

Current draft: 18Oct2019.1156pst

Journalism and Vote2020

Threats against the integrity of our elections challenge American democracy.

Today's partisan environment could destroy America's trust in our election systems in 2020.

Can we verify the integrity of our elections in a way that most Americans would trust?
Specifically, can American journalism build a national common understanding of how to monitor the integrity of our democracy?

On election day, news organizations now rely on voting counts from [6,459](#) major jurisdictions, and several thousand subjurisdictions. All together, there are over 9,000 voting jurisdictions that count votes.

This is a proposal to build a parallel data system, joining thousands of students and faculty across America in the national data science curriculum into partnership with news organizations, to build a new way to monitor election integrity, understand the data, and share analysis of the elections in those jurisdictions in an open and transparent way.

Many efforts to detect and prevent attacks on our voting systems are underway, at a national, state, and local level.

The [US Election Assistance Commission \(EAC\)](#) has distributed almost \$4 billion dollars to hundreds of jurisdictions; the Department of Homeland Security monitors and mentors hundreds of jurisdiction on hardening their systems; the National Security Agency, and the US CyberCommand are running training exercises to defend our election systems from threats of interference.

But American news organizations have a unique, independent capability and a special journalistic responsibility to publically report on the integrity of elections, whether government-run or privately-run. All news organizations are designing their systems now to report on the 2020 election.

Here is the important convergence: As American news organizations build their capabilities to report on the election, they can build, at the same time, elements of what America needs to *protect* its election systems--a new, vast network of local sources, local data, and local analysis able to detect anomalies and irregularities.

As election systems have come to rely almost entirely on information technologies, new

capabilities are inextricably joined with new vulnerabilities. Estimates range into the billions of dollars to update or replace voting systems in America's nine thousand voting jurisdictions to reach desirable levels of security. Primary elections in 2020, and the general election in 2020 will run on antiquated and vulnerable equipment. Time and money have run out. There is no practical way to change the voting systems for the majority of these jurisdictions.

But we can build reporting systems, news systems, data analysis systems to significantly increase our trust in election results. These systems will require new initiatives by American news organizations, joined with new capabilities of data acquisition and analysis developed in the rapidly expanding world of data science. The expertise to do this lies in American companies, American universities, and American institutions devoted to national security.

This site outlines a workable approach to join these communities in a common effort for America's elections.

Public media

- Major US papers
- Television news
- Twitter/Facebook/Reddit

Human incentives

Trials and demonstrations
