

Election Throws a Spotlight on Poor Data Quality.

This US election has thrown a spotlight on impact of data quality on 'big ticket' processes like voter registration. But in a digital age our whole economy and way of life rely on information. Poor data quality poses a real threat to the way we live.

October 30, 2008 (FPRC) -- Is our democratic process under threat? Many watchdog groups such as the Brennan Center for Justice have documented repeated problems with electoral processes in the US, from hanging chads and butterfly ballots in 2000, to counting errors with electronic voting machines and provisional ballots in 2004, and to voter registration databases in 2008.

But do these serious problems have a common source? The IAIDQ says that the underlying issue is the lack of focus on the quality of voter information and data in all election processes, from voter registration to vote counting and recounts.

“Who knows who will win the election? Regardless of how close the outcome, some voters will be disenfranchised because of poor data quality,” says Christian Walenta, President IAIDQ. “Voter intention is corrupted by counting errors, poor ballot design and poor voter registration information.”

Eligibility to vote is based on registration information provided by the voter. Failures in the quality of that information can deprive voters of a voice or worse, overturn voter preference.

Dr. Thomas Redman, author of the recently-published book *Data Driven: Profiting from Your Most Important Business Asset* (Harvard Business Press) and co-founder of the IAIDQ, commented, “Democracies depend on trust and nothing is more critical for that trust than fair, honest elections,” says Dr. Redman. “It all has to come together on Election Day. Our financial markets also depend on trust – and look what’s happened as trust has evaporated.”

What can voters do? After the election they should press their federal and state representatives to apply proven practices for managing information and data quality to the election process.

For November 4th, Larry P. English, co-founder of the IAIDQ and author of *Improving Data Warehouse and Business Information Quality* (Wiley & Sons), has this advice for voters: “Ask for a paper ballot if they’re available in your precinct. Electronic voting machines are not secure, nor can they be used to conduct a recount. If no durable paper ballot is available, be sure you understand how to use the voting equipment. Ask what errors can disqualify your vote and how to avoid them.”

The 2008 election may be highlighting the dangers of poor data quality to our democratic process. But in a digital age our whole economy and way of life rely on information. Poor data quality poses a real threat to the way we live.

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Keywords

[us election](#)
[information quality](#)
[data quality](#)

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