

VOTE
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the security of electronically delivering, marking and, especially, returning ballots.

There are “effective risk management controls” to enable electronic ballot delivery and casting, but returning ballots electronically is “high-risk even with controls in place,” states a report by several federal agencies, including the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency and the Election Assistance Commission.

The risks of returning ballots electronically can affect an election’s results and occur at scale, the report found.

It further stated that securing ballot return digitally while guaranteeing voter privacy and ballot integrity is “difficult, if not impossible, at this time.”

But if election officials choose or are mandated to allow electronic ballot returns, they should allow voters returning ballots electronically to check their ballots’ status, the agencies stated. They recommended that its use be limited to voters who can’t vote any other way.

Voters with disabilities fit the category of people who have no other means to return their ballots privately and independently, said Eileen Newcomer, voter education manager at the League of Women Voters of Wisconsin.

While there may be security risks, Newcomer said the risk of voters’ being disenfranchised must also be

addressed.

Despite warnings about the risks of electronic voting, there have been no instances of widespread electronic voter fraud or high-profile prosecutions of people alleged to have tampered with the electronic system that voters with disabilities use.

Voters with disabilities would have to understand the risks of returning ballots electronically if the lawsuit is successful, Disability Rights Wisconsin public policy manager Lisa Hassenstab said.

But she said the organization didn’t want to budge on its request for electronic ballot return, because the alternative — printing and returning physical ballots — could sacrifice voters’ ability to vote privately and independently.

She also said current fears about security risks will soon be overcome by better technology.

Between August 2021 and September 2022, the University of California, Berkeley, hosted a working group of election, technology, and cybersecurity experts to discuss the feasibility of creating standards to enable safe and secure electronic marking and return technologies.

The group found that widespread adoption of electronic return requires technologies that don’t currently exist or haven’t been tested.

The group pointed out six particular concerns that could threaten election security: client-side malware; the potential for people to

hack voters’ computers; a targeted denial-of-service attack; the difficulty in verifying voters’ identities; the absence of a physical ballot that voters can verify; and the possibility that a small group of people could alter votes in bulk.

While the group cautioned against electronic return technology, it said eliminating that path for voting without reasonable alternatives could “produce an unacceptable risk to those with accessibility needs and would place election officials” at risk of violating federal laws like the Help America Vote Act and the ADA, the group stated.

The group advocated for

the research and development of technologies to improve accessibility.

Natzke said electronic voting would remove a barrier for voters with disabilities just as curb cuts in raised sidewalks made streets more accessible.

“We need to have that curb cut because we know it can work,” he said

“To not do that, when you know that it’s there, makes a statement, because it’s been done elsewhere,” he said. “So when there’s a choice to then not do it, it ends up really concerning me in terms of the position people with disabilities hold in the hands of our policymakers.”

HORNACEK
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I’ve ever done in my life, I think,” but days later he was shocked to be called in to receive a job offer from Paul’s Pantry.

In June, 2019, Hornacek began working full time as the assistant executive director of Paul’s Pantry. Noracek said “it was like God put me here just in time” as he would become crucial to maintaining operations during COVID-19.

In working a job that has continued to bring

him into encounters with a wide variety of people, Hornacek shared the importance of treating people with “dignity, respect and understanding,” because “everyone who comes to Paul’s Pantry has a story.”

Today, Hornacek closes in on four years of employment at Paul’s Pantry.

Reflecting on his time so far, he notes the importance of building relationships within the community and serving through the diaconate.

“God has created in me the heart to serve,” he noted.

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