

# ***Use of a web-based voting system for the 2009 Board of Trustees Elections***

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Further to earlier e-mail discussions regarding the use of a web-based voting system, I submit the following for the consideration of the board.

## ***Expected result***

Resolution 08-xx: Approval of electronic voting system for the 2009 Board elections

RESOLVED that the electronic voting system as designated by the Chair of the Election Committee is approved.

## **Framework for holding elections**

The framework for the holding of elections is defined in the bylaws<sup>1</sup>, and further detailed in the Procedures for selecting Trustees<sup>2</sup>

Our Procedures for selecting Trustees state that:

### **Use of Electronic Mail**

All formal communications between ISOC and the Organizational Members or Chapters related to elections will use electronic mail.

### **Ballot**

Ballots will be distributed via e-mail. Votes may be cast electronically by method(s) designated by the Elections Committee.

### **Receipt of Ballots**

For each election, the Election Committee shall define what it deems to be a secure electronic return. Only ballots returned by electronic methods designated by the Elections Committee are considered to be a valid return of the voting ballot.

### **Counting of Ballots**

The counting of ballots will take place on the election date, at a time and place established by the Elections Committee. At least two members of the Elections Committee shall be present at the counting of the ballots. The committee will establish procedures to ensure the privacy, validity and accuracy of all ballots. In the event of a tie vote for any position, fair and unbiased random selection will be used to determine the order of the tied candidates.

Based on the above, my understanding is that the election could be web-based, as long as the ballots are sent out by e-mail. The language further says that it is up to the elections committee to decide what constitutes a "secure electronic return".

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1 <http://www.isoc.org/isoc/general/trustees/bylaws.shtml>

ISOC bylaws Article II, section 2:

"The Board of Trustees is authorized from time to time to make arrangements for the election or appointment of voting Trustees, such that the total number of Trustees shall not exceed twenty.

With the exception of the President, all Trustees shall be elected or otherwise selected by a constituency to be defined by a resolution of the Board or shall be appointed by the Board. "

2 <http://www.isoc.org/isoc/general/trustees/select.shtml>

## ***Proposal to the Board***

There were two web-based voting systems proposed. One is BigPulse, a commercial system. The other was generously offered by LACNIC. We are very grateful to them for this offer.

Due to both lack of time and hands-on experience, it seemed difficult to review the LACNIC system in time for the 2009 election. Hence, the proposal is to use the BigPulse<sup>3</sup> system to hold the elections. However, the LACNIC system could be reviewed by the staff after we gain some experience from the 2009 election.

BigPulse is a web-based voting system. It matches our requirement that the ballots are to be sent out by e-mail. The system offers several advantages over our mostly manual procedures:

- Highly secure, accurate, no risk of repeat voting
- Run by a third party. Secure anonymous voting
- Several voting methods: proportional (chapters) or weighted voting (organizational members), among others
- Automatic reminder sent by emails to those people who have not yet voted
- Add candidate bio and/or pictures in the online ballot
- Auditing and vote verifications tools
- Candidate rotation option – means no candidates are disadvantaged by their position in the ballot
- Browser and email vote receipts
- Change vote option. Voter can change vote before the deadline
- Data download for independent analysis
- Bulk upload of voter data

In our context, this would also save a trip to Reston for 3 members of the elections committee for counting the ballots. It is suggested that all three committee members would be poll administrators, mostly for control and auditing purposes. A limited number of staff would also have access to the interface for the purpose of setting up the polls.

It is further suggested to have a blank election with board members and staff as voters to test the system ahead of the election.

This system is used by the ICANN constituencies and advisory councils to hold elections. The feedback I got from both ICANN staff and past voters has been very positive. The system has not generated any challenge over the last two years. Further, the turnout is very high in general, which is attributed both to the ease of voting and to the strictly anonymous voting this system offers.

## ***Cost***

Based on the assumption of 200 voters, the cost would be USD 520.00 for 6 months (or cheaper for a 3 months period). It would allow an unlimited number of polls to be held during that period. Given the savings generated on travel, it is actually cheaper than the e-mail voting method we have used until now.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.bigpulse.com/elections>