

0 Connecticut Citizen Election Audit

Municipal Website Study

A Study of Connecticut Municipal Websites Information
for Voters, Prior to the 2014 November Election

February 25, 2015

Executive Summary

Motivation

After every election there is disappointment in voter turnout in Connecticut and across the United States. Turnout varies between municipalities, between elections, and primaries¹. The reasons voters do not vote in a particular election are many, varied, and subject to unending debate.

One factor that can encourage or discourage voting is the information available on municipal websites. Connecticut citizens not yet registered to vote may turn to the municipal website to answer questions about voter registration. All citizens may look to that same website to seek details about voting and the upcoming election.

A 2013 national study² evaluated election websites across the country and interviewed voters. The study found that most voters use local government websites rather than state sites to seek information. The study determined the top five questions asked by voters:

- *What's on the ballot?*
- *What's the deadline to apply for an absentee ballot?*
- *What do I have to do to get an absentee ballot?*
- *When is my absentee ballot due?*
- *Where do I go to vote?*

Based on our concerns that voters in every municipality in Connecticut should be able to easily obtain information necessary to participate in our Democracy, we initiated this study of Connecticut's municipalities and the voting information they provide on the Internet.

Our motivation is not to single out municipalities or election officials, but to provide information on the opportunity for improvement and how frequently sought, quality information could be provided to Connecticut voters at low cost with moderate effort.

¹ The Connecticut Secretary of the State publishes turnout statistics after every election:

<http://www.sots.ct.gov/sots/cwp/view.asp?a=3179&q=392194>

² Usability of County Election Websites, <http://civicdesigning.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/371a.pdf>

Findings

Reviewing Connecticut's one-hundred-and-sixty-nine (169) municipal websites, we found:

- ▲ Using Google search we were easily able to locate websites for 100% of Connecticut municipalities.
- ▲ For at least 90% of municipalities we were easily able to locate a page of voting information on the web, registrars names, registrars phone numbers, and how to apply for an absentee ballot.
- ▼ Only 28% answered, "What is on the ballot?", usually by providing an image of the ballot(s)
- ▼ Only 56% provided the "Date of the next election". 15% of those answered in a way judged "obscure"
- ▼ Only 64% answered "Where do I vote?" with maps, street lists, or links to the Secretary of the State's online lookup tool. That 64% includes municipalities with only one polling place.
- ▼ Only 15% posted results of their 2013 municipal election.

Although not statistically evaluated, we also found:

- ▼ Many websites with broken links, and obviously outdated information.
- ▼ Many websites with registration information, without the information that it is possible to register online at the Secretary of the State's website.
- ▼ Many websites with homepage menu's for "Services" or "How do I?" which provided information on obtaining licenses, building permits, and how to registrar a dog, but no information related to voting.
- ▼ Many websites with up-to-date event calendars and front page bulletins, listing current events, including meetings on election-day, and Ebola preparations, yet that did not list election-day.

Recommendations

Recommendations For Registrars of Voters

We recommend that Registrars of Voters throughout Connecticut take responsibility to work with other municipal officials to provide municipal website information that is accurate, up-to-date, and complete, with a single main elections page that:

- ✓ Answers or provides links to answer the top voter questions, registration information, registrars' names, phone numbers, and office hours - including information on how to get assistance at other times, when registrars have limited scheduled office hours.
- ✓ Clear answers or links to information at the Secretary of the State's website for ballot images, online registration, registration requirements, registration deadlines, voter ID requirements, and information specifically for military and overseas voters.
- ✓ Assure that the municipal home page has voting information on any list of services, "How Do I?", calendars, and bulletins etc.

To this end, we have created a sample, whimsical municipal website to demonstrate how elections information might be highlighted on a municipal home page with a clear sample set of pages on such a site for registrars of voters information. We used the open source product Wordpress and its free service for developing and deploying websites³. Our sample site is <http://NutmegtonCT.wordpress.com>. We make do not claim that others could not easily design more effective, comprehensive, and more appealing websites.

We also recommend Civic Design's *Field Guide: Designing Election Department Websites*⁴ which we used to review and improve our NutmegtonCT sample.

Recommendations For The Secretary of the State

- ✓ The Secretary of the State has a single web page with links to much of the information most sought by voters.⁵ It could be improved and a permanent link⁶ setup to that page for registrars to link from their municipal elections page.
- ✓ The Secretary of the State work with municipal officials to create and post an official list of municipal websites for citizens and other interested parties to find those sites.
- ✓ Review other states' websites for best practices and review offerings of third-parties such as the U.S. Vote Foundation/Overseas Vote Foundation for web and voter help desk services.

³ Available to anyone at <http://wordpress.org>

⁴ <http://civicdesigning.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Field-Guide-Vol-07-20130628.pdf>

⁵ <http://www.sots.ct.gov/sots/cwp/view.asp?a=3172&q=525432>

⁶ Permanent links are used to reference information over time, even if the underlying web technology changes. Instead of the technical URL in the previous footnote, a permalink might be "http://www.sots.ct.gov/voters"

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Background

Motivation

After every election there is disappointment in voter turnout in Connecticut and across the United States. Turnout varies between municipalities, between elections, and primaries⁷. The reasons voters do not vote in a particular election are many, varied, and subject to unending debate.

One factor that can encourage or discourage voting is the information available on municipal websites. Connecticut citizens not yet registered to vote may turn to the municipal website to answer questions about voter registration. All citizens may look to that same website to seek details about voting and the upcoming election.

A 2013 national study⁸ evaluated county websites for the 2012 elections across the country and interviewed voters about county websites. The study “*sought to learn about what local election jurisdictions were offering for content, what terminology they used to describe it, and how useful and usable that content was to voters*”. The study found that most voters use local government websites rather than state sites to seek information. The study determined the top five questions asked by voters:

- *What’s on the ballot?*
- *What’s the deadline to apply for an absentee ballot?*
- *What do I have to do to get an absentee ballot?*
- *When is my absentee ballot due?*
- *Where do I go to vote?*

In gathering information for past elections the Citizen Audit found many municipal websites with minimal election information, outdated election information, no election information, or even no municipal website. In recent years the General Assembly has heard calls to exempt municipalities from web posting requirements⁹ and to require municipalities to provide email access for registrars¹⁰.

Based on our concerns that voters in every municipality in Connecticut should be able to easily obtain information necessary to participate in our Democracy, we initiated this study of Connecticut’s municipalities and the voting information they provide on the Internet.

Our motivation is not to single out municipalities or election officials, but to provide information on the opportunity for improvement and how frequently sought, quality information could be provided to Connecticut voters at low cost with moderate effort.

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⁸ Usability of County Election Websites, <http://civicdesigning.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/371a.pdf>

⁹ PA 10-171, passed in 2010: <http://www.cga.ct.gov/2010/ACT/Pa/pdf/2010PA-00171-R00HB-05255-PA.pdf>

¹⁰ SB 213, did not pass in 2013: <http://cga.ct.gov/2012/TOB/s/pdf/2012SB-00213-R00-SB.pdf>

Methodology

The following activities were performed in the course of data collection and analysis for this report.

- We developed a SurveyMonkey^{11,12} survey for assessing municipal websites. Reviewing some municipal websites and reviewing a national study of election websites and voter needs.¹³
- For most survey items we used a subjective scale of Obvious/Good, Obscure, No link found, or NA (no municipal web found).
- We developed a Code of Conduct/Confidentiality Agreement, and description of the project for potential evaluators. We recruited volunteer evaluators from the ranks of experienced post-election audit observers.
- We developed a web tool to automate the website review. The tool:
 - a) Randomly assigned one municipality at a time to an evaluator (they could pass on a municipality if they had a conflict of interest).
 - b) Automatically provided links for Google searches for each assigned municipality.
 - c) Let evaluators record completion of an evaluation and randomly assigned another municipality.
 - d) Began additional rounds of evaluation for all municipalities, once one was complete, and
 - e) Made sure that each evaluator was assigned to different municipalities in subsequent rounds.
- We conducted several group and individual web based training sessions. We provided access to the survey and municipal assignment tool in test mode for evaluators.
- Between early October and prior to election-day we performed two rounds of evaluations of the one-hundred-and-sixty-nine (169) municipal websites.
- By the evening of election-day we had reviewed the survey responses, consolidated results for each municipality and referenced municipal websites to resolve differences between the two evaluations of each municipality.

¹¹ <https://www.surveymonkey.com/>

¹² Printable version of our online survey: <http://ctelectionaudit.org/WebStudySurvey.pdf>

¹³ Usability of County Election Websites, <http://civicdesigning.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/371a.pdf>

Citizen Evaluation: Challenges and Limitations

This is the Citizen Audit's first web study. Data collection and verification was necessarily accomplished in the thirty day period before the November 4, 2014 election, so that we could get an accurate and uniform picture of information available to voters prior to election-day.

Without volunteers willing to invest hours and days of their time, under very tight deadlines this report would not have been possible. Our volunteers care about democracy and ensuring that information is available to voters in Connecticut.¹⁴

We recognize that there may be occasional errors in our raw data derived from variations in subjective and objective evaluation. With tight deadlines, and without extensive pre-testing of questions, there was a level of ambiguity in the assessment of some questions, especially some of those on voter registration and absentee voting. There are additional questions that we wished we had asked.

Yet, the overall results and the totality of the statistics paint a clear picture of an opportunity for election officials to provide more complete information for voters and would be voters in Connecticut.

¹⁴ Upon request of any registrar of voters, we would be pleased to provide specific feedback applicable to their municipality.

Findings - Statics and Discussion

Locating Municipal Websites and Election Information

Survey Question	Sub Question	% Yes/ Good:	% Obs- cure:
Based on searching for "[Municipality] Connecticut Official Website", or by other searches, did you find an official website for the Municipality?		100%	
Does the following GOOGLE Search result in locating an official registrar/voting page on the first page of results?	[Municipality] Connecticut Voting	90%	0%

The survey began with locating a municipal website and registrar of voters' site with formalized Google searches. In every case we used the Google web search tool. There are other search tools that voters use that might provide somewhat different results. For uniformity, we used the same search tool for every site and evaluator.

We were pleased that we were able to locate websites for every municipality and find voting webpages for 90% of municipalities. Most likely about 10% of municipalities do not have a webpage with information for voters.

Reviewer Comments

¹⁵Site listed links to voting locations and other things you check for but the links weren't active.

Hardly any info provided!

The ROV page link "Elections & Voting Information" takes you to the SOTS home page where you find "The requested article is no longer published."

Only info is small amount of info way way down on Town Clerk's page.

No information available on the registrar's site; one link to SOTS site for any/all questions related to voting.

¹⁵ All evaluator quotes have been edited for grammar, clarity, and brevity. Our editorial comments in brackets [].

Locating Election Information from the Home Page

Survey Question	Sub Question	% Yes/ Good:	% Obs- cure:
How easy is it to find a link to Voting Information from the Municipal HOME PAGE?		90%	4%
Does the Official Municipal website HOME PAGE have links to a Registrars/Voting Page?	A "department list" link to Registrars etc.	88%	1%
	A link on a list of "services for residents" etc.	28%	
	Other links, such as "I want to register etc."	22%	

Here we were pleased that 90% of municipalities had website homepage links to voting information. Most had access through a “departments” list or dropdown.

Registering Your Dog Might Be Easier Than Registering To Vote

Many, but far from all, municipal webs have a list of ‘services’ and/or ‘How do I’. We were surprised that many of those lists did not have any links to items such as ‘elections’, ‘voting’, ‘registration’, or ‘how do I vote absentee?’ etc.

We also note that many municipalities, like many of us, always refer to ‘Registrars of Voters’, while many prospective voters, new to Connecticut, may be unfamiliar with that term and might better be served with additional links to ‘elections’, ‘voting’ or ‘voter registration’ etc.

Reviewer Comments

The first link on homepage is to election-day information!

Link to Registrars from Town page was hard to find. Registrars need more info on their page.

“Government” drop down does not list registrars - not clear that you need to click main button to get entire list.

Like many towns there is an extensive list of services under "residents" link, yet nothing about voting there.

Home page: One obscure link to registrars, none on department list and one other on contacts has very little information.

Two different links, different info each link, maybe thus most references should be rated 'obscure'.

Registrars not on department list, but phone and email on contact list. Homepage prominently displays ballot, but that is all. No registrars' page.

Not listed as town department, but in separate town services list.

Homepage has Departments, a drop down with Registrars of Voters, but it does nothing.

Only link on municipal web is news item for voting locations, it points to one page with info on emails, registrar names and emails. Search for elections yields a much more informative page. All info is thus rated obscure.

Drop down for departments does not list registrars of voter. It is on a similar list on very lower right of home page that might easily be missed.

Just a blank page saying "Registrar of Voters".

Visiting, Calling, or Emailing Registrars

Survey Question	Sub Question	% Yes/ Good:	% Obs- cure:
Does the Municipal web or Elections webpages have the following information?	Registrars' Names	92%	1%
	Registrars' Phone(s)	92%	2%
	Registrars' Email(s)	50%	18%
	Specific office hours for Registrars' Office (OR Municipal office hours that likely equal Registrars' hours)	72%	5%
	Alternate contact info/advice for other times	35%	4%

Here as one would expect, we found most municipalities with the name of registrars and their phone numbers. Some were found on municipal contact lists where there was no specific elections webpage.

We also believe it is important for registrars to clearly post office hours on the web or offer alternatives such as phoning, emailing, or contacting the municipal clerk at other times. When specific office hours for registrars were not posted, we used judgment too assume municipalities where registrars' office hours likely matched those posted for town hall.

Of those municipalities with posted hours,

- Eighteen (18) were available for just eight (8) hours per month,
- One (1) was available for six (6) hours per month, and
- Two (2) were available for just four (4) hours per month.

Citizens should expect that every registrar is readily available via email. Registrars without listed email addresses are often from towns with limited registrar hours. Often a link to an email was provided by a link from the registrars' names - we rated those as 'Obscure' under the assumption that such a link was to an email would not be clear to many members of the public.

Reviewer Comments

Good invitation to call or email registrars and promise to respond quickly.

No mention of the fact that you can register in person. It listed office hours as 5 days per week but that was the town clerk's hours. To me that is not obviously the hours of the registrar's office [in a small town].

About as little info as possible on website, just registrars names and home addresses.

Three Important Pieces of Information, Often Missing

Survey Question	Sub Question	% Yes/ Good:	% Obs- cure:
Does the Main Registrars/Voting page have links or sections covering the following?	What is on the ballot?	25%	3%
	Next election dates?	41%	15%
	Where do I vote?	56%	8%

These three items are very important to voters, yet often not provided on municipal websites across Connecticut. We often think of increasing turnout by providing registration, absentee voting, and other election information, yet can easily overlook such basic information sought by many voters.

These items change for each election, often multiple times in a year. It takes more effort to provide and keep them up-to-date for voters. Perhaps that is why they frequently are not available.

What is on the ballot is the most sought information by voters, perhaps because every voter wants to know what they will be asked and it changes for each election.

In Connecticut, “Where do I vote?” can be provided by:

- An address of a polling place, clearly identified as the only one in the municipality.
- A street listing showing the polling place associated with each street.
- A map showing streets and their associated polling places (which can sometimes be difficult to read).
- A clearly identified link to the Secretary of the State’s voter look up web application which provides look up for voters to confirm they are registered and their polling place.

Polling place is important even to experienced voters, since polling places change frequently, due to redistricting, facility relocation, and for different types of elections (Municipal, State/Federal, Primary and Referendum).

Reviewer Comments

Had a link, in red, on the Registrars' homepage to a picture of the Nov. 4 election ballots.

A street list is provided but does not tell how to interpret it.

4 polling locations listed, but no indication which one applies to a voter

Says next election is Nov 2012.

Still setup for possible primary in August.

2013 Municipal Elections Calendar.

Posting Of Election Results

Survey Question	Sub Question	% Yes/ Good:
Past election results for Nov 2013 Municipal Elections (Check All that Apply)	Results posted for 2013 November election	15%
	Results separately for each district	7%
	Results separately for absentee and polling place voting	5%
	Results include voter turnout	8%

It is very useful to the public, candidates, and parties for municipalities to post election results. We would like to see the results for every contest, every candidate, every district, and broken down between polling place voting, absentee, and election-day registration.

Currently the Secretary of the State does not collect or post information separately for each district. Especially in local elections, only partial municipal results are posted by the Secretary of the State.

Reviewer Comments

Full history of previous elections.

Voting results in detail are all listed.

Results for Primary August 2014.

Excellent election results and statistics. Very up-to-date details. Some extensive and informative information.

Results posted 2009-2011.

Have results from 2010, but none since.

Has voter turnout in one large spreadsheet from 2000, yet ends in 2012

How Do I Register? How Do I Vote Absentee?

Survey Question	Sub Question	% Yes/ Good:	% Obs- cure:
Does the Main Registrars/Voting page have links or sections covering the following?	How to apply for an absentee ballot?	56%	18%
	How do I register?	73%	11%
	Registration deadlines?	*41%	*15%
	Absentee/registration information, specific for Overseas and Military voters?	*15%	*15%
	Voter ID requirements?	*10%	*5%
	What happens if I don't have an ID?	*5%	*4%

(*) These results should be considered rough estimates, due to inconsistencies in interpretation by reviewers

For new voters, especially those moving from other states, information on registering to vote is critical to voting. That information was available on eight-four percent (84%) of the ninety percent (90%) of municipal websites where we found an elections webpage. Yet, on eleven percent (11%) we rated access to that information ‘obscure’.

We did not specifically count occurrences, yet many sites did not have a link or indication that online registration is available. Not only, is online registration a convenience for voters, it saves municipalities processing and correction costs for each registration that otherwise would be submitted on a paper form.

Many voters, new and experienced seek information on absentee voting. Information on how to apply and qualification requirements. Reviewing registrars’ pages we found absentee information on seventy-four (74%) with eighteen (18%) of those rated obscure. One information challenge in Connecticut is that registrars are not responsible for absentee voting – it is the responsibility of municipal clerks – yet voters often don’t know that. It is important that absentee voting information be provided on registrars’ webpages, or clear links provided to that information maintained by the municipal clerk.

Polling place voter ID requirements are often unclear and misunderstood. Something many voters want to know before they go to the polls or before they criticize Connecticut’s system as either too stringent or too weak. Despite uncertainty in our results, voter ID requirements are seldom clearly provided.

There are special accommodations and considerations for military and overseas voters. The U.S. Congress, the Connecticut General Assembly, and the Secretary of the State have worked hard to improve tools and information available to overseas, and especially military voters. In Connecticut we have been quite successful, but further improvement would be likely with information clearly available.

Once again, despite uncertainty in our results, clearly military and overseas voters are less than adequately served by municipal websites.

Even with the uncertainty, there is extensive room for improvement. (For more on uncertainty, see the following section).

Reviewer Comments

Liked the way they emphasized the absentee ballot vs the absentee ballot application.

Registrars' site includes info on several kinds of ABs, including emergency ABs.

Absentee ballot information is only available on the Town Clerk's page. It would be good if the registrar's page contained a link or listed it as a frequently asked question with a link to the town clerk's page.

Points to SOTS forms for registration and AB, but not online registration.

Only registration information is paper form in Spanish.

[Registrars' webpage] says town clerk does AB. That is also all the town clerk's site says as well.

No links to forms or online registration or absentee application.

"Voter Registration" link confusing since it sends to site to check registration status, not how to register.

No links or forms for registration or AB or indication can be done without getting forms in person. Also apparently misleading information "An elector may also register in any Registrar's Office throughout the United States"

No pointer to paper registration and absentee forms, only online registration.

No info on absentee ballots, incorrect voter registration deadline.

Voter registration is not visible nor appears to be important. It is under the town clerks duties, mixed in with dog licensing which I find less important.

Only info of about how to register and AB is link to SOTS home page.

Link to Registration Forms goes to state homepage not even SOTS homepage.

Uncertainty In Results, Subjective Judgment

This was the Citizen Audit's first web study. Data collection and verification was necessarily accomplished in the thirty day period before the November 4, 2014 election, so that we could get an accurate and uniform picture of information available to voters prior to election-day.

We recognize that there may be occasional errors in our raw data derived from variations in subjective and objective evaluation. In this case, with tight deadlines, and without extensive pre-testing of questions, there was a level of ambiguity in the assessment of some questions, especially those concerned with information on voter registration and absentee voting.

Variations occurred especially in the evaluation of voter registration and absentee voting, there were a variety of means of providing such information and linking to it. For instance, many sites pointed to more detailed information on the Secretary of the State's website. Sometimes those links clearly identified that the information covered included deadlines or information for overseas voters; sometimes not; on other site there links to the Secretary's home page or main voter information page. In such cases it required more extensive detailed evaluation, followed or preceded by a consensus, uniform judgment of how to rate the information as Obvious/Good, Obscure, or Not Found.

Frequently, we found information available, yet not clearly identified on the municipal site in a way that would lead readers seeking that information to pursue a particular link. Some municipal sites had information in one place, yet not necessarily where a reader might look e.g. some incomplete information available from items on the home page, other incomplete information from a registrar's page or pages found only by Google searches rather than from the municipal web. In such cases, when actually found after extensive searching, it was a difficult subjective evaluation to choose between Obscure and Not Found.

What We Wished We Had Asked

There are questions that we wished we had asked. There are others that we wish we had detailed more clearly with examples and objective standards for reviewers.

Although not statistically evaluated, we also found,

- ▼ Many sites with broken links, and obviously outdated information
- ▼ Many sites with registration information, without the information that it is possible to register online at the Secretary of the State's website.
- ▼ Many municipalities with menu's for "Services" or "How do I?" which provided information on obtaining licenses, building permits, and how to register a dog, but no information for voters.
- ▼ Many municipalities with event calendars and front page bulletins, listing very current events including meetings on election-day and Ebola preparations, yet that did not list election-day as an event.

Additional General Issues, Evaluator Comments

Left bar menus not logical, change without warning or pattern

A dead link to Secretary of the State's Info. Not intuitive. There are two ways to get info (via Government tab or Department tab) that provide different info. Perhaps the ROV contacts are not listed because Town Clerk provides ROV services?

Several links that go nowhere, only one link works. Missing current information, link to .PDF is particularly obscure for communicating info.

Very little information on registrar's home page.

The Registrar page would be nice if the info on it was correct.

[Good] Could easily see registration deadlines for Nov. election on the municipal webpage. The link was very informative-registrars' office hours, phone numbers, and what is needed to register. [Not so good] It was easier to get info there than on the registrar's home page.

Very poorly organized information. Most of it is there someplace in a long single page, yet links to specific information on that page at the top are mostly broken. Some info on menu on left of page but it is hard to notice it is there.

I think having a price list for voter lists posted on page is in poor judgment.

Political Committees were listed. Not sure if this is important or useful, but only major parties were listed.

The Link to Secretary of the State's page to check registration status is ideologically partisan. Largest text is Secretary of the State's name. Only graphic is a Secretary of the State's candidate photo.

Unreadable fonts. Not enough information.

No personal info on elected officials on "Voting page". No contact information for officials on "Elected Officials" page either. All info presented as FAQs, instead of in bullet form - difficult to find info. Not optimized for smart phones or iPads.

Links do not work correctly. Dates are all wrong!

Very confusing menu system, different items come and go depending on what page you are looking at and what you happen to click.

A bit disorganized series of webpages, some voters may fail to find information that is there.

Difficult to find information on town site and registrars' page. Emails on registrars only on a directory page.

Registrars' page does not list their names phones or emails. Those can be found by a separate link from the home page called "Elected Officials"

Municipal website showed an example of a ballot but it wasn't very prominent and the Registrar's homepage had no link.

I found information on absentee ballots at the town clerk page but the registrar of voters page only gave me a phone number to call for the town clerk. They could have included a link to the clerk's page. The clerk's page points you to the SOTS home page to get a copy of the AB Application. It would be better to point to the page with the actual AB Application.

Exemplary Practices, And Compliments From Evaluators

When you click on Nov 4 election under news and events, there are boxes to mark your calendar or share the event with a friend. Kind of cool way to remind friends to vote.

Very good links to all key information related to this election were in a featured section of the home page.

Nice website. Simple but easy to understand.

FAQ's were excellent and had all the updated information for current election including dates and deadlines. Also they had a link to the Proposed Amendment Ballot question.

Used a lot of links to SOTS site, but sent you to the exact pages.

Much of the info right on registrar's webpage.

On the home page there were extended hours for abs ballot and voter registration at end of week before election.

Very user friendly with headings and drop downs.

Inactive Lists posted.

On the main website the sample ballot link was front and center, impossible to miss. The ROV page repeated that link, and gave details on registration, ROV contact info, polling location. Lots of info visible without having to search all over for the links.

A link to the Constitutional Amendment ballot question that includes a full explanation and the specific language of the question and the amendment.

Good description of what happens if you move within city and go to vote at wrong polling place. The website does include EDR information on its registration-deadline page. Refers military voters to fvap.gov.

Recommendations

Recommendations For Registrars of Voters

We recommend that Registrars of Voters throughout Connecticut take responsibility to work with other municipal officials to provide municipal website information that is accurate, up-to-date, and complete, with a single main elections page that:

- ✓ Answers or provides links to answer the top voter questions, registration information, registrars' names, phone numbers, and office hours - including information on how to get assistance at other times, when registrars have limited scheduled office hours.
- ✓ Clear answers or links to information at the Secretary of the State's website for ballot images, online registration, registration requirements, registration deadlines, voter ID requirements, and information specifically for military and overseas voters.
- ✓ Assure that the municipal home page has voting information on any list of services, "How Do I?", calendars, and bulletins etc.

To this end, we have created a sample, whimsical website to demonstrate how election information might be highlighted on a municipal home page with a clear sample set of pages on such a site for registrars of voters information. We used the open source product Wordpress and its free service for developing and deploying websites¹⁶. Our sample site is <http://NutmegtonCT.wordpress.com>. We make no claim that others could not easily design more effective, comprehensive, and more appealing websites.

We also recommend Civic Design's *Field Guide: Designing Election Department Websites*¹⁷ which we used to review and improve our NutmegtonCT sample.

¹⁶ Available to anyone at <http://wordpress.org>

¹⁷ <http://civicdesigning.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Field-Guide-Vol-07-20130628.pdf>

Recommendations For The Secretary of the State

- ✓ The Secretary of the State has a single web page with links to much of the information most sought by voters.¹⁸ It could be improved and a permanent link¹⁹ setup to that page for registrars to link from their municipal elections page.
- ✓ The Secretary of the State work with municipal officials to create an official list of municipal websites for citizens and other interested parties to find those sites.
- ✓ Review other states' websites for best practices and review offerings of third-parties such as the U.S. Vote Foundation/Overseas Vote Foundation for web and voter help desk services.

Much of the information at or sample NutmugtonCT links to various pages within the Secretary of the State's website, <http://SOTS.cga.ct.gov>, yet that official site could be improved by:

- ✓ More voter friendly pages with high-level, clear, attractive descriptions, followed by more detailed information and references to the law where appropriate.
- ✓ Providing a single page with links and descriptions similar to the common information shown at NutmugtonCT such that local officials could link to that page, as well as copy some of its contents²⁰.
- ✓ Providing guaranteed permanent links to specific information that can be linked from municipal websites, with link addresses that will not change.

The Overseas Vote Foundation²¹ and the related The U.S. Vote Foundation²² provide “*Nonpartisan voter services for US citizens overseas and uniformed service members*” and “*Absentee ballot request and voter registration services for all U.S. voters in all states at home and abroad*”. We encourage readers of this report to review the information and ease of use they provide voters, as an example what can be accomplished.

Six states actually outsource partial support of their elections web to the foundation, which then also provides official help desk support to voters of those states.

<https://www.overseasvotefoundation.org/initiatives-shs-program-states>

We also suggest the elections website of the State of Minnesota as an example of an attractive single source for statewide information: <http://mnvotesinfo.sos.state.mn.us/>

¹⁸ <http://www.sots.ct.gov/sots/cwp/view.asp?a=3172&q=525432>

¹⁹ Permanent links are used to reference information over time, even if the underlying web technology changes. Instead of the technical URL in the previous footnote, a permalink might be “<http://www.sots.ct.gov/voters>”

²⁰ The SOTS site does have a page with much of the information, yet it could be improved:

<http://www.sots.ct.gov/sots/cwp/view.asp?a=3172&q=525432>

²¹ <https://www.overseasvotefoundation.org/vote/home.htm>

²² <https://www.usvotefoundation.org/>

About

The Connecticut Citizen Election Audit

The purpose of the Connecticut Citizen Election Audit (Citizen Audit) is to increase integrity and confidence in elections, for the benefit of the voters of Connecticut. We provide independent audit observations, independent audits, and independent reports focusing on the integrity of elections and election administration. We are non-partisan and strive for objectivity and integrity in our work. Organized originally in 2007, as the Connecticut Citizen Election Audit Coalition, our primary activity has been observing and reporting on post-election audits.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/BOARD

Significant decisions and reports are approved by majority vote of the Board. Members of the Board are experienced volunteer observers, with diverse skills, political affiliation, and geographic representation. Current members of the Board are:

- Luther Weeks, Executive Director
- Jean de Smet, Aaron Goode, Douglas Lary, Tessa Marquis, Victoria Usher, Julie Watson Jones

CITIZEN POWERED

The Citizen Audit is an entirely volunteer, citizen powered organization. We appreciate every Citizen Audit volunteer. Without scores of volunteers spending days and hours each election objectively observing, auditing, and reporting, the promise of publicly verifiable elections could not be pursued and will never be attained.

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All reports and additional supporting data are available at <http://www.CTElectionAudit.org>