Online AIWS Roundtable
*Digital Technologies, Elections and Democracy in Times of COVID-19*

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Marc Rotenberg
Center for AI and Digital Policy
Michael Dukakis Institute

**Preliminary Remarks**

*Health Crisis and Electoral Governance – Steps to Take*

- Observe necessary health guidance in all matters concerning elections (Resources: WHO, CDC, national agencies)

- Communicate clearly to state officials and the public the safety guidance that will be followed (Resources: national agency websites, technology to educate and inform)

- Communicate clearly to public all necessary information about voting participation (Resources: national agency websites, technology to educate and inform)

*Electronic Voting – Considerations*

- Goals: (1) maximize voter participation (ensure easy and safe access to voting locations), (2) ensure accuracy of vote tally (independent agency to verify), (3) protect the “secret ballot,” the ability of voters to cast a vote without revealing who they voted for
• Voting experts are concerned about three problems: (1) disinformation, (2) reliability of online voting, and (3) preservation of secret ballot

• *Disinformation*: Consider source attribution for paid political advertising. Maintain strong independent media to monitor and counter propaganda. Support non-partisan research and NGOs committed to democratic institutions.

• *Reliability of Online Voting*. Widespread concern that “electronic only” voting is too easily subject to manipulation. Consider range of risks: political parties, criminal hackers, foreign adversaries. “Verified voting” in polling place (paper ballot that is optically scanned) preferred. Some experimentation with online voting (e.g. Estonia) but still skepticism.

• *Preservation of Secret Ballot*. Not a problem when a piece of paper is put a box. A complex problem when votes are cast online or by fax.

**Advantages of Vote by Mail over Telematic Voting**

• Vote by mail provides the paper verification favored by election security experts

• Vote by mail failures tend to be localized, limited in scope, and easy to detect. Telematic voting failures can be far-reaching and difficult to detect.