

News Article in Mineola American

Voting Of A New Kind?

Written by Matthew Ern Saturday, 19 October 2013 00:00

Mineola-based company hones in on mobile tallying

It's been depicted in movies and on TV, but dismissed. The concept seems progressive, but is open for discussion. Would you put your say on an important matter in the hands of your mobile device? One Mineola-based company has seen success on a small scale in the private sector, but is dreaming bigger.

VotRite, a company that specializes in electronic and mobile voting, offers digital alternatives to standard voting machines and has hosted elections for organizations across the country.

The company has been around since January of 2007. It isn't endorsed by municipalities, but is instead utilized by private organizations such as charities or condo boards to host internal elections.

VotRite has been used locally by Long Island University, Queens Community College, and the Fraternal Order of Police. Its system allows for both mobile voting by visiting their website from a computer, smartphone or tablet as well as voting at a fixed location on one of their touch screen machines. The machines access the website through encrypted cloud servers.

Security is a huge concern for VotRite and company manager Jim Kapsis says they take every effort to protect votes. "We update servers constantly. We maintain software on a daily basis. It's just a matter of spending the time and money to keep things safe."

When trying to vote on the website, you'll first be prompted to enter a pin number for the election you're trying to access. An ID number is used when voting at a machine as well and ensures that everyone can only vote once.

Once the pin is entered, candidate names appear along with their pictures. Before you finish up there's a final screen allowing you to review and change your selections before submitting them.

The computers can double check the number of votes cast against a list of registered voters for a given election to make sure no extra ballots have been cast. At the end of an election, the results are printed within 5-7 seconds. And an automated cut-off ensures no votes are cast after the specified end time.

The machines can display ballots in numerous fonts and sizes. The ballots are customizable as well and only take minutes to produce, in any language.

Response to the machines has been largely positive. Elderly users, according to Kapsis, "have reported that the larger fonts make voting easier, and younger generations can intuitively navigate the touch screen interface."

Voter transparency and security are key for VotRite. "People want transparency, they want to know that their vote counted," Kapsis explains. He believes it's only a matter of time before digital voting becomes the standard.

The next step for VotRite, according to Kapsis, is installing their machines in retail chains across the country. "If you can't get to your polling place and have no Internet access, you could go to one of their machines at a store or pharmacy."