

Title:

Politics and the Internet

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Summary:

Internet can help people gain political power

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According to a recent poll conducted by ComputerWorld, about forty percent of the population believes that people can increase their political power by going online. Hence, many academics believe that people in western societies are becoming more technologically educated in order to gain more influence in the political sector. For example, Mr. Jeffrey Cole, a director at the University of Southern California states, "This year, 6% of regular Internet users said they have their own blogs, 16% said they post pictures on the Web, and more than 10% maintain their own web sites. In 2003, 3% of Internet users said they blogged, 11% posted photos, and less than 9% maintained web sites." (ComputerWorld, 2005: 1) Thus, the question raised by many is, "Is the Internet providing a more democratic and participatory human society for the future?"

Mr. Cole agrees that the Internet plays a pivotal role in providing a more equitable society that encourages participatory development. He argues that due to the younger generation having the ability to effectively communicate through Internet forums, they are more willing to express their political opinions online. The younger generation also has the opportunity to engage in academic discussions with people who are older and have more experience, such as university lecturers, or people who specialize in the area of discussion. Hence, the Internet has clearly demonstrated its use in terms of educating the younger generation for the future. However, the positive benefits that can be gained through the use of the Internet not only extends to young citizens, but has also created an impact for those who are in the workforce and are keen to learn more about their nation's political system.

Research has shown that many Americans are 'surfing' on the Internet before a Federal Election to increase their knowledge about political parties and their policies. Mr. Cole states, "The Internet is no longer a marginal force in

American politics - it is quickly becoming the central force in empowering voters." (ComputerWorld, 2005:1). For example, the success of the election of former Vermont Governor Howard Dean was mainly due to the Internet, where online fundraising and lobbying was used to ensure that people were adequately informed of the parties' policies.

Hence, due to the power of the Internet, although many would argue that a person needs a certain level of knowledge and expertise before they are able to master the Internet and its search engines effectively, these people also agree that new software and computer technicians are slowly changing technological discourse in order to accommodate for people who may not be as technically inclined. Although it is generally agreed that the environment of cyberspace and the purpose of using the Internet is constantly changing to suit the needs of contemporary society, gaining information about political parties and their policies still remains a top priority for Internet users, especially those living in Western society.

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