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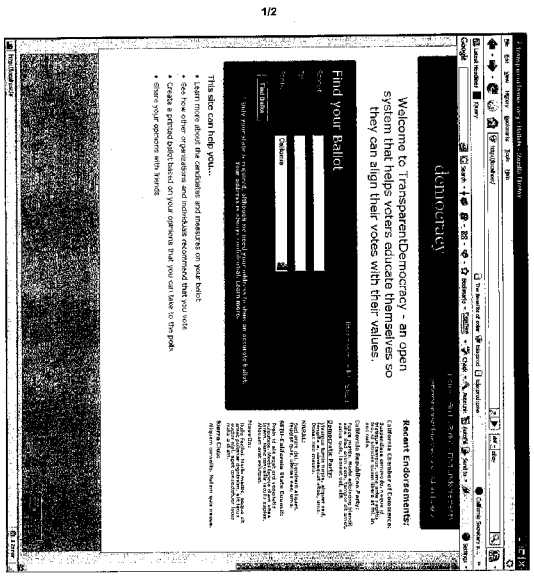
(54) Title: OPEN SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR VOTING INFORMATION AND ACTIVITY



(57) Abstract: Provided herein is a method for receiving information from an independent user or external information providers and storing it on a computer system. The information is then disseminated to consumers based on their particular needs as articulated by customizing criteria provided to the computer system. The methods and systems of the invention provide a platform for simultaneously introducing measures, propositions and the like for consideration by other users of the systems in the context of electoral participation or other participatory forums, the vetting of information in connection with such measures or propositions and the evaluation and ranking of decisions and propositions prior to a selection event, such as an election or shareholder voting. The methods provided herein provide advantageous tools to assist individuals and organizations in connection with national, state, and local elections, and for elections held at shareholder's meetings.

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OPEN SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR VOTING INFORMATION AND ACTIVITY

CROSS-REFERENCE

[0001] This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application No. 61/029,283, filed February 15, 2008, which application is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] Every four years the United States holds a Presidential election. Every two years there is a national election to elect members of the U.S. Congress. During and between each national election, voters also elect candidates for state and local offices and vote on various state and local ballot measures. Usually preceding each election for office there is also a primary election where the single candidate that will represent each political party is chosen.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0003] The present invention relates generally to a method for receiving information from an independent user or external information providers and storing it on a computer system. The information is then disseminated to consumers based on their particular needs as articulated by customizing criteria provided to the computer system. The methods and systems of the invention provide a platform for simultaneously introducing measures, propositions and the like for consideration by other users of the systems in the context of electoral participation or other participatory forums, the vetting of information in connection with such measures or propositions and the evaluation and ranking of decisions and propositions prior to a selection event, such as an election or shareholder voting.

[0004] Embodiments of the present invention are advantageous with regards to national, state, and local elections, and for elections held at shareholder's meetings.

[0005] For illustration and without limitation, embodiments of the invention provide systems and methods that can be deployed in conjunction with electronic ballots, absentee ballots; proxy voting, and numerous other applications.

[0006] It should be noted however that the present platform provides sample ballots for users to channel and receive information in connection with measures, propositions and the like that are the subject ballots. The platform then provides information for the users to locate actual ballots for voting. The platform provides quality control systems that avoid confusion between information provided for assistance in making a selection for a ballot and actual

participation in a ballot, which generally occurs through direct voting at a voting center or through conventional absentee ballot or shareholder proxy voting.

[0007] In one embodiment, the present platform provides the tools for completing a vote electronically.

[0008] The present platform is particularly advantageous in that it allows for locating actual electoral ballots, absentee ballots and share holder proxy forms.

[0009] One aspect of the present invention is that it provides tools allowing the users to introduce and publish propositions or decisions for consideration by other users. The invention provides tools for inviting other users to rate the relevance and/or the importance of a decision as well as provide reasoning and guidance on how other users might decide on the merits of a particular proposition.

[0010] As indicated above, the platform provided herein is not limited to electoral or shareholder decision making contexts.

[0011] The tools provided herein are contemplated for use in conjunction with various applications. In some embodiments, the tools of the invention are implemented in conjunction with a universal barcode enabling users and organizations to enable filing information linked to the barcode.

[0012] In some embodiments, a barcode is associated with information relating to investments in companies or mutual funds whereby information relating to the quality of the investment (e.g., based on economic and/or social value of the investment) is accessible through a link to the barcode.

[0013] In one embodiment, the barcode is linked to information on the producers and marketers such as their labor and environmental practices. For example; the platform provides barcodes that linked to a certificate for organic products, products certified to be made by manufacturers who do not use child labor; products made by socially responsible manufacturers; or products that are part of a fair trade process.

[0014] In some embodiments, the tools of the invention are employed in providing guidance in connection with charitable giving, for example, by allowing publication of information on 501C3 nonprofit organizations to insure a better match between the recipient organization and the objectives of the donor.

[0015] The inventors have identified a need for voters to be able to better align their votes with their values. The inventors have also identified a need for increased transparency and trust in electoral systems. The inventors have further identified a need for providing a unified,

organized, and easily accessible source for information on candidates and issues. The inventors have also identified a need for increasing access to voters by organizations with information about candidates and ballot measures which would be of value to an electorate. Further, the inventors have identified a need for decreasing the costs associated with making valuable information accessible to an electorate. These and other needs are addressed by the embodiments of the invention described herein.

[0016] Some embodiments of the present invention provide a computer implemented method for providing customized information comprising the steps of providing an interface to a plurality of external information providers and a plurality of consumers; receiving information from at least one of said plurality of external information providers and customizing criteria from at least one of said plurality of consumers, said receiving being accomplished through the use of said interface; customizing said information from said external information providers for said consumers based on said customizing criteria; and providing said customized information to said consumers through the use of said interface.

INCORPORATION BY REFERENCE

[0017] All publications and patent applications mentioned in this specification are herein incorporated by reference to the same extent as if each individual publication or patent application was specifically and individually indicated to be incorporated by reference.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0018] The novel features of the invention are set forth with particularity in the appended claims. A better understanding of the features and advantages of the present invention will be obtained by reference to the following detailed description that sets forth illustrative embodiments, in which the principles of the invention are utilized, and the accompanying drawings of which:

[0019] Figure 1 illustrates a screen printout according to one embodiment of the invention. As shown in Figure 1, the user can access the platform and locate a ballot initiative or other election item. The user can enter appropriate information such as zip code or address and retrieve current ballot information. As shown in Figure 1, the user can access information on candidates, ballot initiatives etc. As shown on the right section of the figure, endorsements of particular candidates or ballot initiatives can be retrieved. As well, the user can access information relating to voting recommendations from other individuals or organizations. The

user can create a printed ballot incorporating the user's opinions. As well, the user can share her opinions with others.

[0020] Figure 2 illustrates a ballot generated by the user with planned votes. In some embodiment, the finalized ballot is submitted by the user for actual electronic voting.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0021] The present invention relates generally to a method for receiving information from certain external information providers and storing it on a computer system. The information is then disseminated to consumers based on their particular needs as articulated by customizing criteria provided to the computer system. Embodiments of the present invention are especially useful with regards to national, state, and local elections, and for elections held at shareholder's meetings.

Elections

[0022] On various 2006 Los Angeles ballots there were six candidates for each of the seven state offices. There were six candidates for a U.S. senate seat. There were between two and four candidates for various U.S. House of Representative seats. There were between two and four candidates for various state Senate and Assembly seats. Additionally, various judicial positions were up for election. Finally, there were nine different statewide propositions on which voters had to decide.

[0023] About 64 % of the electorate, or 126 million people, voted in the 2004 Presidential election. During the 2000 Presidential election only 60% of eligible voters, or 111 million people, cast votes. During the 2006 mid-term elections about 84 million people, or about 40% of the eligible voting population, voted. In the 2002 mid-term election, about 39.5% of eligible voters, or about 78 million people, voted.

[0024] During the 2006 mid-term elections the AFL-CIO, a 501(c) organization, spent about $40 million on voter education and mobilization efforts. An estimated 205,000 members knocked-on doors, made 30 million phone calls, and distributed over 14 million leaflets. The Chamber of Commerce of the USA, another 501(c) organization, spent about $20 million on TV advertising, phone calls, and the distribution of various materials. The 2004 Presidential election saw the 527 organization America Coming Together spend about $78 million. The 527 organization Progress for America Voter Fund spent about $36 million. All together, various 527 organizations spent over half a billion dollars on various voter education and mobilization programs during the 2004 election.

[0025] In some embodiments, the method is utilized for national elections. In some embodiments, users publish specifics relating to candidates in a national election. In some embodiments, a third party (e.g., organizations or individuals) publishes endorsements and other support information to guide users in connection with the election.

[0026] In some embodiments, the method is utilized for local elections. In some embodiments, users publish specifics relating to candidates in a local election (e.g., an election for members of Congress, state representatives, governor, school board, city council). In some embodiments, a third party (e.g., organizations or individuals) publishes endorsements and other support information to guide users in connection with the election.

[0027] In some embodiments, the method is utilized for ballot initiatives. In some embodiments, users publish specifics relating to a ballot initiative. In some embodiments, a third party (e.g., organizations or individuals) publishes endorsements and other support information to guide users in connection with the ballot initiative.

[0028] In some embodiments, the method is utilized for elections by shareholder. In some embodiments, users publish specifics relating to an election (e.g., a merger, a board member election). In some embodiments, a third party (e.g., organizations or individuals) publishes endorsements and other support information to guide users in connection with the election.

[0029] In some embodiments, the method is utilized for student body elections. In some embodiments, students use the system for posting ballots about student body governments. In some embodiments, a third party publishes endorsements and other support information to guide students when casting their vote.

[0030] While the present platform provides tools for external stakeholders to publish through the platform information on ballot initiatives, endorsements and other relevant information; the platform also contemplates situations wherein the host server provides independent information on ballot initiatives and other propositions for public consideration. In some embodiments, such information includes, without limitation, the context in which a ballot initiative is presented or a ranking or weight assigned to endorsements (meta-endorsement factor), information from external stakeholders that they have not yet directly published through the platform, etc.

[0031] It is envisioned that the invention will enable voters to better align their votes with their values. Further, it is a goal of the invention to increase trust and transparency in electoral systems. To this end, in some embodiments, external information providers provide information to consumers. In some embodiments, the information is in the form of opinions,

positions, data supporting said opinions and positions, governmental documents, documents generated according to government-imposed criteria, and any combination thereof. In some embodiments, the governmental documents comprise documents generated in an official capacity by one or more members of a legislature, one or more members of the executive, one or more members of the judiciary, an agency, a committee, a sub-committee, a commission, a special commission, one or more persons acting in an official capacity for a governmental entity, or any combination thereof. In some embodiments, the governmental documents comprise Federal Election Commission documents. In some embodiments, the documents generated according to government-imposed criteria comprise campaign finance disclosures.

System

[0032] Disclosed herein, in certain embodiments, is a method for providing customized information, comprising: (a) providing a database to store information; (b) providing an interface that facilitates communication with the database; (c) receiving information from an external information provider, the receiving being accomplished through the use of the interface; (d) storing the information from the external information provider on the database; (e) receiving customizing criteria from a consumer, the receiving being accomplished through the use of the interface; (f) storing the customizing criteria from the consumer on the database; (g) customizing the information from the external information provider for the consumer based on the customizing criteria to generate customized information; and (h) communicating the customized information to the consumer by displaying the customized information on a computer monitor.

[0033] In some embodiments, the tools provided by the present invention allow individuals and organizations to publish decisions and or propositions or the like which are the subject of consideration by members of a society or a subset community. In some embodiments, individuals and/or organizations publish proposed decisions or propositions; information on such propositions to guide the users in selecting appropriate propositions for consideration based on their own interests; as well as rankings of propositions based on relevance and other criteria.

Database

[0034] In some embodiments, the computer system is comprised of one or more servers. In some embodiments, it is contemplated that one or more databases will be on these servers. In some embodiments, the information from the external information providers and the customizing criteria from the consumers will be stored within these databases. In some

embodiments, some or all of the databases are relational databases or other databases which operates according to a similar model. In some embodiments, the relational database is integrated with a larger database so as to accomplish other tasks with other databases within the system. In some embodiments, the relational database is a separate database but one which is partly integrated with other databases in the system.

[0035] . In some embodiments, an external information provider uploads the information onto the computer system. In some embodiments, the information is stored in a relational database on the computer system. As used herein, upload will refer to the process of transferring files from a local computer to the server. In some embodiments, a webpage is created for each external information provider. In some embodiments, the webpage contains the information uploaded by that external information provider and biographical, background, or historical, or any combination thereof, information regarding that external information provider.

Interface

[0036] In some embodiments, the receiving of the information and the customizing criteria, as well as the output of the customized information, is accomplished by use of an interface.

[0037] As used herein, interface will refer to the graphical form, textual form, or any combination thereof, of interaction between the consumer or external information provider, and software located on the server or servers. In some embodiments, the interface allows a consumer or external information provider to give commands to software located on the server or servers. These commands are then translated into instructions that the server or servers interpret.

[0038] In some embodiments, the interface is a webpage on the World Wide Web.

[0039] In some embodiments, the interface is any suitable type of media, e.g., video through online servers such as YouTube.

External Information Providers

[0040] As used herein, external information provider will refer to any individual, organization, or government entity which provides information to consumers through the interface. In some embodiments, the present platform is employed to publish through the platform information from external information providers, for example, the platform is enabled to keep track of significant events in connection with a particular initiative or proposition (e.g., significant endorsement) and alert the endorser and invite them to update the information linked to the proposition or initiative through the platform. Thus, any individual, organization, or governmental entity, or any combination thereof, who utilizes the method to

disseminate information regarding one or more candidates or issues to be voted upon is contemplated within the definition.

[0041] In some embodiments, an external information provider is a public officeholder, a candidate for public office, a nonprofit organization, a media organization, or combinations thereof.

[0042] In some embodiments, an external information provider accesses the computer system. In some embodiments, an external information provider provides descriptive information regarding the contents of the information. In some embodiments, this information will be used by the computer system to index the information.

[0043] In some embodiments, the external information provider identifies a candidate to which information pertains and the geographical area where the candidate is running for office. In some embodiments, the geographical information is the state, county, or district in which the candidate is running. In some embodiments, the geographical information indicates that the candidate is running for a national office

[0044] It is envisioned that external information providers, and various third parties, will notify their membership about the interface. Use of the interface could supplement or replace their traditional methods of voter outreach and voter education. No longer relying on paper materials and labor intensive distribution efforts would enable the external information providers to save money. Thus, in some embodiments, a consumer accesses the interface after notification. In some embodiments, a third party or an external information provider notifies a consumer about the interface. In some embodiments, an email sent by a third party or external information provider links to the interface. In some embodiments, the notification is via a hyperlink located on the website of a third party or an external information provider

[0045] Another aspect of the present platform is to enable external providers to post on their web page or other page a version of the tools provided herein for members of the group associated with the external provider (e.g., the Sierra Club) to access a link back to the group's webpage where recommendation on a ballot initiative are provided for the group for further informing the membership on the group's position.

Consumers

[0046] As used herein, consumer or user will refer to any one who utilizes the invention but who is not initially an external information provider, but can save the ballot for future reference and if desired can become a provider. Thus, any person who utilizes the method to gain information regarding one or more candidates or issues to be voted upon is contemplated

within the definition. In some embodiments, a consumer includes an eligible voter in local, state, or national elections, or a shareholder voting in an annual or special shareholder's meeting, or anyone gathering information for any of the aforementioned.

[0047] It is also envisioned that consumers will notify their friends, family and others acquaintances, e.g., neighbors, members of a social network) thereby providing recommendation with greater credibility than those provided by outsiders about the interface. Thus, in some embodiments, there is a means for consumers to notify third parties about the interface. In some embodiments, notification is by email. In some embodiments, an email contains a hyperlink that links to the interface. In some embodiments, a consumer emails their ballot and customized information. In some embodiments, the email with the ballot and customized information contains instructions on accessing the interface. In some embodiments, the email with the ballot and customized information contains a hyperlink linking to the interface.

Customizing

[0048] In some embodiments, a consumer accesses the computer system. In some embodiments, a consumer uploads customizing criteria onto the computer system. In some embodiments, the customizing criteria are a consumer's geographical location, precinct number, or securities owned.

[0049] In some embodiments, the server(s) filter the information provided by an external information provider using the customizing criteria uploaded by a consumer.

[0050] In some embodiments, the customized information provided to a consumer is sorted. In some embodiments, a consumer selects how the information is sorted. In some embodiments, the customized information is sorted alphabetically by name of the providing external information provider. In some embodiments, the customized information is sorted by the type of providing external information provider. By way of non-limiting example, the categories could be media organization, non-profit organization, political action committee, or governmental entity. In some embodiments, the customized information is sorted by the subject matter of the information. By way of non-limiting example, the categories could be environment, civil liberties, economy, and national security. In some embodiments, the customized information is sorted by the type of election to which the information pertains. By way of non-limiting example, the categories could be national election, statewide election, countywide election, or district election. In some embodiments, the customized information is sorted by the frequency that it is relied upon by other consumers. In some embodiments, the

customized information is sorted according to evaluations from external information providers or evaluations from consumers.

[0051] In some embodiments, the interface comprises information regarding pending legislation or governmental decisions. By way of non-limiting example, pending governmental decisions can include rulemaking by executive agencies which are often times published only in the Federal Register for a short period of time.

Communicating

[0052] In some embodiments, the customized information is communicated to the consumer. In some embodiments, the customized information is communicated to the consumer by displaying the information on a computer monitor. In some embodiments, the information is displayed on the interface. In some embodiments, the customized information is communicated to the consumer by emailing the information to the consumer. In some embodiments, the customized information is communicated to the consumer by mailing the information to the consumer.

[0053] In order to provide information to as many voters as possible, in some embodiments a consumer prints or emails customized information. In some embodiments, a consumer prints or emails customized information through the interface or communicate in other ways, including sending a text message or using other online communication channels such as posting on social networking web communications (e.g., Myspace and Facebook).

[0054] It is also envisioned that the invention will help keep consumers apprised of recently added information and pending elections. Thus, in some embodiments, a consumer registers an email address. In some embodiments, the consumer receives an alert regarding new information adhering to the consumer's customizing criteria. In some embodiments, consumers receive alerts regarding a pending election. In some embodiments, the alerts contain information customized using customizing criteria the consumer entered for a previous election.

Additional Services

Information Evaluation

[0055] One embodiment of the invention provides for meta-endorsement assignments based in the evaluation and assessment of the various endorsements listed for particular initiative. Such meta-endorsement will allow the consumers to sort through third party endorsements without the need to conduct extensive research on each individual (or organization) endorser.

[0056] In some embodiments, a consumer also evaluates, endorses, ranks, or comments on, or any combination thereof, (hereinafter, evaluate) an external information provider whose information was provided to the consumer. In some embodiments, the computer system will prompt a consumer to evaluate one or more external information providers. In some embodiments, the computer system will place an evaluation prompt in visual proximity to the customized information. In some embodiments, the computer system will send a consumer an email requesting that the consumer evaluate one or more external information providers whose information was provided to the consumer. In some embodiments, an email requesting that a consumer evaluate one or more external information providers will contain a hyperlink that will take a consumer to the interface where the consumer evaluates one or more external information providers.

[0057] In some embodiments, a consumer also evaluates, endorses, ranks, or comments on, or any combination thereof, (hereinafter, evaluate) the customized information. In evaluating customized information and decisions that can be made users are able to evaluate or rank the relative importance of the different aspects they are being asked to decide for example a specific proposition. In some embodiments, the computer system will prompt a consumer to evaluate the customized information. In some embodiments, the computer system will place an evaluation prompt in visual proximity to the customized information. In some embodiments, the computer system will send a consumer an email requesting that the consumer evaluate the customized information. In some embodiments, an email will contain a hyperlink that will take a consumer to the interface where the consumer evaluates the customized information.

[0058] In some embodiments, an external information provider evaluates, endorses, ranks, or comments on, or any combination thereof, (hereinafter, evaluate) one or more other external information providers. In some embodiments, the computer system will prompt an external information provider to evaluate one or more other external information providers. In some embodiments, the computer system will place an evaluation prompt in visual proximity to the instructions for uploading information. In some embodiments, the computer system will send an external information provider an email with a prompt requesting that the external information provider evaluate one or more other external information providers. In some embodiments, an email with a prompt requesting that the external information provider evaluate one or more other external information providers will contain a hyperlink that will take an external information provider to the interface where an external information provider

evaluates one or more other external information providers. In some embodiments, an external information provider will be able to select, by any means known in the art, the one or more other external information providers to be evaluated.

[0059] In some embodiments, an external information provider evaluates, endorses, ranks, or comments on, or any combination thereof, (hereinafter, evaluate) the information provided by other external information providers. In some embodiments, the computer system will prompt an external information provider to evaluate the information provided by one or more other external information providers. In some embodiments, the computer system will place the evaluation prompt in visual proximity to the instructions for uploading information. In some embodiments, the computer system will send an external information provider an email with a prompt requesting that the external information provider evaluate the information provided by one or more other external information providers. In some embodiments, an email with an evaluation prompt will contain a hyperlink which will take an evaluating external information provider to the interface where the evaluating external information provider evaluates the information provided by one or more other external information providers. In some embodiments, an evaluating external information provider will be able to select, by any means known in the art, the one or more other external information providers whose information will be evaluated.

[0060] In some embodiments, the evaluations, endorsements, rankings, comments, or any combination thereof, (hereinafter, evaluations) are provided to a consumer in visual proximity to the customized information. In some embodiments, there will be a hyperlink that will take a consumer to the evaluations. In some embodiments, the evaluations will contain hyperlinks that will take a consumer to the information uploaded by and regarding the evaluating external information provider.

Communication with Elected Officials

[0061] It is a goal of the invention to facilitate citizen involvement in government. Citizens can most effectively participate in government when they are aware of current governmental actions and when they can communicate with their representatives.

[0062] In some embodiments, the interface facilitates contact with a governmental official. In some embodiments, the governmental official is an elected representative. In some embodiments, the governmental official is a member of an executive branch. In some embodiments, the governmental official is the President. In some embodiments, the governmental official is a governor. In some embodiments, the governmental official is a

member of a legislative branch. In some embodiments, the governmental official is member of Congress. In some embodiments, the governmental official is a state representative.

[0063] In some embodiments, the interface comprises contact information for a governmental official. In some embodiments, the contact information is a phone number, email address, a mailing address, or a combination hereof.

[0064] In some embodiments, the interface comprises means for contacting governmental officials. In some embodiments, the interface comprises a hyperlink of an email address. In some embodiments, the interface comprises a program that facilities internet-based phone calls. In some embodiments, the interface comprises a videoconference system. In some embodiments, the interface allows a consumer to request and/or schedule a meeting with a governmental official.

[0065] In some embodiments, the interface comprises petitions started by a consumer or an external information provider which are made available to all consumers through the interface.

Practice Ballots

[0066] To further assist the consumer in voting, the interface provides the consumer with a practice ballot. Therefore, in some embodiments, an election ballot is generated and provided to a consumer based on the consumer's customizing criteria. In some embodiments, a ballot lists persons or items, or any combination thereof, on which the consumer may vote. In some embodiments, a ballot contains the candidates for local, state, and national office on which a voter in the consumer's geographical location may vote. In some embodiments, a ballot is an official ballot if an official ballot has been generated. In some embodiments, a ballot is a hypothetical ballot with its contents extrapolated by the computer system from the most current information available.

[0067] In some embodiments, the generated ballot is an HTML document. In some embodiments, the generated ballot is a downloadable document. By way of non-limiting example, a downloadable ballot could be a Microsoft Word document or an Adobe PDF document. In some embodiments, some of the contents of a ballot are hyperlinks which link to customized information. By way of non-limiting example, a ballot lists three candidates for President of the United States under a heading: Candidates for the Office of the President of the United States. The heading "Candidates for the Office of the President of the United States" is a hyperlink. By clicking on the heading, a consumer is taken to customized information pertinent to that election.

[0068] It is envisioned that consumers will use the ballot and customized information to optimize their voting experience. In some embodiments, a consumer fills-out the ballot using the customized information. In some embodiments, a consumer fills-out a ballot through the interface. In some embodiments, the interface comprises the means to print a ballot. In some embodiments, a consumer utilizes the ballot to fill-out an absentee ballot. In some embodiments, a consumer utilizes the information to fill-out a proxy. In some embodiments, a consumer brings a ballot to an election place and uses it to fill out an official ballot. In some embodiments, a consumer distributes copies of a ballot to one or more third parties. In some embodiments, consumers distributes a ballot by printing and distributing paper copies, or by email. In some embodiments, a consumer prints or emails a ballot through the interface. Distribution of s ballot is particularly useful as it has been shown that peer-to-peer Get-Out-the-Vote emails can increase voter turn-out by about 6.8% to 12%.

Additional Sources of Information

[0069] It is envisioned that consumers will also use the interface to assist them with the process of voting. Thus, in some embodiments, the interface additionally comprises hyperlinks to other sources of information. In some embodiments, these other sources of information provide information regarding voting. In some embodiments, these information sources contain information regarding registering to vote, applying for an absentee ballot, locating a polling place, and increasing the likelihood that a vote will be counted. Information sources regarding the latter subject are especially important given the increased reliance on electronic voting machines which often do not provide a paper copy of the vote. These websites could instruct voters to vote by absentee ballot as a method of increasing the likelihood that their vote will be accurately counted.

Methods of Communication between Consumers and External Information Providers

[0070] It is also a goal of the invention to foster a sense of community and to enable consumers and external information providers to more effectively collaborate to address social, economic, and environmental challenges. Therefore, in some embodiments, consumers, external information providers, or any combination thereof utilize the interface to communicate with each other. In some embodiments, external information providers use email to communicate with consumers or with other external information providers. In some embodiments, the interface consists of chat rooms or moderated forums, or any combination thereof, where consumers and external information providers communicate with each other.

In some embodiments, the interface also comprises blogs to which consumers and external information providers contribute.

[0071] It is also a goal of the invention to encourage and facilitate charitable giving amongst consumers. Thus, in some embodiments, the interface allows consumers to financially reward those external information providers which they found to be most beneficial.

[0072] While preferred embodiments of the present invention have been shown and described herein, it will be obvious to those skilled in the art that such embodiments are provided by way of example only. Numerous variations, changes, and substitutions will now occur to those skilled in the art without departing from the invention. It should be understood that various alternatives to the embodiments of the invention described herein may be employed in practicing the invention. It is intended that the following claims define the scope of the invention and that methods and structures within the scope of these claims and their equivalents be covered thereby.

CLAIMS

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for providing customized information, comprising:

(a) providing a database to store information;

(b) providing an interface that facilitates communication with the database;

(c) receiving information from an external information provider, the receiving being accomplished through the use of the interface;

(d) storing the information from the external information provider on the database;

(e) receiving customizing criteria from a consumer, the receiving being accomplished through the use of the interface;

(f) storing the customizing criteria from the consumer on the database;

(g) customizing the information from the external information provider for the consumer based on the customizing criteria to generate customized information; and

(h) communicating the customized information to the consumer by displaying the customized information on a computer monitor..

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the information pertains to decisions posted by other users.

3. The method of claim 1, employing a computer system comprising:

(a) an interface through which external information providers may provide information and customers may provide customizing criteria; and

(b) one or more servers in communication with said interface, wherein said server or servers employ a relational database to store said information and said customizing criteria, and wherein said server or servers have means to deliver customized said information to said consumer based on said customizing criteria.

4. The method of claim 3, wherein said external information providers are selected from the group consisting of: individuals, organizations, and governmental agencies, and any combinations thereof.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein said consumers comprise anyone gathering information on an election or other decision proposed for consideration.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein said consumers comprise eligible voters.

7. The method of claim 6, wherein the interface is accessed through the internet.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein said information from external information providers is selected from the group consisting of: opinions, positions, data supporting said opinions

and positions, government documents, documents generated according to government-imposed criteria, any endorsement; and combinations thereof.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein said government documents comprise documents generated in an official capacity by a member selected from the group consisting of: one or more members of a legislature, one or more members of the executive, one or more members of the judiciary, an agency, a committee, a sub-committee, a commission, a special commission, one or more persons acting in an official capacity for a governmental entity, or any combination thereof.

10. The method of claim 9, wherein said documents generated by a government comprise Federal Election Commission documents.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein said documents generated according to government-imposed criteria comprise campaign finance disclosures.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein said customizing criteria are selected from the group consisting of: geographical location, precinct number, or securities held, or any combination thereof.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein said external information providers, said consumers, or any combination thereof may evaluate, endorse in election context, rank, comment on, or any combination thereof an external information provider.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein said external information providers or said consumers, or any combination thereof, may evaluate, endorse, rank, rate, assign a weight to, qualify, comment on, or any combination thereof the information provided by said external information providers.

15. The method of claim 14, wherein said evaluations, endorsements, rankings, or comments, or any combination thereof, are provided to said consumers through the use of said interface.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein said information from said external information providers is sorted according to categories.

17. The method of claim 16, wherein said consumers can selects said categories.

18. The method of claim 17, wherein said categories are selected from the group consisting of: position in the alphabet, type of external information provider, subject matter of the information, ranking as determined by frequency of reliance by consumers, evaluations from external information providers, evaluations from consumers, type of election to which the information pertains; information to enable the user to sort through the published info

based on the number of endorsements associated with the proposition; information on meta endorsement (filter)..

19. The method of claim18, wherein a customized sample election ballot is generated based on said customizing criteria.

20. The method of Claim 19 further comprising issuing an alert to the user with a reminder that vote is not completed until an official ballot in an appropriate site is cast.

21. The method of Claim 20 wherein the appropriate site includes voting through the internet.

22. The method of claim 19, wherein said customized ballot comprises candidates, issues, or any combination thereof on which said consumers may vote.

23. The method of claim 22, wherein said customized ballot is provided to said consumers through said interface.

24. The method of claim 23, wherein said interface comprises the means to print or email, or any combination thereof, said customized ballots or said customized information through other electronic communications such as posting in social networks.

25. The method of claim 24, wherein said consumers print said customized ballot.

26. The method of claim 24, wherein said consumers fill-out said customized ballot using said customized information.

27. The method of claim 25, wherein said consumers utilize said ballot to fill-out an absentee ballot.

28. The method of claim 26, wherein said consumers bring said ballot to a polling place.

29. The method of claim 27, wherein said consumers utilize said information to fill-out a proxy.

30. The method of claim 28, wherein said consumers distribute copies of said ballot and said customized information to third parties.

31. The method of claim 29, wherein said distribution of said ballots or customized information, or any combination thereof, comprises distribution by email, or by printing and distributing paper copies and other communication tools such as posting on a social network.

32. The method of claim 31, wherein said interface comprises methods of accessing other sources of information.

33. The method of claim 32, wherein said other sources of information provide information regarding subjects selected from the group consisting of: registering to vote, applying for an absentee ballot, locating a polling place, and increasing the likelihood that a

vote will be counted other type of information such as local voting requirements, need to bring photo ID or other such information relevant to voting.

34. The method of claim 33, wherein said consumers access said interface after notification.

35. The method of claim 34, wherein said notification comprises an email from an external information provider or a third party.

36. The method of claim 35, wherein said email comprises a link to said interface.

37. The method of claim 36, wherein said notification comprises a hyperlink located on the website of a third party or external information provider.

38. The method of claim 37, comprising a means for consumers to notify third parties about said interface.

39. The method of claim 38, wherein said consumers, external information providers, and any combination thereof may communicate with each other.

40. The method of claim 39, wherein said communication between said external information providers, consumers, and any combination thereof is by electronic means.

41. The method of claim 40, wherein said interface comprises the ability to donate money to said external information providers.

42. The method of claim 41, wherein said consumers register their contact information.

43. The method of claim 42, wherein said contact information comprises an email address.

44. The method of claim 43, wherein said consumers may receive alerts regarding new customized information.

45. The method of claim 44, wherein said consumers may receive alerts regarding pending elections.

46. The method of claim 45, wherein said alerts regarding new customized information, or pending legislation, or any combination thereof, are by email text messaging other forms of electronic communication social networks.

47. The method of claim 46, wherein said interface comprises information regarding pending legislation or governmental decisions.

48. The method of claim 47, wherein said interface comprises information comprising ways for consumers to contact governmental officials.

49. The method of claim 48, wherein said interface comprises means for contacting governmental officials.

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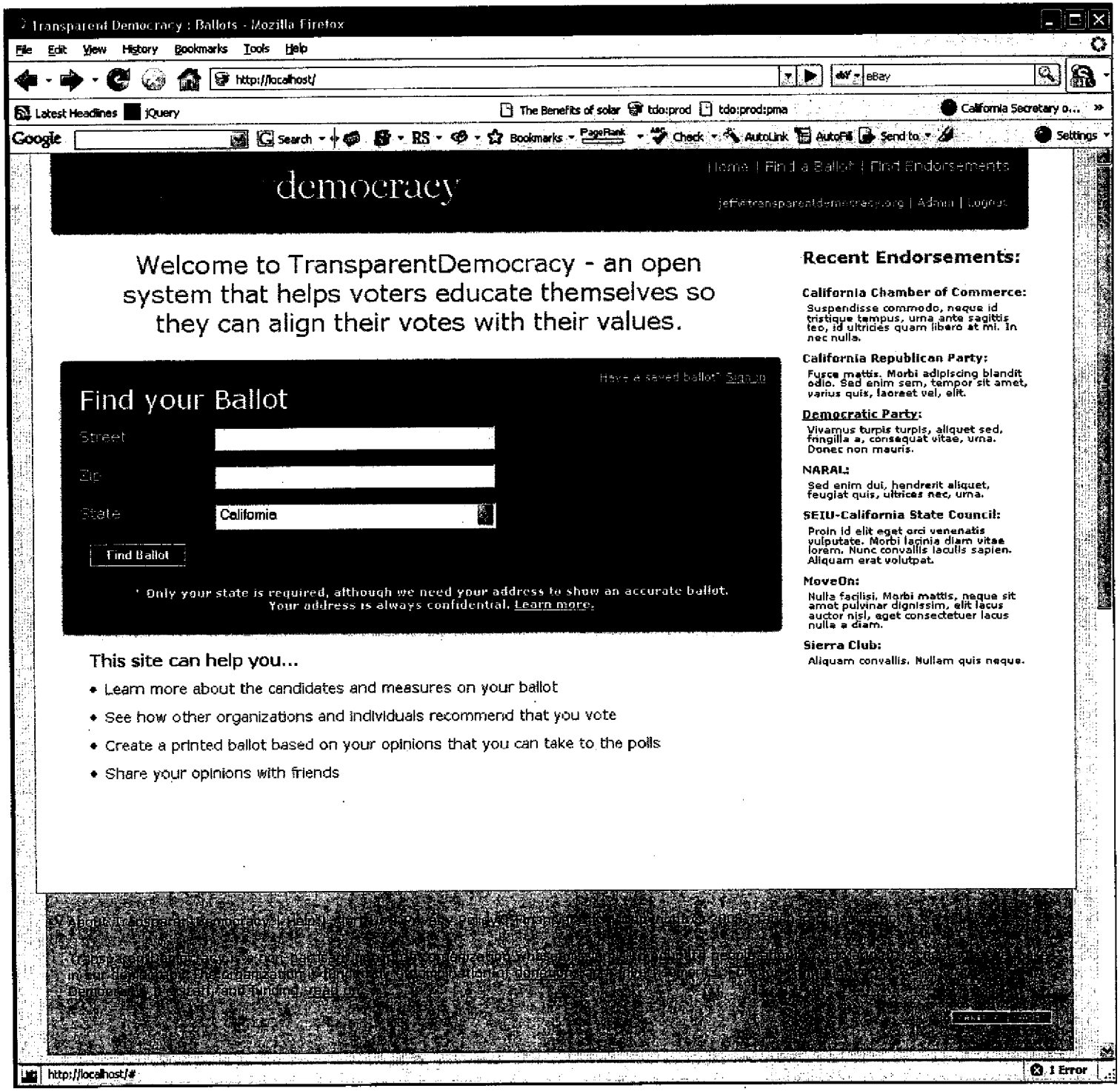

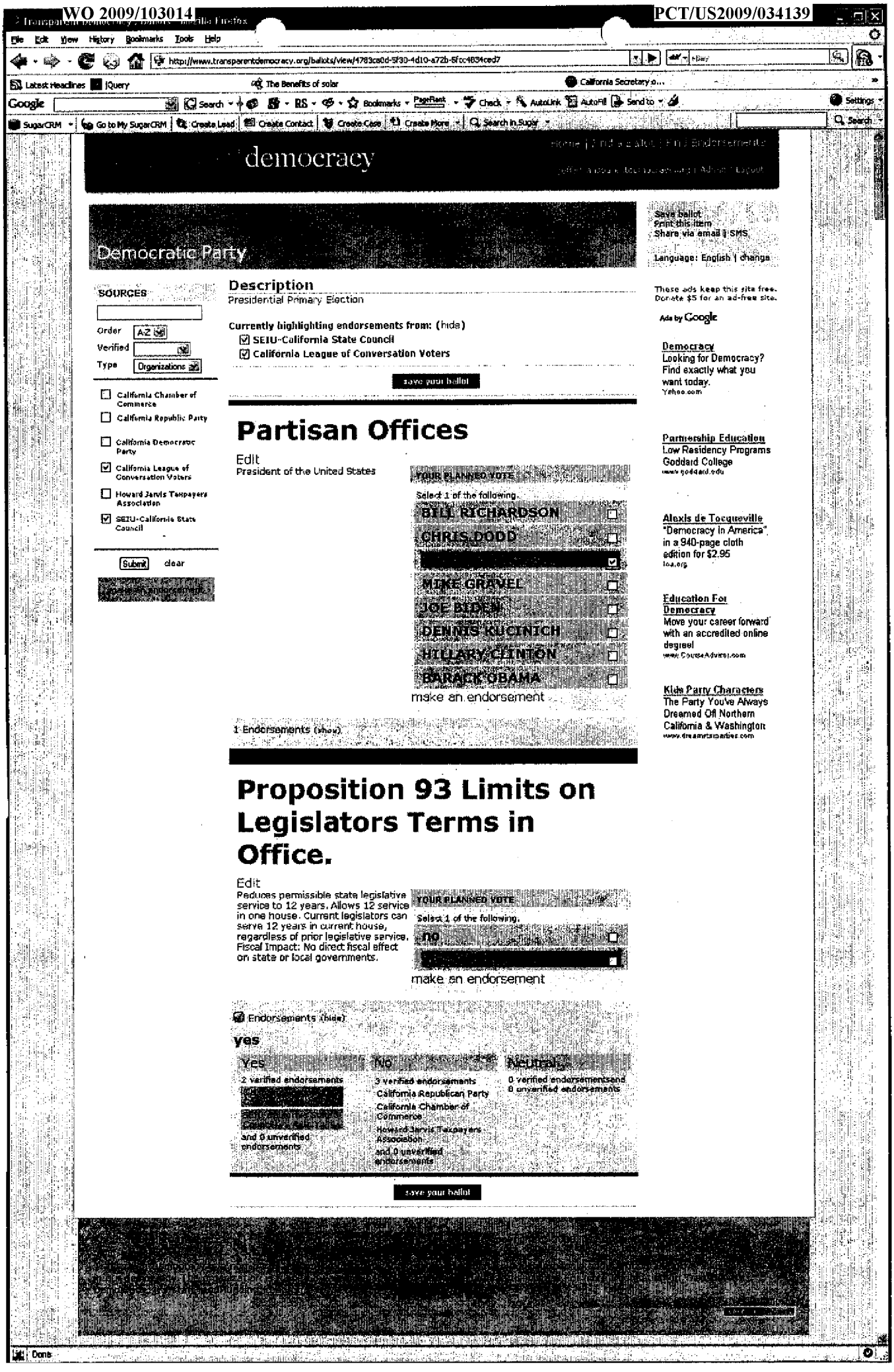
democracy
Democratic Party
Save ballot
Print this item
Share via email | SMS
Language: English | change
SOURCES
Order A-Z
Verified
Type Organizations
California Chamber of Commerce
California Republic Party
California Democratic Party
California League of Conservation Voters
Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association
SEIU-California State Council
Submit clear
Description
Presidential Primary Election
Currently highlighting endorsements from: (hide)
SEIU-California State Council
California League of Conservation Voters
save your ballot
Partisan Offices
Edit
President of the United States
YOUR PLANNED VOTE
Select 1 of the following.
BILL RICHARDSON
CHRIS DODD
MIKE GRAVEL
JOE BIDEN
DENNIS KUCINICH
HILLARY CLINTON
BARACK OBAMA
make an endorsement
1 Endorsements (show)
Proposition 93 Limits on Legislators Terms in Office.
Edit
Reduces permissible state legislative service to 12 years. Allows 12 service in one house. Current legislators can serve 12 years in current house, regardless of prior legislative service. Fiscal Impact: No direct fiscal effect on state or local governments.
YOUR PLANNED VOTE
Select 1 of the following.
no
make an endorsement
Endorsements (hide)
yes
Yes
2 verified endorsements
and 0 unverified endorsements
No
3 verified endorsements
California Republican Party
California Chamber of Commerce
Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association
and 0 unverified endorsements
Neutral
0 verified endorsements and 0 unverified endorsements
save your ballot
These ads keep this site free. Donate $5 for an ad-free site.
Ads by Google
Democracy
Looking for Democracy? Find exactly what you want today.
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