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OSET Institute Announces New Grant to Support Technology for Overseas Military and Voters With Disabilities
Funding to Build Open-Source Digital Absentee Ballot Marking App for Paper Return

Palo Alto, CA—January 25, 2022. Today, the OSET Institute announced it is the recipient of a grant from Tusk Philanthropies to produce an accessible App for digital absentee ballot marking.

"Our goal is to develop a Section 508-compliant Microsoft® Windows®-native app for desktop computers used by the disability community to prepare a ballot and attestation document for paper return," explained Gregory Miller, COO of the nonprofit OSET Institute. "This Tusk Philanthropies grant focuses on iOS® and Android® mobile versions for digital absentee ballot preparation and delivery, which we are happy to develop as this work will advance our efforts for a desktop version."

The Institute signaled this project past fall by publishing a new paper, "Towards Voter's Equal Protection in Participation" which established the basis for this new software to come. The paper is available at: https://bit.ly/OSET-vwdpaper. "Meeting the needs of literally millions of voters with disabilities that limit their ability to cast a ballot in person is something near and dear to the hearts of many of our staff and contributors," explained John Sebes, OSET Institute, CTO. "This project seeks to provide the accessibility and convenience of digital ballot preparation with the security of paper ballot return."

The grant comes from Tusk Philanthropies, a charitable foundation funding research and development into digital absentee voting technologies. "Our work is on accessible ballot marking for voters with disabilities, and not on digital return," noted Miller. "We have been critical of Internet voting systems and remain skeptical of widespread use; that has not changed."

"What has changed is the approach that Tusk Philanthropies is taking," added Sebes. Four things make this different: first, the grant program is based on principles of open-source technology; second, conducting extensive testing and public evaluation; third, building-in capability to support a voter verifying the system functions correctly, and fourth, without any commercialization agenda in the near-term."

That significant change in approach enabled the nonprofit OSET Institute to apply for and earn a grant to design and develop the front-end app called Mark.It.

"We selected the OSET Institute for this grant due to their deep roots in user-centered design as well as their commitment to transparency and to developing open-source election technology as a public good—principles we share," explained Jocelyn Bucaro, Director of the

Tusk Philanthropies mobile voting project. "We both share a common objective to make all voting systems more accessible and verifiable for those voters who need assistance."

"For the OSET Institute, our work is focused on building what several states have asked of us over the past two years: an equitable means to properly support voters with disabilities who require an at-home solution, as well as providing a solution for overseas and military voters, and that has become possible thanks to the Tusk Philanthropies grant," added Miller.

The open-source software we're building for this is slated to be ready late this coming Spring.

For more information on the OSET Institute's accessible ballot marking tool project please see a Frequently Asked Questions document available here:

https://trustthevote.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/23Jan22_MarkIt-FAQ.pdf

About the OSET Institute, Inc.

The OSET Institute is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) non-profit non-partisan election technology research, development and education organization founded in late 2006, based in the Silicon Valley. A team of veteran technologists leads the Institute with extensive software, hardware and systems design experience from well-known companies including Apple, Mozilla, Netscape, and Sun Microsystems. The Institute's mission is increase confidence in elections and their outcomes through research, development, and advancement of publicly-available election administration technology, election cybersecurity, and related public policy in defense of democracy and as a matter of national security. The OSET Institute's TrustTheVote® Project provides publicly available software technology, such as the 3rd party voter registration platform used by RockTheVote™ and others, and provides other election administration technology to governments. Work is based on open-source principles to ensure this critical government technology is an imperative public asset.

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