate significant evidence to suggest that candidates will address a broader range of issues, in greater depth, and with fewer negative appeals, than in other media and that the Internet offers citizens an extremely flexible and effective means to spur interaction about important issues of community concerns.
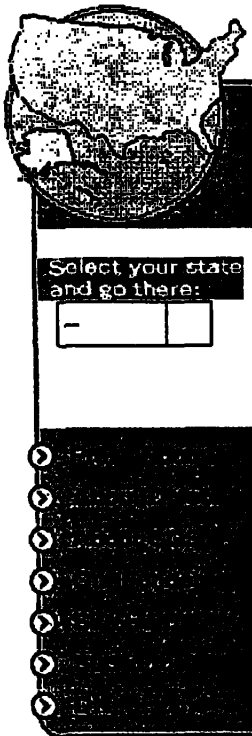
This is an excellent case in which the exception proves the rule. Only one out of the hundreds of races that DNet covered this year descended into the rancorous and negative he said/she said that typifies much of modem political discourse on TV and in direct mail. In every other case, candidates set forth "positive" statements about their positions and agendas. The vast majority of statements about an opponent were in the context of a substantive discussion of an issue.

California's gubernatorial and senatorial elections are good examples of how DNet expanded the number and depth of issues discussed. Four to five issues dominated both races in paid advertising and press coverage. On DNet, the candidates for governor discussed 43 topics and the candidates for senate addressed 33 issue areas. We also found that many candidates, who were initially reluctant to address a particular issue on DNet, were very likely to participate once another candidate posted a statement.

Our experience this year leads us to expect that the Internet's impact on politics will continue to increase as we approach 2000.

Net News of Note from DNet

On Thursday, December 3, 1998, Area Madaras, Director of the Democracy Network, will be a panelist at the Kennedy School of Government Visions of Governance for the Twenty-First Century Project's POLITICS ON THE 'NET: A POST-MORTEM OF THE 1998 ELECTIONS conference. She'll join Catherine Clark, Program Director, The Markle Foundation; Leslie Goodman, President, Strategic Communications Services; Marion Just, Wellesley College; David King, Associate Professor of Public Policy, Kennedy School of Government; Andrew Kohut, Director, Pew Research Center for the People and the Press; and Larry Makinson, Executive Director, Center for Responsive Politics in a panel discussion titled "The Voters: Who's online, and what are they doing there? What was - and will be - the impact politically?"

Go to the site for more info: (http://ksgweb.harvard.edu/visions/netpolitics2.htm)

On Monday, December 7, 1998, Tracy Westen, DNet's President, will moderate the Plenary Session of the Politics Online Conference hosted by the Graduate School of Political Management at George Washington University. The title of the plenary session is "Looking Towards 2000: A moderator asks three visionaries and professionals to look towards 2000 about what to expect from online advocacy, lobbying and campaigning."

Go to their site for more info: (http://www.gspm.org/politicsonline)

Another Example of an Advocacy Group's Use of the Internet

In response to last week's issue, one reader submitted the following example of an issue advocacy group using the Internet for political purposes.

http://www.responsiblechoices.org

Californians for Responsible Choices, the political action committee of Planned Parenthood Affiliates of California, launched a website this election cycle that attempted to move beyond static "brochureware" and translate online activity into votes at the ballot box. In addition to providing newsworthy content in the form of timely original research on candidates' records, the site used cutting edge technologies to provide voters with innovative tools which assisted them in their 'offline' personal political participation and local persuasion activities.

The post election punditry in California's major newspapers noted "Abortion rights played a major role in the defeats of Lungren and Fong."

Planned Parenthood of California also maintains a non-campaign site which tracks state legislative and regulatory activity on these issues and provides tools for citizens to made themselves heard in the policy-making process:
http://www.ppacca.org

For more information, please contact Stuart Trevelyan (510) 482-4444.

Please send us your comments!

We're always interested in feedback from our loyal readers!

Send your suggestions and any comments or letters to dnetizen@dnet.org.

Remember, Free DNetizen Subscriptions are available here!

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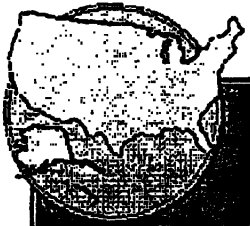Paul Mitchell, Contributing Editor pmitchell@cgs.org

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Select your state
and go there:

Issue 4.3

The Internet in 1998: Turning Interested voters Into informed voters and informed voters into volunteers

Editor's Note DNet is delighted to bring you the results of one of the most comprehensive studies of the Internet and politics from 1998. Marty Edlund, along with Area Madaras and Tracy Westen of DNet, was a featured presenter and the Kennedy School's Politics on the Net Conference last week and the Politics Online Conference at the George Washington University today.

The Internet in 1998: Turning Interested voters Into informed voters and Informed voters Into volunteers

By: Marty Edlund mme@campaignsolutions.com
Project Director, Campaign 98 Internet Study

HOW VOTERS USED THE SITES

Voters used candidate Web sites for the serious and substantive Information that they found lacking in the popular press. By analyzing log files from participating campaigns, we were able to construct a complete picture of how voters use campaign Web sites. The average time that voters spent on participating sites was over eight and a half minutes. Compare this to your average TV or radio spot, both of which are around thirty seconds. This is seventeen times as long as these other media! The difference, of course, is that the Internet is self-selecting. Voters must seek out candidate information on the Web. When they get to a site, however, voters are able to read only the information that interests them most and stay as long as they like.

The average session length was largely dependent on the contents of a site. Those sites that provided detailed information in an easy to use format held voters' attention much longer than those that did not. Governor George Pataki's site (R-NY) was recognized as one of the best this election cycle at providing rich content in an easy to use format. Voters were able to customize the site to receive specific local and issue information. As a result, voters on the Pataki site stayed for over 10 minutes on average. Governor Rowland's site (R-CT), by contrast, offered very little to the online voter. The only original content was a biography and campaign contact information; otherwise the site relied on links to the state Republican Party Web site and the official Governor's site for content. The average users' session on the Rowland site was only 2:11.

WHAT DID VOTERS LOOK AT? With voters spending so much time using the sites, the next logical question is: What are they looking at? Are these base voters, using campaign Web sites to stay up on developments in a campaign, or are they undecided voters using the Internet to choose between candidates? The most popular sections and those where voters spent the bulk of their time were sections containing serious political information. Issue sections, candidate biographies and comparison sections consistently turned up as the most popular pages. The three most popular sections in Illinois Senate candidate Peter Fitzgerald's site, for example, were "Fitzgerald's Biography", "The Conservative Record" and "The Comparison Chart". The average time spent on these pages were 3 minutes 20 seconds, 2 minutes 15 seconds and 4 minutes respectively. This is exactly the kind of information that campaigns are trying to reach voters with – the biographical and issue information that might sway the undecided voter. On the Internet, voters are choosing this information for themselves.

VOLUNTEERS The Internet is also proving to be an effective medium for attracting volunteers. This year, the Lungren campaign in California attracted over 1,500 volunteers online and Jeb Bush attracted over 1,000. We surveyed almost 1,000 volunteers from the 20 campaigns asking them basic recruitment, political experience, demographic and Internet usage questions. Nine out of ten (91%) Internet volunteers reported that they were not recruited in any way. These people are going to the Web sites, finding a message that resonates with them, and volunteering based solely on that information. From the campaign's perspective these are low cost volunteers. Rather than having to recruit them with events or targeted mailers, campaigns are able to volunteer online simply by providing substantive information and making it easy to volunteer directly through the Internet.

Almost 55% of Internet volunteers had never volunteered for a campaign before. What is it about the Internet that is attracting new volunteers? We asked Internet volunteers this very question. We consistently got answers like:

"I got involved through the Internet, without it I probably would not have volunteered"

"It was a way to volunteer when I had trouble finding the right telephone number to volunteer at."

"I wouldn't have know that I could volunteer if it wasn't for the Internet."

"I signed up over the Internet. It was simple, easy, pressureless and efficient."

The Internet raised people's awareness of the opportunity to volunteer and made it easy to do so. On most sites, voters were never more than a click or two away from the opportunity to volunteer.

As exciting as these results are, they still only represents the activity of a part of the online political audience which is itself only a part of the larger political audience. Exit polls found that some 10 to 17% of voters used the Internet for political information in 1998. Campaigns still have a long way to go in using the Internet to reach out to voters. This year, more money was spent studying campaign's use of the Internet than was spent campaigning on the Internet. But as campaigns begin to take the Internet more seriously and fully integrate it into their overall campaign efforts, the Internet will become an easier and more informative source for more and more voters.

Complete results for the Campaign '98 Internet Study are available at http://www.campaignstudy.org.

Please send us your comments!

We're always interested in feedback from our loyal readers!

Send your suggestions and any comments or letters to dnetizen@dnet.org.

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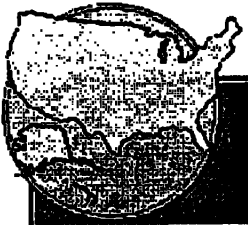Paul Mitchell, Contributing Editor pmitchell@cgs.org

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Issue 5.0

Can Spam Go Bad?

We're talking of course of unsolicited email messages -- not the lunchmeat that made such an indelible impression during the camping trips of days gone by.

As we continue to look back at the Internet and politics in 1998, two paradoxical lessons about email and politics emerge.

1) It is one of the most effective and economical ways to use the Internet, and

2) One cannot send unsolicited email messages to anyone without running the risk of a tremendous negative backlash.

The obvious question is -- why is email different than any other means of communication? Why is an unsolicited email message so mush worse than the telemarketer who calls during dinner or the reams of direct mail that stream into our real mailboxes every election?

Why is email different? There are at least three answers.

1) The first reason is simple economics. Much of the cost of email is borne by third parties, not the sender. The costs of Spam are pushed off on Internet Service Providers (ISP's) and the recipients. The real expense of Spam is covered by the ISP's who have to route and store all of these messages. This unique arrangement allows consumers and providers to unite against Spam in a way that telephone companies and the postal service never would because these service providers get paid for every call or piece of mail that is made or sent.

It does not cost the recipient anything to receive junk mail or a telephone call but most people do have to pay for Internet service and for their connection to the Internet. Therefore, any time they spend reading junk email has a direct cost.

2) The potential for abuse is significant because Spam is easy and cheap to send. It takes a great deal of money and time to mail something to or call 1,000 people. It only takes minutes to send an email message to thousands. This makes it a very attractive mechanism for those who want to reach a large audience quickly and cheaply and makes it ripe for abuse.

3) Spam runs against the founding culture and ethos of the Internet. Until very

Select your state and go there:

recently, email was a non-commercial almost purely academic affair. When the Internet was a government and research institution supported enterprise, it was just unseemly to use email for crass commercial or political purposes. It just was not done. As the Internet and web become part of American consumer culture, there are bound to be tensions with the older ideals.

All of the above, along with serious concerns about online privacy, have combined to create a strong consensus against the use of unsolicited email by political campaigns. In fact, one highly respected website -- http://campaignwebreview.com -- tracks the use of Spam in political campaigns (http://www.campaignwebreview.com/resources/).

Can the consensus against Spam endure? But will this consensus hold? Will email continue to occupy a special place apart from the junk that pervades our mailboxes and telephones?

In two words: probably not.

Again, there are three factors to consider.

1) It's just too cheap and easy to avoid the temptation. If you were running for Congress in the Bible Belt and a supporter offered you a subscription list for the Christian Coalition newsletter or you were a Coastal Democrat with access to the Sierra Club's list, could you avoid the temptation to send a little note to drum up support?

2) Free email accounts. In the attempt to capture as many eyeballs as possible, most high traffic sites are giving away email accounts in return for your demographic info. Many people's personal email now comes with advertising embedded in it. If people will tolerate ads in their email, why not emails as ads?

3) There's a great deal of money at stake. Online commerce has exploded into a multi-billion dollar enterprise. With that much money at stake, who will be able to stem the tide of people looking to make a few dollars?

1998 may turn out to be the last campaign season when politicians were afraid to use email. By 2000, Spam -- like junk mail and the telemarketing call during dinner -- may be a common part of every day life.

Agree? Disagree? Tell us what do you think! mailto:dnetizen@dnet.org The next DNetizen will feature the comments of our readers.

Exhibit 3: More Online Issue Advocacy

Several of our readers pointed out this very timely example of an online issue advocacy campaign:

http://moveon.org

Censure and Move On is a bipartisan group of concerned citizens organizing around a single issue: speedy resolution of the Clinton scandal. According to moveon.org organizers, the vast majority of the American public understands that a continuing obsession with this scandal will do great damage to our institutions, our economy, and our power and prestige in the world. Originally their site consisted of a petition to Congress to, quite simple, censure and move on. They gathered over 300,000 signatures in a very short period of time and have directed many emails and phone calls to the members of the Congress. Their efforts have accelerated as articles of impeachment were debated and approved. For more information, visit their site (http://moveon.org).

Net News of Note from DNet

Check back next week.

As always, send your comments to: mailto:dnetizen@dnet.org.

Remember, Free DNetizen Subscriptions and a DNetizen Archive are available.

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Issue 5.1

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and go there:

Readers Respond to Spam

Well we asked for it and you responded. Our article on Spam generated more responses than any other DNetizen issue to date. It's not surprising that many more people say they hate Spam than defend it. However, the fact that some did defend it indicates that the consensus on this issue is less universal than it once was. Several readers pointed out that Spam was a little less annoying than its cousins telemarketing and junk mail because "my dinner has never been interrupted by an e-mail and [email] messages] are also more environmental and easier to ignore and discard than real mail." Still, conciliatory sentiments like these were clearly in the minority. Most people simply can't stand Spam (again, we're not commenting on the meat here).

Three reader responses were selected for publication. The first two were strongly against Spam. The final selection took a slightly different stance.

As always, send your comments to dnetizen@dnet.org. br>

From polwoman@****.***: "Candidates will never Spam, because any candidate who does will be defeated. That lesson was learned in the 1998 election cycle by the candidates who tried it - or simply contemplated it.

There is a big difference between including a commercial message inside an email that has been invited, and sending an uninvited email. Spam is like cockroaches - you have to stop them when they first appear, or you will be overrun.

Internet users are an empowered group, not a passive group like TV couch potatoes. If we don't like something, we will express ourselves. Nothing is easier than voting against a candidate who spams you.

Most "netizens" barely tolerate politicians in the first place. We recognize that the technology is available for direct democracy. Why do we need politicians to represent us at all? In most cases they do not even represent us, as we can see in the impeachment votes which are opposed by over 60% of the public.

When it comes to politicians, "netizens" are an inherently skeptical bunch. All we need is one good reason to vote against someone - and Spam is as good as any, because it shows a politician's contempt for each and every Internet user.

Caveat spammor."

From Hayrene@****.***: "Spam is intolerable to me, as email is primarily a professional tool for me and my employees. As either individual or corporate account holders, we should be able to bill the advertiser for our time to delete these messages. I get hundreds of Spam messages a week on our corporate account and close to that on my personal accounts. The lost personnel time is astounding. Would you believe some spammers are so offensive as to try to recruit my employees on my corporate accounts?!! Until we hold the spammers responsible for the resource abuse they impose on us, we'll continue to be held hostage to this outrageous imposition.

If we don't clean up our email accounts, they actually become clogged, the mailboxes bounce legitimate business correspondence back to the sender and we lose business. Absolutely astounding that this is being tolerated by the online community."

From PACmaster@****.***: "You raise questions that are very important to me, since my own livelihood relies heavily on my ability to circulate my commercial messages to an audience of potential customers.

As you rightly point out, direct mail and telemarketing are very expensive because they involve printing and postage costs on the one hand, the hiring of telemarketers on the other, and the acquisition of highly targeted lists on both.

From my point of view, any direct marketing, telemarketing or e-mailing that is conducted without regard to the audience which receives the message about the product, service or issue that is being promoted is—"junk" with regard to direct mail, "pestering" with regard to telemarketing, and "Spam" with regard to e-mail.

On the other hand, many valuable and extremely useful materials and products cannot be profitably sold in the open marketplace, and can exist only by bringing them to the attention of people who can be logically expected to benefit from them; or, at the very least, would appreciate having the opportunity to learn about their existence.

On this basis, e-mail that is legitimately directed to a logical group of recipients should not be treated as "Spam." I am delighted about the prospects of using e-mail and websites to promote my products to a very tightly defined universe of prospective customers. It is so economical that, if successful, it could be a factor that might lead me to reduce my prices, something that would be beneficial to all of my customers. On the other hand, I would never dream of trying to promote my product to people whom I have no possible reason to expect they would find my products useful or even interesting.

In the political arena, a candidate running for an office in Tarzana, Calif., ought to restrict his or her e-mail to people in Tarzana, not to millions of people throughout the country.

Your description of how candidates might be tempted to use an organization's e-mail address list, however, is not realistic.

In the past, organizations like the Sierra Club might have sold or supplied mailing labels to political candidates or other cause groups. This was required because the labels were either consumed by the mailing process or because the data was required to affix names and addresses to envelopes. That will no longer be the case with e-mail. From now on, organizations will no longer release their possession of e-mail lists. Instead, they will invite candidates and cause groups to provide the message they want to send and the organizations will do the e-mailing through their own computers."

Exhibit 4: More Online Issue Advocacy

One of our readers asked that we highlight a new feature on the Common Cause website in our weekly spotlight on online advocacy. The Soft Money Laundromat is a searchable database of soft money contributions to the Democratic and Republican political parties. The site highlights the top contributors and allows users to search the database by the name of the donor or recipient.

Here's the link: http://www.commoncause.org/laundromat

For more information about Common Cause, go to http://www.commoncause.org or contact Jeff Cronin at jcronin@commoncause.org.

If you know of an online organizing effort you want to bring to your attention, remember to email us at dnetizen@dnet.org.

Net News of Note from DNet

The DNetizen will not be published on December 28 or January 4. It will return to emailboxes everywhere on 1/11/99. Everyone at DNet and CGS wish you the happiest of New Years!

As always, send your comments to: mailto:dnetizen@dnet.org.

Remember, Free DNetizen Subscriptions and a DNetizen Archive are available.

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The DNetizen

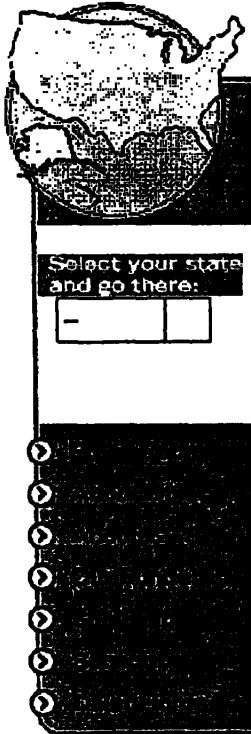| Computerworld |
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Issue 5.1

Targeted Advertising: A Palatable Alternative to Spam

By: Roger Stone,
Director, Juno Advocacy Network

Send your comments to dnetizen@dnet.org.
Although elections have been called "one day sales," the difference between selling a product and selling a candidate will continue to make spam a very bad strategy for politicians. In fact at Juno, which provides direct dial up e-mail to 6.4 million subscribers, we have worked very hard to eliminate spam from our system - bringing numerous lawsuits against spammers, limiting the number of e-mails that can be sent in a batch, etc. Although spamming is a bad political strategy, the economics of the Internet gives candidates ample reason to advertise on a targetable medium like Juno.

Why Spam Doesn't Work For Politicians As the article that started this discussion pointed out, spam is economical because it pushes its true costs onto the service provider and the users. Because it is, therefore, very cheap to the spammer, commercial spammers can afford to send a message to 1,000 people and anger 999 if that 1,000th person buys their product. Campaigns do not have that luxury. They need to "sell" not to every thousandth person, but to 50% plus one. Until the very unlikely event that spam is not only accepted but also loved by recipients, it will never be a viable political medium.

Not only does spamming risk alienating voters, it risks alienating the ISP that provides it with its web site and its e-mail. Certainly no campaign will chance getting its web site and e-mail shut down weeks before the election for the dubious benefit of spamming voters.

Finally, Spam suffers from the same problem the Internet has generally - cyberspace is not geographic, but our politics is. A commercial spammer doesn't care if a customer lives in California or New York, but in the last election, Barbara Boxer only needed to reach the voters in California and Al D'Amato the voters in New York. The lack of the ability to target by geography - at a minimum - is the single biggest limiting factor in all political uses of the Internet.

Uses of the Internet That We Will See What campaigns will be taking advantage of in the next election cycle is targeted advertising like that offered by the Juno Advocacy Network. The 6.4 million subscribers to Juno know that in return for providing them with free dial up e-mail, they must fill out a questionnaire so that Juno can target ads to them. The ads are of two types -- full screen ads that pop up before reaching the e-mail screen or while the computer is downloading their new mail and banner ads that run along the top of the screen while the subscriber is reading and writing their mail. We never interrupt the subscriber's session, and the ads are not in the form of e-mails so they are not perceived as spam.

Because Juno's survey includes home addresses, we are able to target ads to our subscribers by their congressional districts or, in the case of large states, their state legislative districts. We also have the ability to target by age, occupation, interests, homeownership, family status, and a host of other variables.

In the last congressional session we used this capacity to create a powerful grassroots-lobbying tool. The NEA was able to reach 225,000 parents or educators in the swing districts they gave us and generate 20,000 e-mails to Congress. With the subscriber's consent, we also automatically signed each

Select your state and go there:

e-mail with the constituent's name and home address so the members of Congress knew they were hearing from the folks in their districts.

Given Juno's ability to target and costs that are a fraction of direct mail or other media, we expect the 2000 campaigns will be using Juno to get their message out with the immediacy of the Internet, but without the onus of spam.

Net News of Note from DNet

Happy New Year! The next issue of the DNetizen will be published on January 25.

As always, send your comments to: mailto:dnetizen@dnet.org.

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Issue 5.3

Select your state
and go there:

Spammer Beware: How to find the origin of your spam

The Los Angeles Times ran an outstanding article today by Karen Kaplan entitled "A Message for Spammers: Beware; How to Trace the Source of a Junk E-Mail and Exact Revenge." It ran in the CYPERSPACE section of the Business Section.

For 1/25/99, the URL is: latimes.com/HOME/BUSINESS/t000007496.html

The LA Times archives their stories at the end of each day. The story will be available for free for two-full weeks if you search for it in their "Hunter" section. You just need to input the title and author, which are included above.

That URL is: latimes.com/HOME/HUNTER/

From there, you can enter a profile and review the last 2 weeks of stories about 10 topics for free.

How to fight back against spammers Here's a brief synopsis of the story for those who did not catch it today and who don't plan to visit the LA Times site regularly.

The story is a personal tale that many of us can relate to: the frustration of being inundated with spam and wanting to do something about it. The author set out to provide a how to guide for those who were tired of just hitting the delete key.

She provides links to a number of groups who have "posted step-by-step instructions for tracing the source of spam and offered suggestions for lodging effective complaints."

They include the:

Realtime Blackhole List (maps.vix.com/rbl) which helps ISP's block spammers and provides users with a list of vigilant ISPs.

Bright Light Technologies (www.brightlight.com) a San Francisco Firm that estimates the global cost of spam to highlight the enormous cost of junk e-mail.

Yahoo's "Junk E-Mail" category: (www.yahoo.com/) A collection of a groups of helpful sites to fight spam.

Whatever you do — Don't reply After providing a good starting place to find helpful links, the article gives some practical advice for fighting spam.

The first tool is to never reply to spam or to send a message to request to be removed from the list that generated the unwanted mail. Kaplan warned, "by replying, you confirm that your e-mail address is legitimate, which is likely to result in even more spam." (I wish she'd said something earlier — I replied to one message and now receive several a day!)

The article proceeds to give you instructions to figure out who is responsible for

the unsolicited e-mail by identifying not only the actual sender, but also his or her internet service provider. According to Kaplan, this information can sometimes be teased out of the header, but warns, "clever spammers have learned how to tweak headers to conceal their identities. "

Find the source According to Kaplan, the best place in the header to look for a real address is the 'X-sender:' line because the 'From:' and 'Reply to:' addresses are usually bogus. If all three of these are the same, chances are you have more work to do.

Kaplan advises that "[a]nother place to look for clues is in the 'Received:' lines in the header. This header information traces an e-mail's route backward from its final destination to its source. That means the most relevant line is the last line." Armed with that bit of information, you can visit InterNIC, the organization that registers Internet domain names. You can type in the domain name and find out who owns it at: rs.internic.net/cgi-bin/whois.

You can also look for information at ARIN--the American Registry for Internet Numbers-- (whois.arin.net) to try to identify the contact information for the owner of the domain name. .

In many cases even this will not be enough to find the real identity or ISP of the spammer. Kaplan states that "one last trick is to use Traceroute, which can trace the Internet path from one computer to another. Head to www.ixa.net/cgi-bin/trace and type in the IP number that goes with the domain name server listed by InterNIC."

From that trace, you can usually find the source of the spam. Once that's accomplished, you can take action by writing to the site owner and/or the originating ISP. Kaplan advises that "[a]n effective letter is firm but polite. (Netiquette dictates that spam victims refrain from long, rambling diatribe.) Ask the spammers to remove you from their mailing list and remind them that the law requires them to comply. You can also tell spammers that their unsolicited messages waste your time and computer resources and that you won't be doing business with them now or in the future."

You should also "let Internet service providers know that one of their customers is sending junk e-mail and to ask them to put a stop to it. Many ISPs--especially the big ones--have policies prohibiting spamming as an abuse of network resources, and they are eager to kick offenders off their networks."

In addition, Kaplan recommend e-mailing a complaint to abuse@, postmaster@ and root@ at each of the domains that is involved with a junk e-mail. To help them track down the spammer, include a copy of the original junk e-mail that contains all of the headers.

Other agencies to contact Finally, she provides a list of agencies to which you can forward a complaint. Here's her list:

General scams and fraud can be reported to the National Fraud Information Center by calling (800) 876-7060, sending an e-mail to fraudinfo@psinet.com or filing a report at the group's Web site at http://www.fraud.org.

Scam-related spam can also be forwarded directly to the Federal Trade Commission at uce@ftc.gov, although people interested in filing a more formal complaint can do so at www.ftc.gov/ftc/complaint.htm.

Any e-mail that asks you to send money through the mail can be forwarded to the U.S. Postal Service, which investigates mail fraud and violations of the Postal Lottery Statute, which generally prohibits sending money through the mail to participate in games of chance. Simply forward the message to fraud@usps.gov.

Junk e-mail that advertises unsolicited stock tips can be sent to the Securities and Exchange Commission at enforcement@sec.gov. Complaint forms can also be filled out online at www.sec.gov/enforce/con-form.htm.

As the previous article shows, it takes a lot fo work to track down a spammer. But if you're reached the point where deleting the offending messages is no longer enough, Kaplan's article is an excellent resource to help you fight back.

Net News of Note from DNet

The next issue of the DNetizen will be published on February 8.

As always, send your comments to: mailto:dnetizen@dnet.org.

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Issue 6.0

Select your state
and go there:

Online Petitions: The birth of participatory democracy or a waste of time?

Online petitions are one of the oldest and most common political tools on the Internet.

Long before the world-wide-web emerged as a mass medium, email users regularly received messages about the issue of the day -- student aid, NEH funding, etc. --that urged them to add their name to the bottom of the message and to forward it to everyone who may be interested.

The tremendous increase in the number of Internet users has accelerated the use of online petitions. One search on http://hotbot.com for page titles containing the phrase "online petition" generated 860 websites that contained petitions on an incredible array of issues. Here are a few examples of the sites:

http://arrs.envirolink.org/petitions -- a site with links to a number of animal rights petitions;

http://www.demon.co.uk/aesop/petition.htm -- a site with a petition to ban the use of landmines;

http://www.fans4replay.com -- a site to reinstate instant replay review in the NFL. See related story: http://www.wired.com;

http://www.usnews.com -- the artist formerly known as Prince even set up an online petition to regain rights to his song "1999."

Until recently, online petitions did not receive much attention.

Petitions and Impeachment The Impeachment of William Jefferson Clinton changed all of that and brought online petitioning unprecedented attention and sophistication. No less than five well-publicized Internet campaigns have been initiated in response to the impeachment issue:

http://www.moveon.org
http://www.resignation.com
http://www.resign.net
http://www.impeachment.org
http://www.nottheway.org

The combined affect of these sites has been remarkable. A Wired.com news story -- http://www.wired.com -- reported that 42,000 signatures were recorded by one of these sites in a single day and that it generated over 250,000 calls to Congress in the week leading up to the impeachment vote.

Despite these impressive sotries the impact of the online petitions remains unclear. Many legislators dismissed the efforts as orchestrated by groups outside their districts. However, though the petitions may not have affected the House vote, public opinion and media coverage were definitely affected by the online petitions and organizing efforts.

The DNetizen will this in the weeks to come and we're interested in hearing from you.

What do you think about online petitions? Have you signed or circulated one? Do you know of an online petition that has worked -- one that has achieved its

desired outcome?

Are petitions the first step toward the creation of pure participatory democracy or will they continue to fall on deaf ears?

Let us know what you think and show us sites that you think deserve our attention. Send all you comments to: mailto:dnetizen@dnet.org.

Net News of Note from DNet

The next issue of the DNetizen will be published on February 22.

As always, send your comments to: mailto:dnetizen@dnet.org.

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Issue 6.0

Petition Potpourri: Four case studies of online petitions

Our last issue — Online Petitions: The birth of participatory democracy or a waste of time? — generated a great deal of feedback from our readers. We've selected four of the submissions for publication here.

Taken together, these submissions indicate that while direct or participatory democracy through the Internet is still off in the distance, online petitions can be an effective tool in shaping public policy and opinion.

Petitions for Official Uses Internet May Reshape California's Ballot Initiatives — http://www.nytimes.com

One of our readers reminded us of the February 5, 1999 story by Rebecca Rainey, Cybertimes writer for the New York Times. Rainey describes the prospects for online voting and petition gathering in California — a state whose Initiative and Referendum laws are considered national models. In the story, she quotes Bill Jones, California's Secretary of State who offers his views of online democracy. "There's no question we're moving in that direction [toward online petitions and voting but] there's going to have to be a watershed change of attitude in the Legislature" who Rainey points out has been "at odds with the initiative process, which is designed to bypass legislators' authority." Read the full story for more information.

The New Zealand Electronic Electoral Trial — http://www.polemic.net/nzeet.html

Another reader submitted some information about a trail for electronic voting underway in New Zealand to "raise awareness of the potential of electronic voting as a means of improving both citizen participation in democracy and the ability of people to exert greater influence over the activities and decisions of their elected representatives during an electoral term and not just at election time.

Grassroots Online Petitions Online Efforts to save The Miami Circle — http://www.miamicircle.org/

The Miami Circle is the name for a major archaeological discovery in the heart of Miami's downtown during excavation for a new residential development. The story lines are predictable — many groups rally to save the site from the developer's bulldozer. One new wrinkle is that they turned to the Internet to help organize their fight. For more info, go to the Miami Herald's archive of information and stories about the Miami Circle: www.miamiherald.com/archive/miamicircle/

The Texas Education Consumers Association — (http://www.fastlane.net/~eca)

This is a grassroots effort founded by a husband and wife team working to change American education. They are using Internet petitions to build support/opposition to 2 pieces of legislation. Follow the links for more info:

www.fastlane.net/~eca/sboeprotest.html — A petition opposing HB 1232, a proposal by Governor George W. Bush to change Texas' state board of education from an elected body to one appointed by the executive branch

www.fastlane.net/~eca/stwnetwork.html — A petition opposing Federal School-to-Work legislation.

Net News of Note from DNet

The special election to fill Newt Gingrich's unexpired term in Congress will take place tomorrow. Eight candidates are competing for the seat. A runoff election will be held in two weeks if no candidate gets more than fifty percent of the votes. Here's the link to DNet/LWV coverage of the GA-06 Special Election: http://dnet.og/GA

Chicago's city elections will also be held tomorrow. Will Chicago have a Daley for Mayor for another 4 years? Go to DNet/LWV coverage to find out: http://dnet.org/IL

The next Issue of the DNetizen will be published on 3/8/99.

As always, send your comments to: mailto:dnetizen@dnet.org.

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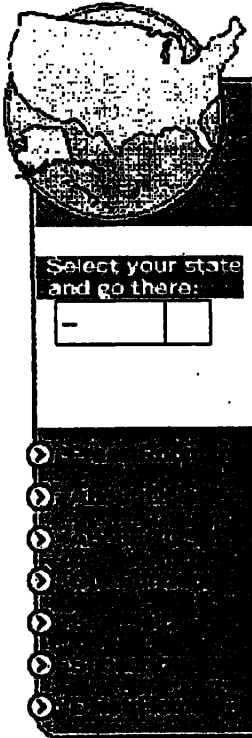1999 Laureate

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Issue 6.2

Participatory Democracy: A new engine for online petitions

Select your state and go there:

New Site Revolutionizes E- Petitions
By: David Schwartz, e-the people If you're like most online activists, you probably get an e-mail petition every day or two.

If you agree with it, you sign the petition and send it on. But how do you know it ever gets to its intended recipients - and in the same form as you signed it? And if you disagree with it, the petition dies with you, presumably. Does that mean the previous signers are just out of luck?

E- The People's organizers claim that their service solves the shortcomings of chain-letter style electronic petitions. The free, nonpartisan service, dubbed America's Interactive Town Hall by its fans, will soon be featured on many activist Web sites.

"Online petitions are the future of participatory democracy," says E- The People founder Alex Sheshunoff. In the past year alone, online petitions have gathered increasing steam. They're a fast, easy and simple way to get a point across. The organizers of Moveon.org, for example, gathered over 500,000 digital signatures during the impeachment debates. And on the just-launched E- the People alone, more than 25,000 visitors have already signed petitions on over 400 different issues.

"People are making online petitions every day all over the Net. What our site does is create a simple and reliable channel to take that kind of direct action," says Sheshunoff.

Many online editors and activists agree with Sheshunoff on the need to simplify the process: more than 40 newspapers and media affiliates, from the New York Daily News to the Utne Reader, will soon be using E- The People's software on their sites. And many more nonprofit organizations will soon follow.

Petition writers just log on to the site or on to a partner's E- The People site, go through the site's search engine to select which of 170,000 local, state, or federal officials in the site's database should receive a petition about a given issue. And in a few more steps, they're finished, and their petition is indexed on E- The People's network, and accessible to online activists all over the country.

But petitions are only the start of the service, which also provides letter-writing tools that make firing off a letter a snap. Whether the writer is a community organizer or an activist concerned with a national issue, E- The People's official searching tool makes reaching an official a simple proposition. Whether they know the officials they're trying to reach or just their own ZIP code and issues of concern, E- The People can match them with the officials who need to hear from them.

Will people do it? Sheshunoff has no doubts. This past year, he traveled 24,000 miles to promote the site, on the Grassroots Express, a bus wrapped to look like a giant mail box, and in each of the 42 states he traveled through, he heard the same thing: America is ready for online democracy.

"Everywhere we went, people said they wanted to get involved, but were just too busy taking care of their homes and offices. They said this is what the Internet is all about - using technology to make our communities stronger and our cities better places to live. We met with everyone from Pinky Porcher at the Lubbock,

Texas PTA to Barbara Boxer of the U.S. Senate — and all said that E-The People was a great application of new technology," he said.

Net News of Note from DNet

The next issue of the DNetizen will be published on 3/22/99.

As always, send your comments to: mailto:dnetizen@dnet.org.

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Issue 7.0

Presidential Primary Primer --
Ready or not, here they come!

The dust from the November elections has just begun to settle and the race for the President is already in full swing. The Internet -- once an after thought for most candidates -- is now front and center in the minds of those whose favorite tune is "Hail to the Chief."

Many stories have already been written about the presidential candidate's online efforts (dueling claims for the first online announcement, campaign contributions online, etc.) and it seems that every candidate is trying to stake out a strong virtual presence.

To help you get up to speed and keep track of the important developments as they happen we've assembled this "Presidential Primary Primer" for you to use.

This is by no means an exhaustive list of the sites covering the race for the White House. But it is a starting place, a collection of some of the best sites we've seen with coverage of the race.

If you know of others that you think deserve a look, please send them to:
mailto:dnetizen@dnet.org

NEWS SITES/STORIES: CNN's "Who's in, who's out" offers a quick snapshot of the official status of possible candidates. Are they in, out or exploring the idea, find out here: Whosin.whosout?

CNN also provides a good overview of the campaign websites to date. That story, "Web sites to play role in 2000 race, 3/18/99" can be found here: Web sites... 3/18/99

The Washington Post's website has a wonderful story archive of its presidential coverage. It's sorted by candidate with a complete list of general stories about the race as well. It located at: Post Story Archive

C-SPAN's "Road to the Whitehouse" is the premier destination for online video coverage of the presidential hopefuls. Their coverage is available at: Road to the White House

CANDIDATE WEBSITE LISTS: Several organizations have compiled extensive lists of websites for presidential candidates. Here are three for you to review:

George Washington University's Democracy in Action P-2000 coverage:
gwu.edu/~action/P2000.html

Project Vote Smart's Pres. 2000 page: www.vote-smart.org/ce/p-index.html

Politics1.com's P-2000 page: politics1.com/p2000.htm

Have we left out your favorite site? Let us know. Send your suggestions to
mailto:dnetizen@dnet.org.

Net News of Note from DNet

The next issue of the DNetizen will be published on 4/5/99.

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Issue 7.1

Presidential Primary Primer -- Continued

More Presidential Primary resources and news stories have come to light since the last edition of the DNetizen. Several new resources are listed below.

If you know of others that you think deserve a look, please send them to: dnetizen@dnet.org

Select your state and go there:

NEWS STORIES: ZDNet.com ran a story called "Candidates take campaign to the Net: A variety of candidates are using cyberspace in their 2000 presidential campaigns" by Mike Stuckey, on March 24, 1999. The memorable line from this article is "It's the volunteers stupid...the killer web app for the 2000 presidential campaign is recruiting and deploying your troops." Read the whole story at:

Candidates take campaign to the Net

The San Francisco Chronicle weighed in with "Electronic Electioneering: Presidential wannabes take their campaigns to the Internet" by Jon Swartz on March 27, 1999. The hook here is that each candidate's site is ranked on a scale of 1 to 5, from "awful to superb." The high score was a perfect five -- the low was 1/2. To find out who ranked and who stank, see the complete story:

Electronic Electioneering

·(Congratulations to Michael Cornfield of GWU who was quoted in both articles and is emerging as the premier pundit for stories about the Internet and politics.)

OTHER RESOURCES: The NY Times has created a very useful set of presidential and general election 2000 resources on their site. To use the NY Times site, you need a free subscription, but you may find it worth the trouble.

2000 Campaigns Page
White House 2000 Page
Republican Candidates
Democratic Candidates

The Federal Election Commission (FEC) provides a valuable list of "SELECTED

PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGNS FOR 2000 ELECTION" which includes campaign address, website, etc. for all the major candidates for President in 2000. This is a page to watch:

FEC Pres 2000 Page

Have we left out your favorite site? Let us know. Send your suggestions to dnetizen@dnet.org.

More on Email--

We dedicated a series of the DNetizen to the impact of email on politics and government (see Issues 5.0, 5.1, and 5.2 in the DNetizen Archive).

Several recent news articles have appeared which address the growing power and prominence of email as a political tool. Please follow the links below for more information.

Kudos to Rebecca Rainey who wrote two of the stories and continues to be a force in coverage of the Internet and Politics beat.

On March 24, 1999, she wrote "Flood of E-Mail Credited With Halting U.S. Bank Plan" which documented the first time a federal agency changed a policy in response to an email campaign. (To read the full story, you must register with the NY Times)

Flood of email story

Rebecca also wrote "Opening Up City Budgets to Online Input" which discusses innovative efforts in Seattle and Santa Monica to solicit public comments on city budgets through email. That story can be found at:

Opening up city budget story

The final story, by Roger Stone of Juno.com, appeared in the February Issue of Campaigns and Elections. That name should be familiar to DNetizen readers because a similar piece ran as the lead article in the January 11, 1999 issue of the DNetizen, titled "Targeted Advertising: A Palatable Alternative to Spam" (http://dnet.org/dnetizen/990111.shtml). Congratulations to Roger and look forward to seeing more DNetizen articles and authors appearing in other publications.

Net News of Note from DNet

The Democracy Network will become part of the Permanent Research Collection on Information Technology at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History on Monday, April 12.

DNet was nominated by Steve Case, Chairman and Chief Executive of AOL and will be part of the Government & Non-Profit Organizations category that includes many of the years most innovative applications of technology from 42 states and 22 countries.

"The primary source material from DNet will enrich the National History of American History's growing collection on the history of information technology, and contribute significantly to the museums efforts to chronicle the Information Age" said Spencer R. Crew, Director of the National Museum of American History.

Case studies of DNet and the entire collection are available at http://innovate.si.edu, the official Internet site of the Computerworld Smithsonian Program.

The next DNetizen will be published on April 19, 1999.

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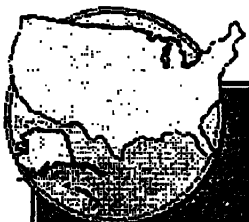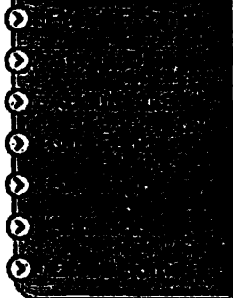Veronica Francis, Technical Manager vfrancis@cgs.org

The DNet*izen*

Computerworld
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1999 Laureate

| | DNet | | Mon Oct 25, 1999

Issue 8.0

Who's Lobbying Who?

An interesting online trend has recently emerged, one with both exciting and frightening potential. By now we're all accustomed to interest groups encouraging us to contact candidates about a particular issue or bill. Lots of non-partisan groups (the Democracy Network included) encourage individuals to contact their officials and make their voices heard on issues near and dear to their hearts. But a new development has candidates and officials themselves asking the public to lobby on behalf of certain policies and legislation.

Does this pose a conflict of interest? It's a question raised by Rebecca Rainey in her recent NY CyberTimes article "Beyond Campaign Sites: Politicians Seek Support Legislation Online" (free subscription required). As Rainey points out, there are laws that forbid elected officials from using public funds to lobby for a particular bill. Yet there is enough leeway in the laws to allow some recent efforts on the part of incumbents.

Christopher Cox's (R-CA) official house website has sections dedicated to building online support for his policies, namely the "Internet Tax Freedom Act" (http://www.house.gov/cox/nettax/). Visitors can sign up to receive email updates, and the site clearly works to build support for the policy, but it stops short of calling for action, asking visitors to lobby others or even giving them directions about how to do so.

Jesse Ventura, Minnesota's newly elected Governor, has taken online advocacy to a new level for an elected official. He is using his volunteer-run JesseVentura.org website (http://www.JesseVentura.org/) and email list to mobilize citizens to contact other elected officials to support policies that he is pursuing. He recently sent out a message to the "Jesse Net" to urge his supporters to contact other officials to support a light rail bill. Because the site does not use public funds, potential legal issues do not come into play.

The question is: should we allow incumbents to go farther or tighten the reins further? Clearly officials should make their views known on issues of public policy. But, if we allowed Jesse to do the same thing on his official site, would that enhance citizen's opportunities to engage in democracy, or would it compromise larger interests of preventing the misuse of public funds? If Cox can inform supporters of his position on internet taxes, would the incremental costs of identifying the oppositions' email address violate the spirit of the law? If he did encourage those who share his opinions to contact the policy's opponents, would that pose a threat to democracy? Or would it merely give citizens more opportunities to engage in public discourse in timely and meaningful ways?

Tell us what you think. Where should the line be drawn? Should a line even exist? We want to hear your opinion. Send an email to mailto:dnetizen@dnet.org.

Net News of Note from DNet

The DNetizen is looking for submissions in the areas of internet policy issues, including but not limited to privacy, internet taxes, and encryption. If you would like to be involved, or if you have a suggestion for people to serve as State or Federal policy experts for the DNetizen, please send email to: mailto:mwtaylor@cgs.org.

The next DNetizen will be published on May 10, 1999.

Select your state and go there:

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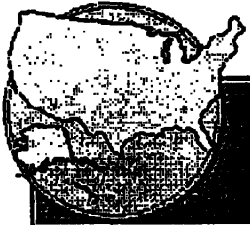Veronica Francis, Technical Manager vfrancis@cgs.org

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Issue 8.1

If you email, will they listen?

In the last issue of the DNetizen (http://www.dnet.org/dnetizen/990426.shtml), we posed this question about elected officials' efforts to use the Internet to build support for policies they support: "should we allow incumbents to go farther or tighten the reins further?"

The answer was loud and clear. In fact, the article seems to have touched a nerve because it generated more responses than any previous DNetizen issue.

It's also unique because, to a person, everyone came down on the same side on this issue. Another first. DNetizen readers were unanimously in favor of allowing elected officials to use the Internet -- and their official government sites -- to communicate with citizens about their positions on the issues they support.

Here are three typical responses from DNet readers.

"Personally, I am all in favor of public officials encouraging dialog over the Internet. It is just another facet of free speech and provides equal opportunity for all sides.

"We elect officials to be advocates of public policy they believe in. And so they use the resources of their office to do that. What do we expect from them, neutrality? This is a different issue than using public funds for re-election purposes.

"We want our elected officials to fight for their programs - that's why we elect them! If we encourage them to stump for their ideas by giving speeches and using the "bully pulpit", why shouldn't they also use web sites?

The article also provoked another very interesting response which raised an important related issue -- how do elected officials handle their constituent emails. French Prescott raised this issue in the following message:

"I don't know how many other people this irritates...but I discovered that web sites of federally elected officials is for some a one-way communication

tool...and for others a cross-communication tool. --In other words, some allow constituents to respond back via e-mail on issues of concern and others make it impossible to do so.

"...But aren't we the people paying for all this? --Why is any officially funded site not allowing response-back from constituents?

"I thought perhaps one could ascribe the "no response possible" sites to a lack of technical expertise on the part of the website. . . that is in fact what my Congressman's office explained to me. ...That it was too technically difficult to do...albeit both Senators from this state don't seem to have any problem."

"But perhaps it's even more insidious. Clearly elected officials like to cite the mail and e-mail they receive to bolster their positions. Doing some more digging, I discovered that some people are encouraged to e-mail my Congressman, i.e., some constituents can be counted but not others....His e-mail was quite available on several far-right religious sites. --I felt somewhat disenfranchised when I saw what was happening.

"I firmly believe that official web sites (paid by public funds provided for Senate and House members) must allow open e-mail feed-back from constituents...This one-way use of the Internet at public expense is just not acceptable.

The DNetizen has spent a great deal of time looking into the matter of how elected officials handle their email and we have found that it varies tremendously. Some agencies and officials welcome and respond to email. The April 5 Issue of the DNetizen (http://dnet.org/dnetizen/990405.shtml) cites two examples of forward-looking agencies that are actively encouraging citizen input through email. These seem to be the exception rather than the rule.

Other -- in truth most -- elected officials seem to have difficulty handling and responding to email. Part of the problem is that the volume of emails can be daunting. They have systems and rules in place to interpret and process a constituent phone calls and hand written letters but the rules on email are still being written. Unfortunately, the ease with which an email can be sent -- while a boon to the citizen -- means that many times an elected official pays less attention to it than a phone call or a hand written letter. Also the success of some online campaigns made this even worse by inundating officials with mail, much of which was from people outside their districts.

The solutions to this problem are probably technical and cultural. Better systems for handling and responding to email need to be developed and elected officials and their staffs need to get more comfortable with email. It's up to DNetizen readers -- and others like them -- to develop the necessary tools and then educate and cajole our elected officials to take advantage of the new opportunities to communicate with their citizens that are offered by the Internet.

DNet News of Note

The DNetizen is going on summer vacation. Look for its return in the fall with more news about the Internet and politics.

Editor's Note

This will be my last issue of the DNetizen. The next issue you receive will be from our new DNet Project Manager, John Howland. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for reading this newsletter. I appreciate the thoughtful responses and messages I have received and will miss the opportunity to share this with you every two weeks.

Again, thanks. Best wishes,

Mark W. Taylor

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