

Vision Statement

What world problem are you concerned about?

The lack of voter turnout in the United States is a monumental problem in our society. The proportion of the elderly registered voters in the United States who turnout to vote considerably outweigh the proportion of the other age groups, especially in youth, where the percentage of 18-24 year olds who turn out to vote has steadily declined since 1964.

Why is this problem important?

Voting is the foundation of a democracy. In a democracy, voting is responsible for enacting laws which govern nearly every aspect of our lives, as well as, electing our government officials, and, via these elected officials, helps to establish this country's foreign policy.

Voting in local elections probably has the most noticeable impact on daily life. Issues such as the definition of marriage, various school board decisions, election of local government officials, etc. are all decided by voting.

Particularly in a democratic superpower, voting has a potential to improve lives on a global scale. Foreign policy, whether ethically right or wrong, is determined by government officials who have been voted into office or those who have been elected by the government officials we voted into office.

Voting gives people a voice to be heard; it allows citizens, as a whole, to choose their own legislation, and, to some degree, how their country's foreign policy is carried out. When only a fraction of people vote, then only a fraction of peoples' voices can be heard.

What may be even more detrimental to our society is the disproportionate rate of voting between the ages demographics. The elderly are, in a sense, a short-lived minority among the demographics but are a voting powerhouse. Though the elderly do indeed deserve a voice, I do not believe, as a whole, the elderly always have the same interests as the majority of this country's population. I believe the future of this country should be represented by the people who will be living in this country, in the future.

What aspect of this problem seems particularly important to you?

Personally, I am not content with several current policies, both foreign and domestic, as I would assume most people can relate to. I believe many of these personal issues are shared with this "silent" majority, the youngest few demographics of voters who historically have had far less equitable representation at the polls. The United States' government is a democracy comprised of the people, for the people, but, as

long as our voting trend remains so disproportionately distributed, our government can only truly be, of the people, for the few.

How could a new software system help to solve this aspect of the problem?

A new software system could help to increase the total voices heard by our government by drastically increasing the number of votes among the younger demographics at any given election. A website could allow registered voters the convenience of voting from their personal computer or cell phone at a time that is best suited for them.

We are living in the era of technology where majority of homes have several devices which could be potentially used for online voting. Why should peoples only option for such a significant event include driving some distance to a predetermined location, hopefully in the city they live, and waiting in a line for some period of time with strangers. I am astonished that there is not already a current software solution for this problem.

I am, without a doubt, certain that online voting would tremendously increase the number of voters, especially in younger generations based solely on the convenience factor. Younger generations already spend a considerable amount of time in front of cell phones and computers; if voting simply required logging onto some government site and spending 15 minutes to cast your votes, people could vote while they're riding a bus, or on a break at work, or while waiting for dinner to cook. I believe this would level the playing field in a sense by, if nothing more, at least would improve the proportionality of the voters in respect to their age demographic.

Not only do I want to create a highly secure website for registered voters to cast their votes; I want to go a step further and increase voter awareness of the legislation and representatives on the ballot. On this website, each bill or position being voted on would have a whole page dedicated to it. Naturally, at the top would be the name of the bill or position followed by the generic, "non-biased" description that traditionally has always accompanied it. Below this, I would embed a *google.com* search with the bill or candidate in question's search results and thus, allowing the voter this optional convenience will result in a higher likelihood that users will educate themselves before voting. By simply using the Google search results, the information provided to the user can only be as biased as Google itself. This effectively helps to solve this secondary problem, voters not understanding what they are voting for.

Obviously security would be a concern, but I believe it would be the same minor impedance experienced by any secure website which handles sensitive information. If a website can be secure enough for students to apply for millions of dollars of government loans every year, or for millions of the country's civilians to access their personal bank accounts, or for multi-billion dollar corporations to access their bank accounts, then I would imagine a website could be created with enough security for an individual to cast their votes with a rightfully high level of confidence.

Why do you think that this idea will make a big impact on the world?

Like previously stated, if more people vote, then more voices will be heard. Thomas Jefferson once said, "When governments fear the people, there is liberty." I believe this is true, and I believe that more voices heard incites, so to speak, more fear. I believe that voting is our only opportunity to shift the balance of power in our direction; I believe that voting is the most effective way we can make positive changes in policy, both foreign and domestic. But, foremost, I believe that implementing this software solution for voting is the best way to drastically increase the number of voters.

Aside from the obvious domestic impact this would have on our democracy and the impact on our foreign policy via our elected officials, I believe there is a much more fundamental way this would impact the world. Having a disproportionate, low rate of young voter turnout is an anomaly experienced by all democratic governments. There is no doubt in my mind that if the United States implemented such a convenient, online solution to this problem that the other, at least developed countries, would soon fall in line. This would effectively allow for more voices to be heard worldwide.