



## **Using Technology Solutions to Enhance Voter Outreach & Education and Pollworker Training Programs**

Prepared by SOE Software, a ScytI company

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U.S. election jurisdictions have been evolving and enhancing their voter education & outreach and pollworker training programs using a variety of technology solutions for well over a decade. These solutions are customized to meet the needs of each jurisdiction, their constituents, their geographies and their unique situations.

One typical scenario that initially prompts a focus on voter education & outreach and enhancement in pollworker training programs is a jurisdiction's implementation of new voting equipment. In preparation for voter uncertainty that often accompanies the transition from one type of voting system to another, (i.e., migration from a paper-based system to an electronic voting system or from a mechanical lever voting machine to paper-based voting equipment) election jurisdictions desire the ability to enhance voter education & outreach and pollworker training programs through various channels, including leveraging the internet and social media.

Jurisdictions work with provider partners in some instances – and with internal teams in others - to develop customized voter education & outreach and pollworker training content around all state and local processes and procedures and all statutes that apply to the conduct of elections in their region. Jurisdictions often create videos and other interactive content that is customized for the particular voting system(s) being used by the jurisdiction.

For example, the New York State Board of Elections invested in a web portal solution that is paying the State back in terms of utilization. With the ability to provide different types of content in addition to multi-lingual information, New York's voter education portal has an endless number of uses for educating voters throughout the state. State governments across the country are constantly searching for ways to justify budgets and stretch every shrinking dollar and New York has proven that one wise investment in a flexible technology solution can pay dividends through continued and expanded use.

New York's web portal - [www.vote-ny.com](http://www.vote-ny.com) - provides a single access point for concerned voters from all local jurisdictions across the Empire State. The site has benefited voters in New York during multiple election cycles and is continuously being updated with news information.

Like many state government agencies, the New York State Board of Elections was challenged with engaging voters from all 62 counties with extremely important voting information. The NYSBOE saw leveraging the web to accomplish many goals to include:

- Provide a uniform educational experience across the state
- Create a dynamic and engaging presentation for web visitors

- Provide a multi-lingual delivery of information in five languages

The New York State Board of Elections worked to record custom video and pictures of New York's training facilities throughout the state and actual New York trainers to be included in the jurisdiction's training content, because the NY State Board of Elections felt that by including familiar faces and locations in the new training content, poll workers would feel more comfortable with the materials, and therefore feel more comfortable with the changes in their voting equipment and the associated procedures surrounding it.

When conducting any voter education & outreach and pollworker training programs, many jurisdictions face the challenge of delivering content to voters in multiple languages. New York State, for example, is currently required to provide election information for voters in English, Spanish, Korean, Mandarin Chinese and Cantonese Chinese. Therefore, this jurisdiction's voter education & outreach web portal had to be set up (and maintained) to provide consistent information across all five of these languages.

By leveraging public-facing, multi-lingual equipment "how to use" videos and a robust hosting infrastructure, a jurisdiction can deliver consistent up-to-date information to its voters and pollworkers and significantly reduce the potential for confusion on Election Day. Coupled with a more prepared and well trained army of poll workers, a jurisdiction is better able to make the transition from one voting system to another or inform voters and pollworkers about new voting requirements such as changes in their state's voter ID laws.

Many jurisdictions are looking to provide enhanced technical capabilities to their websites or to create new portals in an effort to both comply with all jurisdictional compliance requirements while providing the new features with associated benefits for both voters and pollworkers. Ventura County, California is one such jurisdiction.

Ventura County, California's Clerk Recorder / Registrar of Voters, Mark A. Lunn and his team recently undertook the monumental task of redesigning, developing and deploying a customized, interactive web portal for the Recorder, County Clerk and Election functions of his office. The site can be visited at <http://recorder.countyofventura.org/>.

Ventura County's web portal has been live since May 2012 and was heavily accessed as Ventura County's pollworkers and voters prepared for the November 6, 2012 election. The Elections area of the site allows voters to determine whether they are registered to vote, and if they are not, allows them to register. The site also enables voters to find their polling places, view election results and find answers to frequently asked election questions. Additionally, voters interested in becoming pollworkers can fill out web-based pollworker applications and take online pollworker training courses.

Ventura County's web portal provides the following:

- **Accessibility:** Ventura's site is Section 508/A.D.A. compliant and multi-lingual capable. Currently the site is available in English and Spanish.
- **Mobile Access:** The portal provides a web-friendly interface that is updated immediately when any changes occur to the main website. This mobile site allows easy access from smartphones and tablets.
- **Graphical Interface for Election Results Reporting:** The website provides the capability to display maps and precinct-level detail of election results.
- **Online Forms Manager:** The site has an interactive forms interface that allows residents of Ventura County to submit information to the jurisdiction electronically.
- **Live Help Feature:** The site serves provides users with real-time access to a staff member for assistance if users have any questions.

Additionally, all of the software components of Ventura's web portal are installed on an external hosted environment, allowing them to be accessed and maintained by Ventura County's elections staff 24/7 while also allowing system redundancy in accordance with the jurisdiction's disaster recovery planning conventions.

"We worked with a provider partner to develop end-to-end public communication website that is manageable through a web-based content management system," said Mark A. Lunn, Ventura County Clerk Recorder / Registrar of Voters. "Our solution is scalable, so we expect to not have to be concerned about needing additional IT services should there be a spike in web visitors at any given time. Our provider partner also oversaw deployment, configuration and training services for us."

Election jurisdictions that are faced with oversight responsibilities continue to discover that online tools included within their web portals will enhance their ability to insure their election processes are on schedule, fully supported, and uniformly administered. Online tools provide a method for voters to confirm their registration, polling location and review their sample ballot. Additionally, online tools provide the voting public and candidates with uniform information that is readily available and easy to comprehend.

Voter education & outreach and pollworker training programs are constantly evolving and are cornerstones of every election office. Technology allows for flexibility in delivery of content and the ability to quickly and cost-effectively to make content changes and share new information with constituents. We expect to see continued and greatly expanded use of technology solutions to enhance both the voters' and pollworkers' user experience with their local election office.

**About SOE Software, a ScytI company**

SOE Software ([www.soesoftware.com](http://www.soesoftware.com)) is a nationally recognized leader in e-government and election administration software solutions that increase productivity and efficiency for local, state and federal governments. SOE provides comprehensive solutions that include Clarity Election Night Reporting (ENR), Voter Education Web Portals, Online Training and Asset Tracking. SOE serves customers in approximately 1400 jurisdictions across 30 states. The company is based in Tampa, Florida and has over 50 employees.