

Blue Suede News

Update on ELECTION Voter Information System January 2006

ELVIS is alive in 2005

We did it! On December 29, 2005, ELVIS officially went live, statewide. The Secretary of State's office, county election officials and Election Systems and Software staff have been working to reach this milestone for well over a year, and their efforts are finally complete.

So what is so significant about the state of Kansas being live in 2005? For starters, the Help America Vote Act requires all states have a statewide voter registration database in place by January 1, 2006. So we should all feel good about complying with the law. But another interesting and significant milestone is that Kansas is one of only approximately 20 states that will meet the deadline.

A project of this magnitude takes an incredible amount of time, resources and effort no matter how well the project is managed and how well things fall into place. But let's think back....is there anything that sticks out that may have made our effort an even greater challenge? Anything that may have made this project even seem impossible? How about the fact that we worked for months with our original vendor and then changed direction, mutually agreed to conclude that contract and started the project again! We signed our new contract with ES&S in March 2005. For a project this big, it is truly amazing that we were able to complete it on time.

Without an extraordinary effort by county election officials, this project would have failed. Without "buy-in" from all 105 counties, this project would have failed. Everyone involved should take a few moments to reflect on the hard work it took to make this happen. There were countless numbers of meetings and tasks: pilot county meetings, CRP sessions, JAD sessions, data conversion, hardware and software upgrades, WebEx demos, training classes, KANWIN upgrades, user acceptance testing and PKI enrollment are just a few of the many tasks that were critical to our success. Also critical to our success was Infinitec's involvement working with the counties.

Maintaining street files

During the conversion process for each county, ES&S utilized one of two approaches for conversion. In most cases, ES&S built the street file from scratch using data from the legacy system. This utility prevents the county from having to create a brand new street file and attempts to eliminate as much manual effort for the county as possible. In some rare cases, ES&S was able to convert the existing street file from a county's legacy system. This second option was often not possible due to the data variations between software applications.

With both options, there are always cleanup and tuning activities that need to occur by the county as the data owner. As the expert in your county's data, you will be able to spot any areas that need cleanup or tuning better than someone not intimate with your county's data.

As part of the normal support process, ES&S and its Tier 2 Support partner InfiTec, are available to assist you with any lingering cleanup activities beyond what you were able to accomplish with your on-site visit. In order to help ensure integrity of the data, ES&S and its partners, as

a standard support practice, do not modify county data. This guarantees that only the county, as the data owner, manages change to its data.

For assistance, please contact the ES&S Help Desk at 1-800-353-2832 or helpdesk@essvote.com and state you need help with street file cleanup maintenance. A technical staff member will respond and schedule a time to work with you. ES&S and the SOS are committed to making sure that ELVIS meets your needs.

IN THE SPOT LIGHT

Elvis alive in 2005

Page 1

ELVIS security

Page 3

Maintaining street files

Page 1

Featured staff

Page 3

Memorandum of agreement

Page 2

Calendar of events

Page 4

States sign agreement

Every state across the nation has been developing new automated voter registration systems to comply with HAVA. As a result of this requirement, discussions have taken place about using the systems for more than just election administration, which is no small task. One idea is to compare databases among states to identify duplicates. This should help clean up the voter lists and possibly identify individuals who have voted more than once. Three such cases of double voting were discovered last year in the Kansas City metropolitan area and resulted in convictions.

In the fall of 2005, as the Secretary of State offices in Iowa, Missouri, Nebraska and Kansas were planning the quadrennial Midwest Election Officials Conference (MEOC), it occurred to the planning committee that MEOC offered an ideal opportunity for the four offices to get together and decide whether to actively pursue a voter registration data exchange.

Two hours before the opening reception at MEOC on December 11, Iowa Secretary of State Chet Culver, Missouri Secretary of State Robin Carnahan, Nebraska Secretary of State John Gale and Secretary Thornburgh met to discuss the project. They agreed to

continue discussions on the data exchange and to expand it to include other forms of cooperation.

The final wording of a Memorandum of Understanding was drafted overnight by their staffs and the secretaries signed it the following morning.

Key elements of the Memorandum include an agreement to “establish between the states a process for each state to improve election administration and to explore the legal, technical or other issues that need to be addressed.”

The agreement includes formation of a task force to research opportunities including, but not limited to, the following: cross-checking voter registration data, cooperative training of election officials, cooperative testing of election systems, cooperative improvements for election security processes, and establishing uniform protocols for international observers.

Two staff members from each office were designated to carry out the terms of the memorandum. In Kansas, the designees are Mike Stewart, Director of Information Technology, and Brad Bryant, Deputy for Elections.

The staff members will make a progress report to the secretaries on or before March 15, 2006.

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Memorial Hall
120 SW 10th Ave.
Topeka, KS 66612-1594
(785) 296-4564

Editor
Jodi L. Spindler

Layout and Design
Jodi L. Spindler

Contributing Writers
Brad Bryant
Bryan Caskey
Brian Henson
Mike Stewart

If you have any suggestions or comments about this or future issues, please call (785) 368-8095.

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ELVIS security remains top priority

You've read many articles and reminders in the BSN and have heard ad-nauseam during SOS road shows and meetings about the importance of securing the ELVIS statewide voter registration database. You may have said, "This is great, give me more!" or, more likely, "Why do they keep hammering me over the head with this!?!?" Up until this point, Kansas' CVR data was maintained by and in each county with a small subset of each county's data housed at the state each quarter for reporting purposes. An identity theft evil-doer would have to target each of the 105 counties to assemble all voter registration records for their nefarious purposes - probably not a task a thief would care to undertake. Now, with ELVIS, all of that data is available in one convenient, quick-stop shop: the Secretary of State's office (SOS). We take that responsibility very seriously and have implemented many security

measures to protect your data from thieves. One of those measures (as you well know!) is the USB token and PKI certificate.

Recently, the SOS hired a third-party security firm to perform a review of the security measures put in place to protect ELVIS. These included network and system scans, penetration testing, configuration review, policy review and a social engineering report. While the review is very favorable, there are a few areas in particular where all users play an important part to maintain and improve the security measures: social engineering and user identity.

One of the areas to focus on is social engineering. As you've read in previous BSN articles, social engineering is the attempt at and ability of someone to convince you that they are someone who they are not in order to gain access to information systems and/or sensitive infor-

mation. You've seen examples of this in the many "phishing" e-mails that try to lure you into clicking on a link and provide sensitive account information. The sender is someone you "trust" (e.g., a credit card company or eBay) and the story is compelling (your account information may be compromised if you don't act now!). Our Midwest values say we can trust the sender and give them our information. Unfortunately, many do fall prey and become yet another statistic of identity theft.

Another area is user identity and authentication. The addition of the USB token and PKI certificate added a high level of authentication and security to the ELVIS system, but also added a few steps in the log-in procedure that was not in the previous county systems. As a result, some users may feel they can shortcut these

Continued on page 4.

Featured staff:

Kevin Comstock

Kevin Comstock is no stranger to Central Voter Registration (CVR). He has been working with CVR since he started part time with the Secretary of State's office back in 1998. Comstock is amazed at the progress of technology since he started working for the office. "Having worked on CVR since I was part time and loading 105 quarterly extracts that came in through the mail on reel to reel tapes, big floppy disks and cartridges, I am astounded at the progress this process has gone through. Getting the files quarterly electronically was a big step, and now for all the counties to connect live to one system is truly amazing."

Comstock has several roles in ELVIS. He sets up the PKI tokens and helps county users with any problems they have with access to hardware. He also works with KANWIN connectivity issues, is on call for hardware issues and works with the agency central data transfer.

Daily he is involved in many facets of information technology. Comstock works with RPG and Lotus Notes programming and administration, network set-up and security, election night programs, the SOS Web page, imaging, integration of electronic corporate filings and accounting processes.

This native Topekan received his bachelor's degree in computer science from Washburn University. When Comstock is not working for the SOS office, he spends time with his four children and wife, April, watching and playing sports or reading books.

Comstock's advice about ELVIS is simple: "Things haven't always been smooth, but with patience and perseverance it has come a long way and continues to get better and better. Keep up the great work."

ELVIS security continued from page 1

measures by sharing tokens or leaving them plugged into a workstation. Unfortunately, this leaves the system open to someone obtaining the token and password and possibly compromising the ELVIS system. Additionally, sharing the PKI tokens and password is a violation of the PKI agreements with the Secretary of State's office and the Kansas PKI regulations.

Some of the ways you can help protect ELVIS include:

❖ Be suspicious of anyone asking for sensitive information about the ELVIS system, such as access to a workstation or your wiring closet where the ELVIS router is located. Never be embarrassed about asking for credentials - anyone who is legitimate, such as SOS, DISC, Infintec or ES&S personnel, will appreciate your due diligence. Remember, you can always call the SOS help desk 785-296-7810 if you have any doubt.

❖ Never share your user name, passwords or USB token with anyone, including co-workers. Keep your token in your possession at all times.

With your help and diligence we will together ensure the ELVIS system remains one of the most secure voter registration systems in the country.



UPCOMING ATTRACTIONS

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|-------------------------|---|
| January 8, 1935 | Elvis Aron Presley is born! |
| January 23, 1986 | Elvis Presley is inducted in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame |
| February 14 | County Government Day |
| May 2006 | Kansas County Clerks' & Elections Officials' Association |