Regarding your coverage of the President’s Commission on Elections Administration (PCEA) Report, like many, we were pleased with its long waited release. The Report makes important recommendations about how to improve administration of elections, voter experience, and ending those long lines at the polls. But perhaps the most important step to bringing real change to the American voting experience can be found between the lines of those recommendations.

The PCEA Report cites an impending voting technology crisis and calls for changing the way equipment is certified and finding ways to innovate the machinery. The Commission offers a web site of tools to assist elections officials in adopting these recommendations. There’s a back story there worth mentioning here.

We are a Silicon Valley effort called the TrustTheVote Project, with a small but important part in the PCEA web site. The TrustTheVote Project is responsible for a specific piece of software available through that web site for building online voter registration services. We assert it’s the underlying development process that is the real key to updating outdated elections technology.

The software, which is showcased by the Commonwealth of Virginia’s new voter information services portal, was designed and developed using open source principles. The source code is freely available to any State intending to invest in bringing online voter registration to its citizens.

With this open source software available, the logjam to real innovation in elections technology can be broken. One of the logs in that jam is a persistent lack of budget to pay for new government technology. Another log in that jam is the commercial practice of making every project a custom built proprietary solution, with the same price repeatedly charged for each instance. Enter the open source alternative.

The existence of that open source software which makes the Virginia state voter services portal possible, means that every State henceforth who wants to build such a
service need not start from scratch; instead, they simply pick-up where Virginia left off. For many States, that will mean very little if any additional development effort. That translates into lower cost, faster delivery, and greater innovation.

By virtue of the open source royalty-free license, any change, enhancement, or improvement one adopter makes is available to all other adopters. We call this the “perpetual harvest” and it removes barriers to innovation.

Notwithstanding all of the goodness bound in the PCEA Report, the greatest breakthrough in decades of elections technology lurks within the content on the PCEA resource web site: a worked example of the potential of open source software to finally break the logjam of innovation in elections technology. And that’s just one small step.

You see, the 7-year old TrustTheVote Project is chartered with taking Silicon Valley ingenuity, innovation, and know-how to completely re-invent America’s voting and elections systems— all aspects— into publicly-owned open source technology. Voter registration services are a vital but single piece of that platform under development.

There are a number of important recommendations in the PCEA report, because America’s elections systems amount to critical democracy infrastructure. But without government budgets to pay for the innovations required to protect that infrastructure, open source presents the real opportunity to inject more verification, accuracy, security and trust into how America administers the foundation of our democracy.

The Commonwealth of Virginia’s voter services portal, represents a worked example of that. It’s now available to any State that wants to leverage it—for free.

And let’s not miss an important point: it was Virginia who took the initiative to make this possible by investing the initial effort to build an open source solution for their citizens first, and now for everyone else.

That’s open sourcing real change.

—**Gregory Miller**  
TrustTheVote Project

Mr. Miller is the Co-Executive Director of the TrustTheVote Project, a 7-year old non-profit public benefits effort based in Palo Alto, CA chartered with research, development and education in elections technology innovation. [www.trustthecure.org](http://www.trustthecure.org)