BEING ONLINE IS STILL NOT ENOUGH:
REVIEWS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STATE ELECTION WEBSITES 2010

Methodology

Researchers evaluated state election websites for the Pew Center on the States from May to November 2010. The study was designed to assess the sites' content and usability, score them on their performance, and suggest improvements for each state. The goal was to provide voters with more accurate, comprehensive, timely, and easy-to-locate election information.

Websites may have changed since they were assessed.

Scores were based on three categories:

Content:
50 percent of the total assessment.

Lookup tools:
25 percent of the total assessment.

Usability:
25 percent of the total assessment.

Content includes information about voter registration, candidates, or measures on the ballot; casting a ballot; absentee and early voting; military and overseas voting; election officials' contact information; future elections calendar; election results; and ballot privacy.

Lookup tools allow voters to obtain personalized information, such as 1) their registration status, 2) precinct-level ballot information, 3) location of their polling place, 4) status of their absentee ballot, or 5) whether their provisional ballot has been counted.

Usability includes how easy it is to find the site, navigate and search within it, understand the terms that are used, and access it even if the user has disabilities. (Data on usability were collected between June 1 and July 27, 2010.)

The evaluation included a **"five-minute rule."** Data or tools were considered unavailable if they were not found within that time.

Content and lookup tools were assessed on state election sites including those for boards of elections, secretaries of state, and voter education and outreach services. Usability was assessed for the one election site in each state.

Pew commissioned the California Voter Foundation (CVF) and Center for Governmental Studies (CGS) to assess

content and lookup tools. Nielsen Norman Group (NNG), building on its study of state election websites conducted for Pew in 2008, reassessed the sites for usability.[1]

An expert advisory group made suggestions concerning criteria for the assessment. The group's members included:

- Steve Clift, Founder and Executive Director, E-Democracy.Org

- Susan Dzieduszycka-Suinat, President and CEO, Overseas Vote Foundation

- Heather K. Gerken, J. Skelly Wright Professor of Law, Yale Law School

- John Lindback, Senior Officer, Election Initiatives, Pew Center on the States

- Toby Moore, Project Director, RTI International

Draft criteria were circulated to every state for comment, and each was sent a short survey regarding its election website.

Ensuring Accuracy

- **Two parallel assessments.** CGS and CVF analysts conducted independent and separate assessments of all states during, or as close to as possible, the state primary election period—between mid-May and late August

2010. Any differences in findings were reconciled.

- **Feedback by the states.** Each state was given a chance to comment on the initial findings.

- **Second assessments.** CGS and CVF analysts then conducted a second independent and separate assessment round of the states as close to the general election period as possible—between October and November 2010—and after the election regarding site information providing voting results.

Noting Innovative Features That Were Not Scored

Analysts gathered data in a number of categories that were not scored. In some cases, this information helped assess the status of new and developing techniques that might be too novel to require of all states. This information included:

- E-mail notifications
- Electronic newsletters
- Policies on responding to inquiries
- Unique voter education efforts for candidates or ballot measures
- Online voter registration
- Volunteer support at polling places
- Information on handicapped parking and building access
- District lookup tools

❶ CONTENT ASSESSMENT (50 PERCENT)

The Content category contains 105 questions, divided into 10 subcategories: Registering to Vote, Ballot Information, Casting a Ballot, Absentee and Early Voting, Military and Overseas Voting, Voters with Disabilities, Election Official Contact Information, Future Elections/Elections Calendar, Election Results, and Privacy.

Of these 105 questions, 11 were unscored. An unscored question sought information deemed useful but not required—for example, whether a state provides graphics or maps with its election results. Other items were not scored because some states viewed them as controversial and had not adopted them—for example, candidate statements, which some states thought were "electioneering" and not appropriate for their websites. In some states, certain criteria were not applicable—for example, states that allow Election Day registration have no need for provisional voting, so they were scored "n/a" on questions on that subject.

If a site did not have all the information sought in a question, analysts gave credit if the state provided at least half of the data sought. For example, if a question asked whether a state website linked to local election sites in the state, analysts gave it credit if it linked to at least half of those sites. If the question asked whether the information sought was "comprehensive,"

however, analysts gave the state credit only if its information was comprehensive.

Analysts gave a state credit in the Content category even if it linked to the answer off-site, so long as the link took the user directly to the information sought (for example, linking to descriptions of voting equipment on vendor sites).

1. Registering to Vote (10 percent)

This subcategory assesses the availability of voter information such as:

a. Voter registration eligibility

b. State residency requirements

c. Voter registration deadlines

d. How or where to obtain a registration form

e. How to confirm voter registration

f. Circumstances that would require updating registration

g. Whether registration is considered public record

h. Whether voters in certain circumstances have the right to keep their registration record private

i. Whether voter registration forms are available online

j. Registration information for members of the military, overseas citizens, college students, felons, homeless people, those in long-term-care facilities, and voters who are hospitalized

2. Ballot Information (7.5 percent)

This subcategory assesses the availability of information voters might need to make informed decisions, such as:

    a. Lists of candidates for federal and state office

    b. Candidates' party affiliation

    c. Candidate contact information (addresses, e-mail addresses, Web addresses, phone numbers)

    d. Candidate occupations

    e. Candidate statements

    f. Candidate incumbency status

    g. State and federal campaign finance data

    h. Political office job descriptions

    i. List of recognized political parties and contact information

    j. Archived candidate information

    k. Ballot measure texts

    l. Ballot measure summaries

    m. Nonpartisan analyses of ballot measures

3. Casting a Ballot (7.5 percent)

This subcategory assesses the availability of information to assist users in preparing to cast a ballot, such as:

    a. Voter identification requirements at the polls

    b. Polling places' hours of operation

    c. Tutorials or instructions for completing ballots

    d. Description of state voting systems

    e. Provisional ballot information

    f. Toll-free telephone number to check status of cast provisional ballots

    g. Instructions and information about the availability of voting assistance in languages other than English[2]

4. Absentee and Early Voting (7.5 percent)

This subcategory assesses the availability of information for absentee voters, such as:

    a. Absentee voter eligibility requirements

    b. Applications or instructions on how to apply

    c. Addresses to submit these applications

    d. Acceptable methods for submitting an application (e.g., mail, fax, e-mail)

    e. Application deadlines (both for number of days before an election and dates)

    f. Deadlines for returning ballots

    g. Information about assistance in marking absentee ballots

    h. Information on how to obtain replacement ballots if they do not arrive, are lost, or are damaged

i. Early voting information

j. Early voting dates and hours of operation

k. Early voting locations

l. Information for voters with disabilities regarding the accessibility of early voting sites

Easily accessible absentee-voter information is important because of the increasing preference of individuals to vote absentee[3] and the essential role absentee and early voting plays in assisting people with disabilities.[4]

5. Military and Overseas Absentee Voting (5 percent)

This subcategory assesses the availability of information for military and overseas voters, such as:

a. Whether a section for military and overseas voters is provided

b. Registration information for military and overseas voters

c. Information for verifying voter registration

d. Registration information for military family members

e. Re-registration information

f. Absentee-ballot request renewals

g. Information on determining if voted ballots have been received

h. Information on what to do if requested ballots do not arrive

i. Whether the Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot (FWAB) is highlighted

j. Instructions for obtaining and completing the FWAB

Easy access to essential voting information is not a privilege, but a right that belongs to overseas voters and members of the armed forces and their families stationed overseas. However, the complicated process of registering and receiving ballots for these individuals continues to suppress turnout.[5]

6. Voters with Disabilities (2.5 percent)

This subcategory assesses the availability of information for voters with disabilities, such as:

a. Whether a section for voters with disabilities is available

b. Information about the availability of assistance by poll workers

c. Instructions for voters with disabilities on casting ballots

d. TDD or TTY access

People with disabilities continue to face obstacles when voting. A state election information website cannot provide them with easy access to the polling place, but it can provide information to assist them in voting.[6]

7. Election Official (State and Local) Contact Information (5 percent)

This subcategory assesses the availability of the following contact information:

a. Election official telephone number

b. Hotline

c. Toll-free election line

d. Fax number

e. Address

f. E-mail or Web contact

g. Hours of operation

h. Name of state election official to provide assistance

i. Whether Web addresses or links from state site to county sites exist

j. Whether the state relies on local governments to perform election functions and informs voters of that reliance

Just as easily accessible ballot information increases the likelihood of voter participation, making it easy to find contact information for election officials helps people who encounter problems when attempting to register or vote. This information increases the likelihood that they can complete voter registration forms, locate their polling places, and participate in the electoral process.

8. Future Elections/Elections Calendar (1.5 percent)

This subcategory assesses the availability of:

a. Lists of state and federal elections for the upcoming year

b. Lists of upcoming local elections for the upcoming year

c. Important registration and election dates and milestones[7]

9. Election Results (2.5 percent)

This subcategory assesses the availability of results that are:

a. Posted online

b. Posted the day after election (if not sooner)

c. Provided by county, percentage, and precinct

d. Provided with maps

e. Archived so that past election results are available

10. Privacy (1 percent)

This subcategory assesses the availability of the following:

a. Website privacy policy

b. Whether lookup tools are provided on a secure server

c. Explanation of privacy protections for sites that require personal information to use lookup tools

❷ LOOKUP TOOLS ASSESSMENT (25 PERCENT)

This category contains 18 questions, six scored and 12 unscored, which are divided into subcategories: voter registration, ballot information, polling place (general), polling place (street address), absentee ballot, and provisional ballot.

Callers to election information hotlines most frequently are seeking information about their polling place and registration issues. Lookup tools not only facilitate participation in the electoral process but also ease the burden election workers face in fielding calls on Election Day.

Analysts examined whether sites allowed voters to access polling place and ballot information lookup tools by using street addresses. This type of tool allows voters whose registration has been lost to locate their polling place by street address, and then to vote provisionally if necessary. Lookup tools that use voter ID numbers or other unique identifiers are less accessible to unregistered voters.

1. Voter Registration (6.25 percent)

This subcategory assesses the availability of the following:

 a. Lookup tool for voter registration status

 b. Information required to use the tool

 c. Personally identifiable, specific information displayed by the tool

 d. Instructions for users to correct information that is incorrect

Providing easily accessible information on voter registration confirmation will facilitate voting and could increase voter participation.

2. Ballot Information (7.5 percent)

This subcategory assesses the availability of the following:

 a. Lookup tool that provides individuals with precinct-level sample ballots[8]

 b. Whether the tool relies on street addresses

 c. What information is required to access this tool

 d. Whether the tool covers every contest on the ballot

Providing a tool to look up a sample ballot will make it easier to gather information and might help increase in voter participation.

3. Polling Place (5 percent)

This subcategory assesses the availability of the following:

 a. Lookup tool to provide users with their polling place's address (or drop box location in vote-by-mail states)

b. Whether information is displayed with directions or maps to the polling place

c. Whether the tool includes the polling place hours of operation

The top reason that people call help lines on Election Day is for assistance in locating their polling place. Providing a lookup tool will provide important information for voters, reduce call-waiting time, and lessen the number of callers election workers must assist on Election Day.[9]

4. Polling Place—Street Address (1.25 percent)

This subcategory assesses:

a. Whether the lookup tool allows users to provide only their street address and not personal information or voter identification numbers to locate their polling places

This allows willing voters to locate their polling places regardless of registration status.

5. Absentee Ballot (2.5 percent)

This subcategory assesses the availability of the following:

a. Lookup tool to determine absentee-ballot status

b. What personal information is required to use the tool

c. What personal identifiable information is displayed by the tool

The growing number of people who choose or depend on voting absentee makes this an essential tool.[10]

6. Provisional Ballot (2.5)

This subcategory assesses:

a. The availability of a lookup tool to inform users whether their provisional ballot was counted

b. What personal information is required to use the tool

c. What personally identifiable information is displayed by the tool

Websites Evaluated for Content and Lookup Tools

STATE	ELECTION WEBSITES
Alabama	www.alabamavotes.gov and www.sos.state.al.us/Elections/Default.aspx
Alaska	www.elections.alaska.gov
Arizona	www.azsos.gov/election
Arkansas	www.votenaturally.org and www.sos.arkansas.gov/elections.html
California	www.sos.ca.gov/elections, www.voterguide.sos.ca.gov
Colorado	www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/elections/main.htm
Connecticut	www.ct.gov/sots/site/default.asp and www.tuvotosicuenta.com
Delaware	http://elections.delaware.gov
District of Columbia	www.dcboee.org
Florida	http://election.dos.state.fl.us/index.shtml
Georgia	www.sos.georgia.gov
Hawaii	http://hawaii.gov/elections
Idaho	www.idahovotes.gov and www.sos.idaho.gov
Illinois	www.elections.il.gov
Indiana	www.in.gov/sos/index.htm
Iowa	www.sos.state.ia.us/index.html
Kansas	www.kssos.org/elections/elections.html and www.voteks.org
Kentucky	www.elect.ky.gov and www.sos.ky.gov
Louisiana	www.sos.louisiana.gov
Maine	www.maine.gov/sos/cec/elec
Maryland	www.elections.state.md.us and www.mdelections.org
Massachusetts	www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/eleidx.htm and www.wheredoivotema.com
Michigan	www.michigan.gov/sos
Minnesota	www.sos.state.mn.us
Mississippi	www.sos.ms.gov and www.touchandvote.ms.gov
Missouri	www.sos.mo.gov/elections
Montana	www.sos.mt.gov/Elections/index.asp
Nebraska	www.sos.state.ne.us
Nevada	www.nvsos.gov
New Hampshire	www.sos.nh.gov/electionsnew.html

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Websites Evaluated for Content and Lookup Tools

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STATE	ELECTION WEBSITES
New Jersey	www.njelections.org
New Mexico	www.sos.state.nm.us
New York	www.elections.state.ny.us and www.vote-ny.com
North Carolina	www.ncsbe.gov
North Dakota	www.nd.gov/sos
Ohio	www.sos.state.oh.us/SOS/elections.aspx
Oklahoma	www.ok.gov/elections
Oregon	www.sos.state.or.us/elections
Pennsylvania	www.votespa.com, www.dos.state.pa.us, and www.pavoterservices.state.pa.us
Rhode Island	http://sos.ri.gov/elections and www.elections.ri.gov
South Carolina	www.scvotes.org
South Dakota	www.sdsos.gov
Tennessee	www.state.tn.us/sos/election/index.htm
Texas	www.votexas.org and www.sos.state.tx.us
Utah	www.elections.utah.gov and www.vote.utah.gov
Vermont	www.vermont-elections.org
Virginia	www.sbe.virginia.gov/cms
Washington	www.sos.wa.gov/elections
West Virginia	www.sos.wv.gov
Wisconsin	http://gab.wi.gov
Wyoming	http://soswy.state.wy.us/Elections/Elections.aspx

❸ USABILITY ASSESSMENT (25 PERCENT)

Usability was assessed for "Being Online Is Still Not Enough" using the same criteria—with several enhancements in how they were evaluated—that were applied in the 2008 Pew report "Being Online Is Not Enough." Criteria were grouped into seven categories. Each site received eight scores: an Overall Usability Score and seven category scores.

Categories and Weights

Each of the seven categories was weighted to reflect its contribution to overall usability. Two categories were enhanced in 2010—navigation and information architecture and writing and information presentation. For more details, see the Usability Data Collection section below.

WEIGHT	CATEGORY	SUMMARY
25%	Web Presence	How easily can users find the right site when conducting standard Web searches for key phrases related to voting? Can they find the elections site from the state's main site?
20%	Navigation and Information Architecture	Is it easy to navigate to key topics? Can users easily tell where they are within the site if accessing a deep link from a search engine? Are links named intuitively? Is the site organized in a user-centered manner?
20%	Writing and Information Presentation	Is the content understandable? Is it easy to scan and find the right information? Is information made available in HTML vs. PDFs?
15%	Homepage	Is the homepage organized so users can tell which information is intended for them? Are important links placed and presented so they will be noticed? Is it easy to scan?
10%	Accessibility	Can users with disabilities (severe or mild) effectively use the site?
5%	Search	Is there an open search field available on each page of the site? Do search results seem appropriate? Are result titles/content understandable?
5%	Site Tools	Are tools for looking up registration, finding a poll location, etc., intuitive and efficient?

Usability Assessment Categories

Each category includes three to five criteria, each scored on a scale from 0 to 3:

1. Web Presence

a. State election site falls within first page of Web search results. Search for "register to vote in [state]."

b. Search for "polling places in [state]."

c. Search for "election candidates in [state]."

d. Noticeable link to the elections website (or specific functions on the elections site) on the state site's homepage.

2. Navigation and Information Architecture

a. Global and local navigation: Logical, persistent, and consistent.

b. Effective use of page titles, navigational highlighting, and breadcrumbs to help users determine where they are within the site.

c. Descriptive link names clearly indicate content the user is linking to (instead of generic links such as "Click Here," "Go," and "More").

d. Site architecture groups information logically and allows easy accessibility to information without having to jump around the site or visit numerous pages (e.g., Voter Registration information is not located across 10 different pages).

3. Writing and Information Presentation

a. Key voter-oriented content written at eighth-grade level (or lower).

b. Written for the Web (concise, bullet points, easy to scan and hyperlinks used to direct users).

c. PDFs limited to print-and-fill-out forms, not for basic content (e.g., How to register to vote). Also, links to PDFs are labeled as such (eliminating surprise).

4. Homepage

a. Chunking information/links so that users can easily determine which information is intended for voters and not candidates and researchers.

b. Links to key voter content and functionality are grouped and located noticeably on the homepage above the fold: Am I registered to vote? How to register? Polling locations? Absentee voting?

c. Homepage is easy to scan and light on prose-style content. Links are easily identifiable; content is concise and presented in brief format.

5. Accessibility

a. "Skip Navigation" link at top of all pages.

b. Site uses scalable fonts.

c. ALT text on informative/functional graphics (i.e., graphics you need to understand in order to use the site).

d. High contrast between background and text and in images.

e. Visited links change color.

6. Search

a. Search field (or link) located on every page in consistent location.

b. Search results titles/content are understandable.

c. Search results are appropriate to the query.

7. Site Tools

a. Tool descriptions adequately describe the tool that users are considering and what they will receive by entering their information.

b. Tools are designed with intuitive flow, buttons, controls, and links.

c. Clear error messages.

Usability Scoring Key

A general scoring key was used for most of the criteria. Special keys were used for Web Presence criteria 1a-1c (Web Search), criterion 1d (Link on State Website), criterion 3a (Content Grading Level) and criterion 3c (PDF Usage). Three was the ideal score for any criterion and zero was the lowest.

CATEGORY	SCORE	CRITERIA
General	3	Useful and usable, user-centered implementation
	2	Might cause some frustration, but it is not fatal
	1	Likely to cause initial task failures, but users can recover with a significant effort
	0	Likely to cause fatal task failures, leading to site/task abandonment
	N/A	not applicable to state
Web Search	3	First result
	2	Within first five results
	1	Within first page of results

Usability Scoring Key *(continued)*

CATEGORY	SCORE	CRITERIA
Link On State Website	3	Link/button located on homepage above fold, very noticeable
	2	Link on homepage (static) but not as noticeable and/or below fold
	1	Link on homepage behind a tab/filmstrip or part of a rotating hero/graphic
	0	No link to elections/voter website on homepage
Content Grade Level	3	Eighth grade or lower (grade school to junior high)
	2	Ninth–12th grade (high school)
	1	13th–16th grade (undergraduate)
	0	Higher than 16th grade (graduate)
Use Of PDFs	3	95–100% voter information presented in HTML format (exception: print and fill-out forms)
	2	90–95% content presented in HTML
	1	75–90% content presented in HTML
	0	Less than 75% content offered in HTML format

Usability Data Collection

Browser

Election websites were examined using Microsoft Internet Explorer (IE) version 7 because, according to NetMarketShare, IE was the most popular browser at the time of the assessment, with a 62 percent market share.

Web Presence

Google.com was used for all Web searches.

Navigation and Information Structure of the Site

To evaluate the navigation system and information structure (architecture),

analysts created the following task scenarios and performed them on each site:

Determine candidates and/or issues that will be on my ballot: I need to get information about whom and what we will be voting on.

Verify my voter registration: I have lived in this state for a while, but I haven't voted in some years and I've moved a couple times. I need to figure out whether I'm still registered or need to register.

Determine how to register to vote: I just moved to this state and I want to register to vote. How do I do that?

Absentee voting: I will be away on business travel during the election. How can I vote?

Overseas voting: I am living in London for a couple of years and want to know how I can vote in an upcoming election.

Military voting: I'm serving in Afghanistan and want to know how I can vote in my state primaries.

Find my polling place: I moved a couple of years ago and want to know where I should vote.

Writing and Information Presentation

Writing Level was measured with the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level metric.

PDF usage on the site was recorded, and the more content offered only in PDF format rather than HTML, the lower the score. In 2010, PDF usage data were collected as part of the content scorecard completed by the California Voter Foundation and the Center for Governmental Studies. For every piece of content CVF and CGS were seeking, they noted whether it was available in HTML or only in PDF format.

Features That Were Not Applicable

The designation "not applicable" was used so that websites that do not need certain search or voter tools due to laws and practices in their state were not marked down in the usability criteria.

Websites Evaluated for Usability

For each state, one primary website was evaluated. If tools were available on another linked site, that site was considered only for evaluating tools.

Websites Evaluated for Usability

STATE	ELECTION WEBSITES
Alabama	www.alabamavotes.gov
Alaska	www.elections.alaska.gov
Arizona	www.azsos.gov/election
Arkansas	www.votenaturally.org
California	www.sos.ca.gov/elections
Colorado	www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/elections/main.htm
Connecticut	www.ct.gov/sots/cwp/view.asp?a=3&q=415810
Delaware	http://elections.delaware.gov
District of Columbia	www.dcboee.org
Florida	http://election.dos.state.fl.us/index.shtml
Georgia	www.sos.georgia.gov/Elections
Hawaii	http://hawaii.gov/elections
Idaho	www.idahovotes.gov
Illinois	www.elections.il.gov
Indiana	www.in.gov/sos/elections
Iowa	www.iowavotes.gov
Kansas	www.kssos.org/elections/elections.html
Kentucky	http://elect.ky.gov/default.htm
Louisiana	www.sos.louisiana.gov/tabid/68/Default.aspx
Maine	www.maine.gov/sos/cec/elec
Maryland	www.elections.state.md.us
Massachusetts	www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/eleidx.htm
Michigan	www.mi.gov/sos/0,1607,7-127-1633---,00.html
Minnesota	www.sos.state.mn.us/index.aspx?page=4
Mississippi	www.sos.ms.gov/elections.aspx

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Websites Evaluated for Usability

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STATE	ELECTION WEBSITES
Missouri	www.GoVoteMissouri.com
Montana	http://sos.mt.gov/Elections/index.asp
Nebraska	www.sos.ne.gov/dyindex.html
Nevada	http://nvsos.gov/index.aspx?page=3
New Hampshire	www.sos.nh.gov/electionsnew.html
New Jersey	www.state.nj.us/state/elections/index.html
New Mexico	www.sos.state.nm.us/sos-elections.html
New York	www.elections.state.ny.us
North Carolina	www.sboe.state.nc.us
North Dakota	www.nd.gov/sos/electvote
Ohio	www.sos.state.oh.us/SOS/voter.aspx
Oklahoma	www.ok.gov/elections
Oregon	www.sos.state.or.us/elections
Pennsylvania	www.votespa.com
Rhode Island	http://sos.ri.gov/elections
South Carolina	www.scvotes.org
South Dakota	www.sdsos.gov/electionsvoteregistration/electionsvoteregistration_overview.shtm
Tennessee	www.state.tn.us/sos/election/index.htm
Texas	www.votexas.org
Utah	http://elections.utah.gov
Vermont	http://vermont-elections.org
Virginia	www.sbe.virginia.gov/cms
Washington	www.sos.wa.gov/elections/Default.aspx
West Virginia	www.sos.wv.gov/elections/Pages/default.aspx
Wisconsin	http://gab.wi.gov/elections-voting
Wyoming	http://soswy.state.wy.us/Elections/Elections.aspx

Endnotes

1 Scores in Pew's 2008 report "Being Online Is Not Enough" reflected the usability of a state's election website. Overall scores in 2010 reflect a combination of content, look up tools, and usability.

2 "Providing information on how to use voting equipment is valuable when there are changes to voting equipment. In addition, providing instructions allows new voters and voters new to the jurisdiction with information that can help alleviate wait times on Election Day. In addition to static files (word, PDF), interactive examples and videos are good resources as well." *Voter Information Websites Study*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Election Assistance Commission, 2006), 10.

3 "A number of measures show that prior to 1980, absentee voting was a relatively small phenomenon, but it has increased steadily in the past twenty-five years. The best evidence indicates that the rate of absentee voting from the 1940s to 1980 was relatively stable and amounted to between 4 and 5 percent of votes cast in presidential election years. In the 1980s, the rate began to rise, and continued to do so in the 1990s and in each of our recent presidential elections. Approximately 15 percent of all votes in the 2004 election were cast absentee. Early voting has become a significant phenomenon only in the past ten years, expanding from almost none to about 7.5 percent of the vote in that period." John C. Fortier, *Absentee and Early Voting: Trends, Promises and Perils,* (Washington, DC: AEI Press, 2006), 33.

4 "Disability advocates estimate that forty percent of voters with disabilities use absentee ballots." Daniel P. Tokaji and Ruth Colker, "Absentee Voting by People with Disabilities: Promoting Access and Integrity," *McGeorge Law Review*, Vol. 38.

5 "Among military personnel who reported not voting in 2004, 30 percent said they were not able to vote because their ballots never arrived or arrived too late. Another 28 percent said they did not know how to get a ballot, found the process too complicated, or were unable to register." *No Time to Vote: Challenges Facing America's Overseas Military Voters* (Washington, DC: Pew Center on the States, 2009), 1–2 (original research from FVAP 17th report).

6 "The American Association of People with Disabilities estimates that over fourteen million people with disabilities voted in the 2000 election but that more than twenty-one million people of voting age with disabilities did not vote. The issues faced by people with disabilities include difficulties in entering the building where voting takes place, reaching controls or reading ballots or displays, marking ballots due to lack of fine motor skills, communicating orally with poll workers, obtaining auditory feedback, and reading printed ballots or visual displays. They may also find the act of voting at a polling place to be so physically exhausting that they decide not to expend their energy in that particular activity." Tokaji and Colker, *Absentee Voting by People with Disabilities,* 1030.

7 "Post Election Day times and polling location hours prominently. While a single election calendar can cover an entire voting population, do not miss any opportunity to remind voters of these important dates and times." U.S. Election Assistance Commission, *Voter Information Websites Study*, 10.

8 "A sample ballot is the most significant section of a voter information website when measured by the time a voter spends reviewing information online. Polling location and registration data can be reviewed quickly; however, sample ballots, especially if linked to additional reference information, can take time to review. Jurisdictions contemplating a voter information website should consider including sample ballot display functionality in its site." U.S. Election Assistance Commission, *Voter Information Websites Study,* 10.

9 "Websites that do not attempt to answer "Where do I vote?" have limited efficacy and will result in all voter questions concerning where to vote being routed to a state or local call center. In addition, not answering this question on a voter information website may encourage third party organizations to create their own websites, which can limit accuracy." U.S. Election Assistance Commission, *Voter Information Websites Study,* 10.

10 "Give voters the ability to track absentee ballots online. A few voter information websites reviewed in this study included the ability to check the status of an absentee ballot application. The ability to follow the absentee ballot process is especially critical to overseas and military voters." U.S. Election Assistance Commission, *Voter Information Websites Study*, 10.