



Easy access to essential voting information

The Voting Information Project is a partnership between election officials, Pew's Make Voting Work, and the JEHT Foundation (with technical assistance from Google) on an exciting new effort to put voting information in the hands of voters nationwide.

The 2008 election is already drawing historic levels of interest; by November, polling places nationwide are likely to see a huge wave of voters – many of them first-time voters who will have questions about how to navigate the process. Serving voters' information needs, therefore, will be a key priority for election officials this year.

The [Voting Information Project](#) (VIP) seeks to meet those needs by building on the realization that the foundation of an effective democracy is a well-informed electorate. And many Americans are hungry for information about elections. But as we approach the 2008 elections, findings from previous years indicate that voters often struggle to get answers to three basic questions:

- Where do I vote?
- What's on the ballot?
- How do I register or find out if I'm registered?

Much of this information is available at the state and local level as part of election management systems and voter databases, many of which were created as a result of state appropriations funded in part by the Help America Vote Act of 2002. Election officials use this information to manage the registration of new voters, select polling locations, and prepare ballots for the millions of voters who go to the polls each year.

However, this information comes from a patchwork of data sources that are not consistently available to information providers, such as newspapers, civic organizations, and other outlets to whom voters turn for voting information.

Most importantly, this data is not readily accessible to the millions of Americans who rely on search engines when looking for government information online.

VIP has worked with state election officials to develop and implement a technical standard, known as an "open format," by which state and local election officials can more efficiently disseminate voting information.

Through this open format, every address in America can be linked to its polling place. And with this link, voters will be able to gain access to the full range of voting information, including:

- Links to information about voter registration;
- Polling place address, directions and accessibility;
- Procedures governing voting, e.g. identification requirements;
- Type of voting equipment;
- Official information about candidates and issues on the ballot; and
- Polling place alternatives, such as absentee voting, early voting, and vote centers.

More details – including the availability of funds to assist states with creating VIP feeds - are available at the VIP website at <http://votinginfoproject.org>.