

Mark Fleisher

I'm Mark Fleisher, and I'm chairman of the Arizona Democratic Party. As many of you know, we've had a lot of activities over in the States the last few days. One of the things I want to talk about before we discuss the Internet election – clearly the Internet election stole the thunder for the primary, but for the general election, clearly the chad stole the thunder for the general election. I've brought a few cards; I thought I'd pass them around, if you'd like to look at them. These are punch cards similar to the ones used throughout the country and particularly in Florida. You'll see where some of them are punched out: those would count fine. You'll see on the back where some are pushed through, and those did not count. That's what the debate was about in Florida.

We had an election for our state party last year and used these punch cards. One person noticed that out of about four hundred votes, about thirty of them had not been counted, so he wanted a recount because he'd lost by nine votes. When we recounted them one of the cards was like this: you see on the front you punch them out and on the back it's normally all clear. Well on this one the chad had turned around and was stuck back in the hole, and that happens also, which means that they don't get counted. So if someone would like to come and pick these up we'll just pass them around and look at them. I thought you might enjoy seeing what a punch card and a chad actually is. If you can just pass them around so people can look at them, and see what we were talking about as the Democratic Party, as to why it was important to look at these individually to see if they should have been counted or not counted.

Now let's get back to the Internet election, which is what we're here to discuss. . Let me explain to you briefly what we did in Arizona, and then I'm going to talk about how we did it and what we accomplished. We did the world's first binding public Internet election, meaning that people actually voted on the Internet and there was no other paper trail. There was no way to recount it except through the Internet. Until then they'd always had it where you had a paper trail, you could always go back and do a recount.

This was for the presidential election, for the primary, with Al Gore and Bill Bradley. We held the election where Democrats could vote from March 7th through March 11th of the year 2000. There were several ways they could vote: one was that they could vote by mail, they could vote remotely on the computer from their home, office, the library or a friend's house. They could vote remotely only from Tuesday to Friday March 7th to March 10th. In addition they could vote early in some areas where minority districts were very strong, we had early voting on the 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th and then on March 11th, Saturday, we had poll-site voting only at over 120 polling sites. There they could vote on the Internet or on a traditional paper ballot, if they preferred. We also offered early voting by mail, where you mail a paper ballot in.

Let me explain why we held the first Internet election: what was the impetus to make us hold the first Internet election. The Arizona state legislature passed a bill that allowed Republicans to have their primary paid for by the state, because it was scheduled on February 23rd. The Democratic National Committee had stated that Democrats, in any state, could not have their election prior to March 7th. The Republicans knew this: they did the same thing in 1996. So the state had a paid-for primary for Republicans only, and Democrats had to pay for our own primary. So I was looking for a way to get attention so people would be aware of our election and turn out to vote in our primary. I also wanted a way to encourage young people, or people who have not voted or participated in recent elections, to participate. That was the goal and the motivation of trying to go with an Internet election.

Let me give you a little background. The turnout in 1996, when the Republican Legislature did the exact same thing to the Democrats, having a Republican only state paid election was 1.46% of the eligible Democrats. Now that was Clinton only: Bill Clinton's was the only name on the ballot. In 2000 we had Al Gore and Bill Bradley on the ballot, although Bill Bradley was beaten badly on Tuesday March 7th, and was no longer competitive. He lost in several primaries and was out of the race. However we raised the turnout from 1.46% to 10.56%, which is a 622% increase.

Now let me go back and tell you how we decided to pick a vendor, how we picked the company to conduct the Internet Election. An activist sent me an article from the *New York Times* about Internet voting with a company called VoteHere.net. We met with them several times, we went to the Democrat National Committee to get it approved so that we could use their system, and they agreed to do remote voting, which is voting away from the polling place. They agreed to provide the vendor supplies to man and facilitate election day voting at the polling site.

As time went by they realised they'd bitten off more than they could chew and wanted to back out of their deal, so we talked to five other vendors. One of the companies we talked to was Election.com. They were willing to pick up and cover the same things we discussed with VoteHere.net, they had a strong background in campaigns and elections, they had the financial strength and the most important thing we were looking for: systems to make sure the election would not be questioned as far as security or integrity. They also had extensive experience utilizing paper ballots and mail-in ballots, which most of the other vendors did not have. They'd actually run elections. We were going into unknown waters, not knowing what we'd gotten into, and we got into a lot of problems we didn't expect. I wanted someone who had the wherewithal, and whom I had confidence in to get us through those unknown waters, so to speak.

Some of the obstacles we met in the Internet election: the immediate concern was for the Hispanic community, the American Indian community and the African American community. We were concerned that they might feel they were being disenfranchised: that there's a digital divide. "Digital divide" refers to those who have access to the Internet and those who don't have access to the Internet. So the first thing we did when we signed this agreement in December was to start meeting with leaders of these different communities to discuss accessibility and how to ensure participation. We asked them what it would take to make participation a reality in their community. We got differing responses. In the Hispanic community they really wanted us to offer vote by mail: we'd used voting by mail in Arizona for general elections before, and they felt that would neutralise some of the fact that their neighbourhoods would not have access to computers. We also did early voting, which we decided to do after discussions, which would allow voters to vote for several days at a library or community centre. Voters could come in and vote for four days, Tuesday through Friday. On addition also brought people in that would go through the neighbourhood in restaurants with laptops and let people vote during their lunch hour in minority areas.

In the American Indian community we arranged for the Gates foundation to supply computers to the chapter houses on the Navajo reservation, for about 60 chapter houses.

Because we were proactive and went and met with minority community leaders we were able to get their support in this effort. It was very important later when we had a lawsuit filed against us to be able to have leaders of these communities,

elected officials, tribal chairmen, come into the courthouse and speak about the experience of what we were doing and about our program.

We also had to get Department of Justice approval, which we didn't realise to begin with, but there are several states in America that have violated voters' rights, and any change in voting systems must be approved by the Department of Justice. So we went to the Department of Justice and they normally require 60 days to review, however we received approval in about 12 days because of the urgency of the situation. . By the time we were able to submit we had less than 90 days until our election was taking place.

A group called the Voter Integrity Project (VIP), claiming discrimination, filed a Lawsuit in January 2000. They are generally a very conservative Republican organization that tries to discourage people from voting, but they claimed that we were discriminating against minorities. We went to court and they tried to get an injunction against us going ahead with the election. At the court hearing we had leaders of these communities, elected legislators and tribal chairs that talked about how they were comfortable that their communities would not be disenfranchised.

We were dealing with a very short time frame: that was one of the biggest problems. From signing the contract in December, around the 18th, to the elections starting March 7th was less than three months. It was very difficult; we had a lot of logistics to handle in that time frame. We had to organize the election; we had to find 120 polling sites. We originally planned only 50 but we kept expanding it because of the demands of different communities that wanted more polling sites, and to keep people satisfied that an Internet election would be available for their communities.

We had to develop procedures. Software had to be developed, security and election integrity issues had to be discussed, systems for voting – how to vote by mail, who would handle it, how to do early voting, how to do the remote voting. The mailing that we did – I brought samples if someone would like to hand them out – we did a mailing like this in English and Spanish that was sent to all 825,000 Democrats in Arizona. Every registered Democrat received one. The ones you're receiving are the ones we got returned back as undeliverable. I think I brought about 60 or so, so there should be enough for everybody. If you open this up you'll see what we sent out to all Democratic voters.

We also had to address compatibility of Web browsers to make sure that most people's computers would be able to be utilized Internet voting.

I'm going to go through this with you in just a moment, when everybody has it and has it open.

Digital divide concerns.

That's the issue of those who have Internet access and those that do not. VIP argued that the divide exists on a social and economic level; meaning minorities in poor neighbourhoods have less access to computers and to the Internet than wealthy non-minorities. I believe the digital divide does exist, but is much more related to age. I argue that a 21-year-old Navajo student on the reservation was more likely to have Internet access than a 70-year-old Anglo in wealthy Scottsdale. The judge tended to agree because of the experts whom we had testify, and let the election go on.

We signed the agreement in mid-December and had three months to do ballots, mailers, and Website design, to get an Internet provider and to promote the election. To ensure that minorities would participate we brought in a group called

Dogon Village to help the African American community to turn out. They went throughout the community to encourage people to vote.

Some of the problems were in getting locations: we had to have 120 locations around the state that were computer-ready and had Internet access. We used mainly libraries, we used tribal offices on tribal lands, we used community centres, and places that already had computers available. But each location had to be verified and checked by an expert to make sure that it would work. We had to have an expert at the polling site to make sure that when they checked in they had not already voted, and that the system was working correctly.

Time frames for printing.

To print this and send out 825,000 is an overwhelming task. The first printer we had set up to do this after spending much time it couldn't handle the job, so we had to go to another printer. The money that was spent on this election was exorbitant, a lot because of the short time frame.

A lot of people ask about the security: how we decided how people could vote. This is what people received in the mail. If you look on the front you'll see a PIN number that's printed. That's a Personal Identification Number. If you look on the envelope, it states how it's against the law for anyone to open this mail except for the addressee. If someone else opened the envelope, they violated a law, but that didn't stop people from doing it. So if they opened it they would get the PIN number, they would go to the Website, and they could go to either Election.com's Website or Arizona Democrat Party's Website, and it tells you the Website in here, and they put the PIN number in. When they put the number in it verifies who that person is and it then comes back and asks them 2 questions on how they filled in their voter registration form. I also have some samples of voter registration forms here. On the voter registration form you put in your place of birth, city and state, your date of birth of course, and you also put in your social security number. So if you put those three things in it would ask you two of them: it would ask you your date of birth and your place of birth, the city and state you were born in, or country. If you got those correct it would let you vote. If you didn't get it correct you were not allowed to vote and you had to go on Election Day to vote: you couldn't vote on-line remotely. So that was the security system we used.

We had approximately 70-100 press people in town the entire week of the election and we received tremendous coverage. This is a copy of press articles that we had on the Arizona Democratic Party and on this election. Each of these is a different article. This is for December 16th through January 10th, and the books get thicker and thicker. The last one is several inches thick, which is the week of the election. One day I did thirty interviews on this election, so the press coverage was enormous. We had 5 TV stations from Japan, we had TV from Spain, Germany, England, we had hundreds of press from the United States, national and local, and so we got tremendous coverage. And when you have that type of coverage you have a spotlight on everything you do. I said, at the time, if they ever looked at the regular general elections the way they looked at our primary they would be stunned at how poorly run elections are. That became clear this last year with the general elections and the problems we had in Florida, the problems we have with elections the way they're run now.

So we had the security of how you vote, and then we had a CPA firm that handled all the vote by mail forms. We had 40,000 vote-by-mail ballots come in, they're just paper ballots that are marked. And those were recorded, made sure the person had signed the envelope and verified they were a registered Democratic voter, and then were counted.

The election and Election Day problems.

We started at midnight, or actually 00.01 on Tuesday March 7th; we had a 24-hour operation for Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. We had support phone lines. One of the problems we didn't realise was that when we sent the PIN forms out a lot of people threw them away thinking they were junk mail. Then as the publicity built they wanted to vote online, but they didn't have their PIN number.

Also households with three registered Democrats would receive three letters, because each person needed their own PIN number, their own personal identification number. They'd receive three and throw two out and think they could just use one, so we had a tremendous amount of phone calls. The first day our phones were backed up the entire day, the second day we got a service out of Houston that we could divert calls to, and they answered thousands of calls. But we had a logjam of phones the first day. We also had a logjam of people wanting to vote, and because it was the first election they were over-careful on security, and the layers of security they had slowed down the process. So when thousands of people tried to vote at once it would slow down and kick a lot of people out. So the first day we had problems with people not being able to vote online easily.

Also during the election we found out, we'd tested it on Apple computers, but for some reason a lot of Apples, I'm not sure how many, could not vote. We tried for several days, we brought people in from Apple to figure it out but we never did get some Apples to work. We could not figure out whether it was the browser or what the problem was at the time. They've since worked it out, but some percentage of Apple computers were never able to vote online which was a problem.

We had a big fear of hackers. Some of the news agencies actually hired hackers to try and break into the system and see how secure it was, although none were successful. Super Tuesday, which was March 7th there were primaries in nine states, and Al Gore won all 9 states. So at the end of Tuesday night we knew Al Gore was the winner, but we still had four more days of our election. There was tremendous press coverage, that still continued, but the results were the first night by 10 p.m. we'd exceeded the number of the 1996 turnout of 12,844 voters. The total amount of votes was 86,907, that's a 622% increase over 1996 and a 145% increase over 1992, when there was a very contentious primary, so we're very pleased with that kind of increase. We had larger increases in minority areas. One of my goals when we decided to do this Internet election was to make sure that we could do an Internet election and not be discriminatory. That's one of the big questions about an Internet election, and I wanted to make sure that we made the other preparations and efforts to make sure that minorities were not left out of this process. And the results show minorities did participate in record numbers.

I'm going to give you an example of a very white, wealthy area which I'm calling District 30, which is in Mesa, a very wealthy area of Arizona, and District 22, which is Hispanic and African American, a fairly poor area in the inner city. Remote Internet voting, that's people who voted from home or work: in District 30, 47% voted, in District 22, 20% voted on the Internet. On mail, 32% voted in District 30 and 55% voted in District 22 by mail. On the Internet Election Day 1% voted in District 30, and that's because if you wanted to vote on the Internet and you lived in District 30 you probably had a computer. 8% voted in District 22. And paper ballots used on Election Day were 20% in District 30 and 17% in District 22. Increased turnout for District 30 was 547%, and in the minority area was 828%, so we're very pleased with those percentages of increases.

Total votes were 86,907, remote Internet voting was 41%, that means 41% of the people that voted, voted at home, office or work. Mail-in was 38%. What that means is that nearly 80% of the people who voted in this election, 79%, voted at

home either by mail or on their computer. 80% of the people did not go to the polling place: that's a tremendous percentage of people that wanted to participate. When you take democracy from the ballot box and bring it to people's homes they do participate. 5% voted on the Internet on Election Day at the polling place and 16% voted by paper ballots on Election Day. Now the Internet Election Day was a closed Internet: you had to go to a polling place to vote, you couldn't do it from home, but you could vote on-line on Election Day.

What would we have done differently if we had to do it over? I would not have offered Internet voting at the polling site: it was very expensive, we had to have the technicians, we had to find the locations, and they had to be computer-ready. A lot of work went in for only 5% of the total vote. A large part of the costs was in that 5% of the vote. I'd like to have had more time to prepare for it: the three months was a very short window. I wish we'd tested the Macs better, the Apple computers, so we would have known they worked. I would have had more telephone lines in support. When you go to a new voting system you have an awful lot of phone calls, and you have to have the support to answer those calls. We had extensive publicity worldwide, national and local. I still today do about two or three interviews a week on Internet elections, and during the debacle in Florida I was doing even five or six a day sometimes.

The Democratic National Committee at the National Convention in August used the Internet and the same Election.com for casting the delegate votes at the convention for Al Gore. Obviously the question is where do we go from here? What's the future of Internet elections? I think we'll use them these next two years on bond issues and perhaps some propositions, maybe some city elections. Perhaps with Florida's problems I think we'll rush Internet voting into practice a lot quicker. I think people were pretty shocked when they saw the problems in Florida. Did those ballots get passed around? Did everybody get to see the ballot? That's a system that's used in a large part of America, that punch-card system. In the wealthier areas, like in Maricopa County where I'm from, they use an optic reader, and that's about 99% effective. In the rural counties, which tend to be Democratic in Arizona, we use the punch card, and in Phoenix approximately 99% of the people who voted, voted for President. In Cochise County, which is a poorer Democratic county, 7% of the votes did not count for President. That's a huge difference when you add that up around the country to make a difference. And the reason they don't count is not because people didn't vote: it's because they don't punch that tab out correctly, or a tab or chad gets caught back in there.

There's no doubt we'll be utilizing the Internet for voting in the future, and with the problems with elections in the past five weeks in America, I believe Internet voting's a lot closer than it's ever been in the past. It will hopefully be used in the 2002 elections and perhaps extensively in 2004 when we elect the next President of the United States. I'll be glad to take any questions, comments or thoughts.