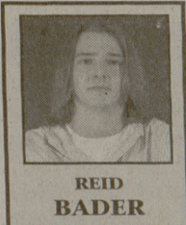


Cast your e-vote

Online voting should be option for all voters; has successful track record

The United States needs a program that makes online voting available to everyone.



REID BADER

Voter turnout with online voting would increase because it would be easy to use and ballots could be counted quicker and easier than before.

There should be an immediate effort by the federal government to coordinate state and local elections to implement an online voting system.

Online voting can be accomplished in two ways: voting online at the polling site and remote polling.

Poll-site voting requires the election staff to have secure computers in place for voters use, while remote voting calls for any computer at home, office or school.

Both systems have already been tested in binding and non-binding elections in some states.

Arizona held its Democratic primary via remote polling in March and declared it a success.

"We think this is very important in the future of how elections are conducted.

We're setting an example for what we hope will happen across the country and the world," stated Cortland Coleman, the Democratic Party's interim executive director.

Democrats tested online voting again at their national convention. Each state's delegation was located near an iMac terminal and states cast their ballots for a presidential candidate.

Democratic National Committee Secretary Kathy Vick said, "Until this year, we had never been able to monitor the delegations or reference vote results in real-time.

Election.com put that information at our fingertips, exceeding our expectations and changing the face of convention balloting as we know it."

Other states that have utilized online voting are California, which ran a mock presidential election during the primaries, and Florida, which extended a binding online voting system to certain counties during the national election.

Online voting offers the ability to vote from any computer.

implemented during this tumultuous election, the results could have been in much sooner.

Jim Adler, CEO of VoteHere.net, said, "The problem with any election is that the audit trail is arduous and error-prone. But with the Internet, the audit process is right there, and it is fast."

As wonderful and

Party when it began to plan its online voting primary.

"Internet voting, however well-intentioned, is not secure from fraud and is grossly unfair to persons without Internet access," stated VIP in a press release. "This is just a new millennium version of the literacy test."

U.S. District Judge Paul G. Rosenblatt accepted the argument from VIP, but allowed the election to continue, citing that if major discrimination did occur, the results could be thrown out. The results were not thrown out and VIP did not seek an appeal to the decision.

This "digital divide" can be overcome. Online voting programs can be begun solely by on-site voting. This allows the quick tabulation of votes, thus avoiding the time-consuming and costly recounts of punch cards and optically scanned votes.

As more research is done on the "digital divide," remote voting can be implemented and increase voter turnout.

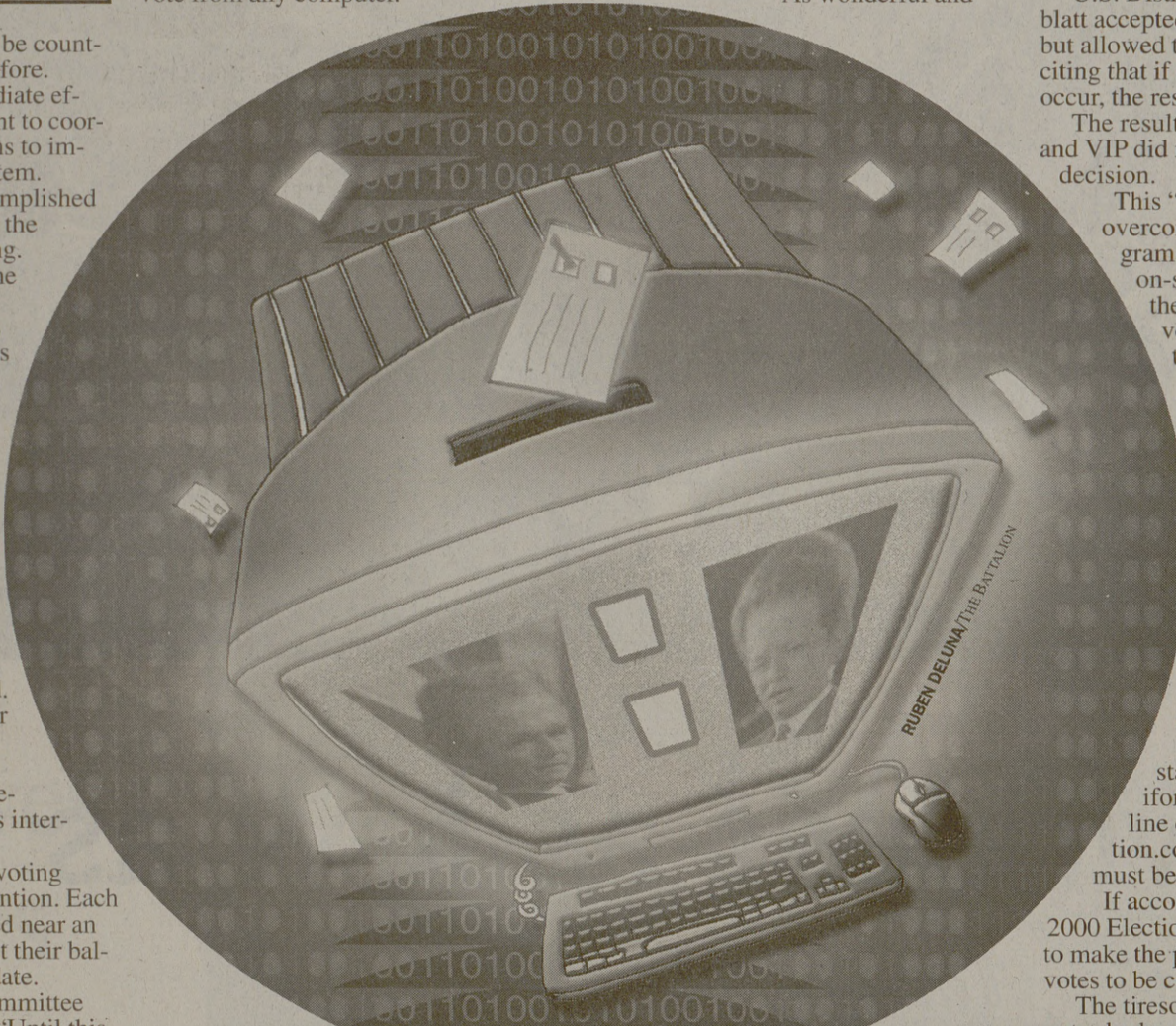
To accomplish this, the federal government must become active in supporting state and local governments implementing this system.

The framework made in states like Arizona and California, with the help of online companies such as election.com and VoteHere.net, must be expanded and supported.

If accomplished by 2004, the 2000 Election will be the last election to make the public wait weeks for votes to be counted.

The tiresome practice of recounting votes by hand and waiting for results, as has occurred in this election, will succumb to natural selection and be replaced with a quick and effective online voting process.

Reid Bader is a junior political science major.



The disabled can vote from their homes if they are unable to drive to polling sites, and soldiers overseas can vote without having to wait for the postal service.

In fact, if online voting had been

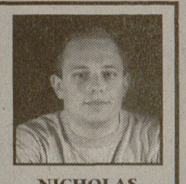
flawless as an online voting system may seem, there are opponents. One of the strongest groups against online voting is the Voter Integrity Project (VIP).

VIP sued the Democratic National

A look into the crystal ball ...

Analysis of U.S. political landscape

Last Tuesday, the American electorate cast its ballots in the one of the most interesting and confusing elections ever. Even now, one week later, it is impossible to name the next President of the United States.



NICHOLAS ROZNOVSKY

In a fitting finish, one of the most hotly contested presidential races in history has a grand finale which includes a close race in the Electoral College, a debate over ballot design, a multitude of recounts, lawsuits from both sides, two former secretaries of state, Pat Buchanan, Jesse Jackson and the possibility of undue media influence on the electorate.

For political scientists, it is a great time to be alive. For the rest of America, it is utterly confusing and at least a little disheartening. For decades, Americans have become accustomed to quick and decisive elections. Many Americans could not fathom going to bed Tuesday night without knowing who the next president would be.

Now, it appears that chaos and uncertainty will be the order of the day for some time. From some of this confusion, however, a look at the likely political landscape of the next four years can be gleaned.

Whichever candidate ends up becoming the 43rd president of the United States will suffer from a lack of popular legitimacy. Neither candidate received an overwhelming amount of support from Americans. There was no clear winner; no ideology captured the hearts of the electorate.

Unlike the Democratic resurgence in 1992 and the Republican revolution in 1994, neither party can honestly claim to have dominated this year's election.

When the presidential race is finally settled, the election will no doubt be seen by a large number of Americans as tainted.

From some of this confusion, however, a look at the likely political landscape of the next four years can be gleaned.

For the winning side, it will be seen as the greatest victory in the history of American politics. For the loser, it will be remembered as the election that was stolen by his opponent. It is clear that the dominant force in politics for the next four years will be division.

No better example of this division exists than the newly elected 107th Congress. Although several House races and a Senate seat in Washington are still under dispute, it is clear that when Congress convenes in January, it will be a more divided camp than before.

As it stands now, the Republican advantage in the House has shrunk to a mere nine seats. Once the Washington senate race is determined, the either Republicans will have a two-seat advantage or the chamber will be split 50-50 between the two parties.

Given the lack of a popular mandate and the division in Congress, it is unlikely that any of the major reforms proposed and promised by the two presidential candidates will ever see the light of day.

The chances of major changes to Social Security, Medicare, and the budget are slim at best. Any president who emerges from this electoral mess will simply not have the political capital to garner support in such a volatile Congress.

Even though the Democrats made inroads in both the House and the Senate, they cannot claim to have captured the election either. Despite their pickups in both chambers, the Democrats did not make the necessary and expected gains to put them in the driver's seat.

The only areas in which they seemed to enjoy large success were metropolitan districts like Los Angeles, New York, Chicago and Philadelphia. For the time being, the ball is still in the hands of the Republican Party.

The only real shining star for the Democrats in this election was the victory of Hillary Rodham Clinton in New York's Senate race. The election, which was predicted to be hotly contested, ended up as a double-digit victory for the first lady over Republican Congressman Rick Lazio.

Just when the Republicans thought they were free of the Clinton era, a new one was born in New York. The senator-elect will certainly become a lightning rod for conservatives' attacks during the next six years.

While the people elected more Democrats to the national legislature, the trend in state elections seemed to favor the Republicans.

The GOP captured majorities in a number of state legislative chambers, including South Carolina, New Hampshire and Missouri. Gubernatorial races seemed to validate the status quo, with only one state's governorship changing hands — West Virginia elected a Democrat as its chief executive.

And so goes the world of politics. The 2000 election, an election charged with excitement and the possibility of real change, will eventually end as a feeble affirmation of the way things are already headed.

Neither side turned out in huge numbers to radically alter the political landscape. The 21st century will begin as the 20th century ended, with political squabbling and division dominating the nation's government.

Regardless of the presidential outcome, America has secured for itself a very bitter and partisan political scene for the next few years. Although the discord which dominates politics is decry by many, it is but a reflection of the ideological differences which define this nation's populace.

Election 2000 may seem like no other election in the nation's history, but one truth remains: however, much they despise the outcome, citizens have no one to blame but themselves.

Nicholas Roznovsky is a senior political science major.

A battle with no victor

Aftermath of KTFB, administration clash

As the first anniversary of the 1999 Aggie Bonfire collapse nears, it is time for Aggies to rebuild.



MELISSA BEDSOLE

After the announcement that there will be no off-campus Bonfire, the most important thing to realize is that there is no winner in the debate over Bonfire's future.

The people involved with Keep The Fire Burning (KTFB) have lost in their attempt to hold a bonfire this year. Those who opposed the renegade bonfire lost as well. Many on this campus have lost sight of the unity that once held everyone together so strongly.

The fighting over the future of the Bonfire has divided all those connected to this University. The "family" that Texas A&M has been known for fell apart like last year's Bonfire.

Even though many students and faculty did not support the off-campus bonfire, the passion behind those who fought for it should be commended.

These people — including many who were not students — worked very hard to inform others of their purpose and the spirit they were attempting to save.

Many people who were closely involved were faced with the decision to follow the rules of the University or to follow their hearts — and both paths are lined with respect.

But Aggies should all be walking on one road, and it is time to focus on the truth of what is known by all.

The fighting over the future of the Bonfire has divided all those who are connected to this University. The "family" that Texas A&M has been known for fell apart like last year's Bonfire.

The A&M community knows Bonfire is an incredible tradition that is an integral part of this University, and students must not lose sight of that. While that might be the only thing that students can agree on, it is a starting point.

It has been almost a year since the collapse, and if A&M ever wants to move past this tragedy, Aggies must act with kindness toward each other's opinions

and work together for what needs to be done.

The feelings for the off-campus bonfire must be set aside to work together at what may be the last chance to bring the real Bonfire back where it belongs, on campus.

If students can take the passion behind their opinions and direct it toward convincing the University that students can handle the responsibilities of participating in the construction of future Bonfires, there may be something left to for students to do.

Finally, an important aspect has yet to be brought up. The students currently on this campus will not be here forever.

Most will graduate, and future Aggies will stand in their place. But the students who are here now must take the initiative not to let go of the legacy that was passed on to them.

If this campus cannot be reunited, students in the future will not know of the Aggie family and the spirit that is still alive on this campus.

The generation that experienced the fall of Aggie Bonfire must not be the generation that experiences the fall of the University and its legacy.

Melissa Bedsole is a junior psychology major.



The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 300 words or less and include the author's name, class and phone number. The opinion editor reserves the right to edit letters for length, style, and accuracy. Letters may be submitted in person at 014 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Letters may also be mailed to:

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College Station, Texas 77843

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Electoral College a better measure than popular vote

In response to Nov. 10 editorial. While the Electoral College is by no means perfect, it should not be eliminated based on the results of the election. In fact, the Electoral College has made things less chaotic this year than a popular vote election.

Consider this: The recount in Florida was mandated by a state law because the margin of victory was less than 0.5 percent. If Al Gore's popular vote "victory" holds, he will very likely win by less than 0.2 percent.

If the national popular vote were to determine the winner, in part or in whole, a national recount would likely be necessary.

If you think waiting on the recount is agonizing, imagine what would happen if all 50 states had to recount their ballots.

We would be waiting a lot longer for a verdict, that is for sure.

Matthew W. Roberts
Graduate Student

Mail Call

Bikers deserve tickets

In response to Cayla Carr's Nov. 8 column.

I say give the on-campus bikers as many tickets as possible. I do not ride a bike, so it will not effect me.

People insist on riding their bikes on the sidewalks when there are two bike lanes on the street.

They are called sidewalks for a reason — not siderides.

Yesterday, I was walking along the sidewalk, and there was a guy on a bike behind me trying to get by, and I got off the sidewalk to let him by.

Then I started thinking, "Wait a second, this guy has all-terrain tires, front shocks and a floating bike seat, yet I am the one that got off the sidewalk into the grass."

That makes no sense. I think the next time a biker pushes by me on the sidewalk I may "accidentally" go into my Tae-Bo workout.

Sometimes you have to take the law into your own hands.

Andrew Kresse
Class of '01