Great Student
CS/IT 285 Section 4

Heading is no more than 2 lines

Weekly Write-Up 4

Since the 2016 American presidential election, scrutiny of election integrity has increased dramatically. In particular, many concerns have been raised regarding the accuracy of ballot counting machines. These machines are intended to make counting ballots quicker, easier, and less error-prone than counting by hand. However, these machines are not completely without fault. In the 2020 American presidential election, ballot counting machines in Windham, New Hampshire had an error that caused a large discrepancy in the margin of victory over the next closest candidate (McDermott, 2020). This error led to an increased mistrust of the voting process, which pressured election officials to reconsider the integrity of their ballot counting machines.

Secondary sources do not have a recency requirement. This student is analyzing an article from late 2022, but background information is gleaned from sources that are several years older, which is ok.

Specific information from outside sources is cited in APA format.

Now, New Hampshire election officials are beginning to replace their previous ballot counting equipment with the modern VotingWorks software. The previous system, AccuVote, had been used in New Hampshire elections since the mid '90s and recently announced that "it won't be manufacturing new parts starting in 2024" (Han, 2022). The AccuVote system is considered a **legacy system**. Legacy systems are "outdated computer systems, programming languages or application software that are used instead of available upgraded versions" (Potasznik, Day 20). The AccuVote system is outdated since it was first used in New Hampshire around 27 years ago and will no longer be manufactured in 2024. As the system has aged, it has been prone to various errors, such as paper jams and failure to recognize certain votes (McDermott, 2020). Despite these errors, New Hampshire continued to use the AccuVote system over available upgraded systems, such as VotingWorks or any of the other "half a dozen ballot counting machine models" they recently considered (Han, 2022).

Include relevant background information and weigh its importance.

Class terms are in bold, defined and cited. The definition is explicitly applied to the topic at hand.

In many ways, the transition from AccuVote to VotingWorks is a positive change. Since the parts for AccuVote will soon no longer be manufactured, any part of the system that breaks will not be easily repaired, which means that it is less likely to be used. This transition is also particularly beneficial to the voters. VotingWorks is open-source, meaning the code is made publicly available (Han, 2022). The transparency of the code allows voters to see exactly how their votes are tallied and ensure that there are no inherent biases in the software. In this way, VotingWorks may ease the growing mistrust of voting systems. On the other hand, there is a chance that new errors will arise once VotingWorks is implemented. VotingWorks was created in 2018 and, prior to New Hampshire's current transition, has only been used in five counties in Mississippi (Han, 2022). With such a small sample size, it is likely that there are errors in VotingWorks's system that have yet to be discovered. Such errors could be as harmless as millisecond delays or as serious as mis-tallying votes.

Weigh multiple perspectives.

An alternative perspective is that ballot-counting should be done entirely by hand, without the assistance of computers. Avoiding the use of computers would prevent **automation bias**, which is the "tendency to trust automated systems" (Potasznik, Day 3). Election officials who report the results of elections tend to trust that the automated ballot counting machines have correctly tallied the votes simply because there is an automated component. This trust may likely result in **automation complacency**, which is when there is "insufficient attention to automated output because the output is viewed as reliable" (Potasznik, Day 3). If an election official believes the ballot counting machines are operating correctly, they will likely consider the tally of votes reliable. Therefore, they likely will not pay significant attention to ensuring the accuracy of the automated tallying process. As is evident in the 2020 New Hampshire election results, these machines *are* prone to error and therefore must not be viewed with automation

Weigh multiple perspectives.

Terms are in bold, defined and cited, with an explicit application of the definition to the topic at hand.

Rather than simply mentioning various viewpoints, you analyze them, weighing them for significance, strength, etc.

complacency. The best way to avoid automation complacency would be to not involve automated processes in the tallying process at all. However, eliminating these automated processes would make tallying votes take significantly more time. Furthermore, humans are just as prone to making errors as machines, meaning that counting ballots by hand will not fully prevent errors from occurring.

If you introduce a new rationale, follow it through all the way to its logical conclusion and how it would affect the situation.

Considering these two perspectives, I believe that transitioning to the VotingWorks software is the best decision for New Hampshire. In my opinion, the disadvantages of counting votes by hand outweigh the advantages. I think counting by hand is likely to lead to the same amount, if not more, errors than automated systems. If this is considered to be true, then the deciding factor between counting by hand and automated counting is the time it takes to count. Counting by hand takes more time, making automated counting the more favorable process. I also think that the open-source quality of VotingWorks is very beneficial in the current climate of mistrust in voting systems. By allowing voters to see exactly how their votes will be tallied, there is no need for speculation about potential corruption within the system. Not only would this ease the voters of stress and worry, but also give them more confidence that their votes will have an impact on the results. This, in turn, could lead to higher voter turnouts in future elections.

End with your opinion and how you generated that idea from the given arguments.

Don't include new ideas in the last paragraph. Conclusions are for emphasizing and tying up points that were already discussed in detail.

References

Han, J. (2022, November 08). *3 N.H. towns are testing out new ballot counting machines that use open source software*. WBUR. Retrieved November 12, 2022, from https://www.wbur.org/news/2022/11/08/new-hampshire-new-voting-machines-open-source

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The references section is in line with APA requirements: bold title, hanging indent, in alphabetical order.