



NJ CONNECTS

IMPLEMENTATION OF AT&T FIRSTNET FOR STATEWIDE E-POLL BOOK CONNECTIVITY

STATE OFFICE:

NEW JERSEY SECRETARY OF STATE TAHESHA WAY

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

IMPLEMENTATION OF ELECTRONIC POLL BOOKS IN NEW JERSEY FOR THE FIRST TIME WAS A SIGNIFICANT UNDERTAKING THAT REQUIRED AN ALL-OUT EFFORT FROM THE STATE DIVISION OF ELECTIONS DOWN TO THE COUNTY AND MUNICIPAL ELECTION OFFICIALS ACROSS THE STATE. NEW JERSEY IS A HOME RULE STATE WITH DECENTRALIZED, COUNTY BASED ELECTIONS. THE COUNTIES HAVE THE OWNERSHIP AND THE FLEXIBILITY TO IMPLEMENT ANY SYSTEM THAT IS APPROVED BY THE STATE. GIVEN THE NUMBER OF FUNCTIONS AND PROCESSES TO BE IMPLEMENTED, THE STATE ENGAGED WITH AT&T TO IMPLEMENT A STANDARD NETWORK TO SUPPORT ALL COUNTIES IN A CONSISTENT MANNER WITH A HIGHLY AVAILABLE AND SECURE NETWORK – FIRSTNET.

CONTACT/PROJECT LEAD:

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SUBJECT AREA:

ELECTIONS – EARLY VOTING NETWORK CONNECTIVITY



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

SINCE 2016, NEW JERSEY'S DIVISION OF ELECTIONS HAS HAD A CLOSE WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH THE NEW JERSEY OFFICE OF HOMELAND SECURITY AND PREPAREDNESS (NJOHSP) AND ITS CYBERSECURITY AND COMMUNICATIONS INTEGRATION CELL (NJCCIC).

THIS PARTNERSHIP PROVED UNIQUELY BENEFICIAL WHEN NEW JERSEY ESTABLISHED EARLY VOTING IN MARCH 2021. THE DIVISION OF ELECTIONS AND COUNTY ELECTION OFFICIALS HAD JUST 6 MONTHS TO SET UP MORE THAN 150 EARLY VOTING SITES ACROSS 21 COUNTIES AND OFFER 9 DAYS OF EARLY VOTING AS AN OPTION FOR NEW JERSEY'S 6.5 MILLION VOTERS. ELECTION OFFICIALS WORKED TO CREATE NEW PROTOCOLS, UPDATE EQUIPMENT AND RELATED TECHNOLOGY, IDENTIFY SECURE EARLY VOTING SITES, AND TRAIN POLL WORKERS TO UNDERSTAND NEW VOTING OPTIONS AND RULES.


THE PROCESS INCLUDED PROCUREMENT OF NEW HARDWARE INCLUDING MORE THAN 14,000 ELECTRONIC POLL BOOKS FOR BOTH EARLY VOTING SITES AND MORE THAN 3,400 ELECTION DAY POLLING LOCATIONS. ELECTRONIC POLL BOOKS, WHICH ALLOW POLL WORKERS TO CONNECT TO THE STATE VOTER DATABASE IN REAL TIME TO CHECK VOTER STATUS, REQUIRE A SECURE WIRELESS CONNECTION.

AT&T FIRSTNET IS A NATIONWIDE SECURE WIRELESS BROADBAND NETWORK FOR CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE COMMUNICATIONS. SINCE ELECTION INFRASTRUCTURE IS CONSIDERED CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE, THE DIVISION OF ELECTIONS, NJOHSP, AND NJCCIC WORKED TOGETHER AND BECAME THE FIRST STATE TO PARTNER WITH AT&T FIRSTNET TO CREATE A SECURE WIRELESS SOLUTION MANAGED BY THE STATE AND ACCESSIBLE TO ALL COUNTIES. WORKING WITH FIRSTNET HELPED THE STATE SECURE THIS CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND PROTECT VOTERS AND OUR ELECTIONS.

THE COUNTY ELECTION OFFICIALS AND THEIR IT SUPPORT TEAMS PHYSICALLY MANAGE THE DEVICES, HOWEVER THE STATE MANAGES ALL SOFTWARE AND SECURITY PARAMETERS.



SIGNIFICANCE



A RELIABLE AND SECURE NETWORK IS PARAMOUNT IN AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE TECHNOLOGY HAS BECOME A CENTRAL PART OF THE ELECTION PROCESS. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF WORKING WITH AT&T ESTABLISHES NEW JERSEY AS A LEADER IN ELECTION SECURITY.

- USE OF A RELIABLE AND SECURE WIRELESS NETWORK FOR ELECTION TECHNOLOGIES.
- ABILITY TO AVOID CONNECTIVITY INTERRUPTIONS AS ITS TREATED WITH PRIORITY OVER “AVERAGE NETWORKS”.
- ANTICIPATES AND PREVENTS SECURITY BREACHES.
- PERMITS COUNTIES TO COMMUNICATE, TRIAGE AND EXECUTE MEASURES TO ENSURE A STREAMLINE VOTER EXPERIENCE.
- PERMITS COUNTIES TO REVIEW AND ANALYZE STATISTICS DURING EARLY VOTING AND ELECTION DAY TO EFFECTIVELY PREPARE AND ANTICIPATE VOTER TURNOUT.



IMPACT/RESULTS

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FIRSTNET DIRECTLY IMPACTED NEW JERSEY ELECTIONS AND ITS CITIZENS BY PROVIDING SECURE AND RELIABLE NETWORK CONNECTIVITY THROUGHOUT THE STATE. THIS INCLUDES BUT IS NOT LIMITED TO EMERGENCY RESPONSE OF ANY POTENTIAL OUTAGES OR DISRUPTIONS. THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING A CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE FOCUSED NETWORK CONNECTIVITY IS A PIVOTAL PART IN SUSTAINING THE CONFIDENCE OF VOTERS.

OVER THE PAST YEAR THERE HAVE BEEN MINOR CHANGES TO HOW COUNTY NETWORK INFRASTRUCTURES ARE COORDINATED, IMPROVING WITH EACH ITERATION. IN THE RECENT NOVEMBER 2022 GENERAL ELECTION, ISSUES IDENTIFIED WERE AT A MINOR SCALE AND DID NOT DISRUPT ANY PART OF THE ELECTION PROCESS.

MOVING FORWARD, NEW JERSEY PLANS TO IMPLEMENT A SECURITY SERVICE TO MONITOR NETWORK ACTIVITY IN REAL TIME ON THESE ROUTERS, THUS GIVING THE STATE A BROADER SCOPE INTO ANY POTENTIAL THREATS TO OUR ELECTION PROCESS.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

THE NJ DIVISION OF ELECTIONS AND THE NJ OFFICE OF HOMELAND SECURITY AND PREPAREDNESS TOOK THE LEAD IN ESTABLISHING A WIRELESS NETWORK TO BE USED FOR ALL OF THE E-POLL BOOK CONNECTIVITY.

- STANDARD CONFIGURATION TO MINIMIZE COUNTY WORK EFFORT.
- CONTRACTED TO USE THE AT&T FIRSTNET NETWORK WHICH IS A NATIONWIDE WIRELESS BROADBAND NETWORK FOR CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE COMMUNICATIONS.
- THE STATE PURCHASED THE NECESSARY HARDWARE AND COVERED THE NETWORK USAGE COSTS.
- 14,000 E-POLL BOOKS IN USE BETWEEN THE 150+ EARLY VOTING LOCATIONS AND THE 3,400+ ELECTION DAY POLLING PLACES (ALL OF THESE LOCATIONS REQUIRE A WIRELESS NETWORK CONNECTION).



EQUIPMENT ACQUIRED:

CRADLEPOINT IBR900



STATE PROVIDED HARDENED CRADLEPOINT ROUTERS FOR EARLY VOTING SITES.

- USED IN EARLY VOTING AND ELECTION DAY SITES.
- INCLUDES ROUTER, ANTENNA AND POWER SUPPLY.
- INITIALLY CONFIGURED BY AT&T.
- EPOLL BOOKS LINKED BEFORE DEPLOYMENT.
- POLL WORKER SIMPLY POWERS ON AND LOGS INTO EPOLL BOOK.
- HARDENED CARRYING CASE.



NIGHTHAWK HOTSPOT ROUTER



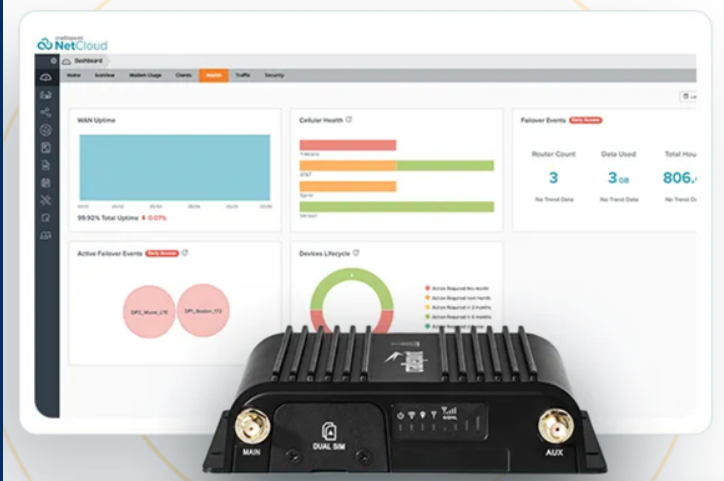
STATE PROVIDED NIGHTHAWK WIRELESS HOTSPOT FOR ALL ELECTION DAY POLLING LOCATIONS.

- INCLUDES ROUTER AND POWER SUPPLY.
- INITIALLY CONFIGURED BY AT&T.
- EPOLL BOOKS LINKED BEFORE DEPLOYMENT.
- POLL WORKER SIMPLY POWERS ON AND LOGS INTO EPOLL BOOK.
- PRIMARILY NEEDED FOR START OF DAY SYNCHRONIZATION TO CENTRAL DATABASE.

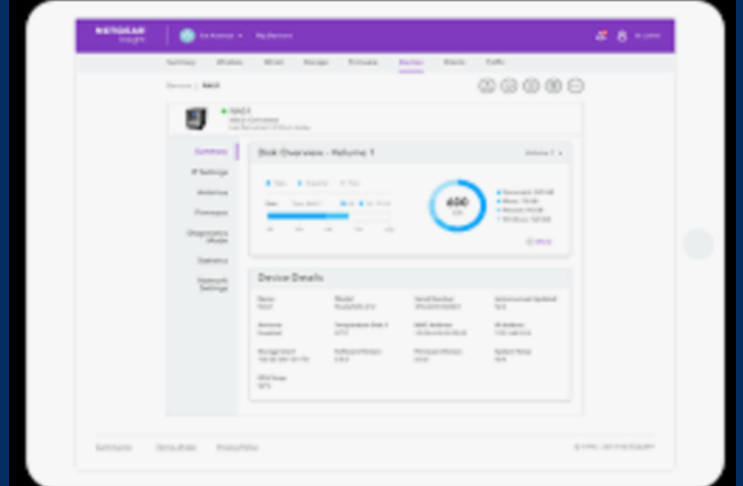
REMOTE NETWORK MANAGEMENT

- REMOTE ACCESS BY COUNTY ELECTIONS IT TEAM.
- ABLE TO MAKE COMMON PROFILE CHANGES ACROSS ALL ROUTERS.
- APPLY CHANGES TO ALL ROUTERS SIMULTANEOUSLY.

NETCLOUD FOR CRADLEPOINT



NETGEAR INSIGHT FOR NIGHTHAWK



VOTER EDUCATION VIDEO

2022 IN-PERSON EARLY VOTING GENERAL ELECTION

In-Person Early Voting is Now Open

LINK TO VIDEO: [HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=COULLWKEZLA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=COULLWKEZLA)

