Pilot Project:

Secure Military Mobile Voting Solution
State of West Virginia

March 28, 2018

Pilot Summary:

The West Virginia Secretary of State’s Office is piloting a secure military mobile voting solution for the May 8th Primary Election. The pilot project will initially be limited to two counties – Harrison County and Monongalia County.

Deployed, registered, qualified military voters will be able to vote starting Friday, March 23, 2018, until polls are closed on Primary Election Day on May 8, 2018. All that is needed to cast their vote is a compatible Apple or Android mobile device and approved, validated State or Federal ID.

Project Goal:

The goal of this project is to offer and manage a secure military mobile voting solution that is verifiable, transparent, and more secure and accessible than currently available mobile voting systems.

Pilot Description:

This pilot project is the first of its kind in the United States. The mobile voting application uses blockchain technology to provide a secure voting process. The blockchain-based mobile voting application is available only to West Virginia registered voters who are active-duty members of the military and their eligible dependents.

Service members currently cast absentee ballots by mail, fax, or email, and are permitted to vote in their home state regardless of where they are deployed or stationed. This secure mobile voting option is offered in addition to the opportunity to request a regular absentee ballot. Absentee ballot systems previously offered to overseas military voters did not ensure anonymity, and many military voters were concerned their mail-in or faxed ballots may not be received in time, or may not be counted. The new mobile voting system resolves these concerns.

To improve accessibility and enhance confidence in our electoral system, West Virginia Secretary of State Mac Warner authorized his Elections Division staff to pursue a mobile voting pilot for the 2018 Primary Election.

This is not the first time West Virginia has offered an internet voting option to military voters. In 2010, West Virginia managed a web-based remote military voting pilot with five counties. Secretary Warner, who served for 23 years in the U.S. Army (Ret. Lt.
Col.), voted on a desktop computer during that election, as did his daughter, then Army LT Lisa Warner. The mobile voting option for military voters under this pilot project is blockchain-based and more secure and auditable than the system used in 2010.

All four of Secretary Warner’s children are veterans: Steven is a former Army Captain with a combat tour (Purple Heart recipient) with the 173rd Airborne in Afghanistan; Captain Krista Warner Cook is an Army Physician’s Assistant with duty at FT Richardson, Alaska; Lisa is a former Army Captain with a combat tour in Afghanistan and an 82nd Airborne Division officer; and LT Scott Warner is currently deployed in Italy. Secretary Warner’s initiative to provide mobile phone voting comes his discussions with his children about the difficulty in voting while deployed to hotspots around the globe for all Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines.

Following a successful pilot in the May Primary Election, the West Virginia Secretary of State’s Office intends to expand the offer of this pilot in the 2018 General Election to all 55 counties in the state to make voting more convenient for West Virginia military voters.

This pilot project conforms with the federal Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) and the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act. UOCAVA and MOVE are federal laws enacted to protect the rights of United States citizens to vote while they are serving in the military services or residing overseas.

To Be Eligible to Vote Using This Solution, An Individual Must Be:

- Deployed and overseas military personnel and their families (as applicable under the UOCAVA), and
- Eligible to vote in either Harrison County or Monongalia County.

How to Vote:

To participate in this pilot, a qualified and eligible voter must (1) submit a Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) to their county clerk indicating they would like to receive voting information via email or online (this process can be done via email in West Virginia); (2) download the free mobile app once the FPCA is confirmed by the clerk; and (3) vote.

If a qualified and eligible voter has already submitted a FPCA, he or she is already authorized to download the app and vote.
Once the FPCA is received by the county and the ballot is delivered via the app, the entire voting process can be done securely and privately through the voter’s compatible smartphone or tablet.

Military Mobile Voting Powered by Blockchain Technology:

West Virginia’s secure military mobile voting pilot is powered by blockchain technology. Blockchain-based mobile voting solutions can help meet many of the most
urgent challenges in election administration by adding security, transparency, and trust to the system.

Blockchain is a distributed ledger technology that empowers anyone with an internet connection to transfer anything of value — anywhere, anytime, with unmatched security and integrity. Because blockchain is a distributed ledger of transactions, military mobile votes become immutable and tamper-proof once recorded.

Benefits of blockchain-based voting solutions include:

- Secure and accurate
- Elimination of human error
- Anonymize votes
- Faster results
- Increased trust in institutions
- Auditable
- Transparent

West Virginia is the First State to Pilot Blockchain Technology in a Federal Election:

This pilot marks the first time a state has offered blockchain-based mobile voting in a federal election. Several leading universities, labor unions, state political parties, church groups and non-profits have already piloted this voting platform successfully for their internal elections, convention voting, and other voting functions. Government institutions around the world, including Brazil, Estonia, Denmark, South Korea, and Switzerland are actively pursuing the integration of blockchain technology into their e-governance systems.

Partners in the West Virginia Pilot Project:

This secure military mobile voting pilot project is a collaboration between the Office of the Secretary of State of West Virginia, Voatz, Tusk/Montgomery Philanthropies, New America and the Blockchain Trust Accelerator. We believe that advancements in election technology require a nonpartisan collaborative effort between states, election boards, policy experts, civic innovators, technologists, academics, and philanthropic leaders. The coalition approach ensures inclusivity and diverse perspectives.

About the Office of The Secretary of State of West Virginia:

West Virginia’s Secretary of State is Mac Warner. Secretary Warner was first elected in 2016 and took office on January 16, 2017. A graduate of West Point Academy, Secretary Warner received a law degree from West Virginia University and a Master's Degree in International Law from the University of Virginia. After 23 years of service in the United States Army, Secretary Warner retired with the rank of Lt. Colonel.

About Voatz:
Voatz is the technical provider designing the mobile voting platform. Voatz is an award winning technology startup based in Boston MA. Its innovative and highly secure mobile voting platform has been used by more than 70,000 voters in various elections and voting events in multiple jurisdictions including several pilot projects involving Town Meeting Voting & Participatory Budget Voting. The Voatz platform focuses on providing cutting-edge security alongside an easy to use interface to enable voters to make their voices heard in a convenient manner.

Voatz has been recognized with several recent awards, including the 2017 MassChallenge Gold Award, the 2017 Microsoft Civic Innovation Scholarship, the 2017 Harvard SECON Prize, 2016 MIT Startup Spotlight Cult Favorite Prize, the 1st Prize at the SXSW Citrix Hackathon, the Mass Innovation Nights Audience Favorite Prize, and recently graduated from the 2017 Techstars & MassChallenge Startup Accelerator programs in Boston. Voatz has conducted a number of smaller election events including state party conventions, town meeting voting as well as labor union and university elections.

For comments from or additional information on Voatz, please contact Mark La Vorgna at Marc@mlvstrategies.com or by phone at (212) 998-7545.

**About the Blockchain Trust Accelerator and New America:**

The Blockchain Trust Accelerator (BTA) is a project of New America, a nonprofit, nonpartisan public policy institute. The BTA is a leading global platform for harnessing blockchain to deliver social impact. Established in 2016, the BTA brings together governments, technologists, civil society organizations, and philanthropists to build blockchain pilots that benefit society. BTA projects and research help increase accountability, ensure transparency, create opportunity, and build trust in core institutions. New America is dedicated to renewing America by continuing the quest to realize our nation’s highest ideals, honestly confronting the challenges caused by rapid technological and social change, and seizing the opportunities those changes create.

For comments from or additional information from the Blockchain Trust Accelerator or New America, please contact Allison Price at Price@newamerica.org or by phone at (202) 360-9361.

**About Tusk/Montgomery Philanthropies:**

Tusk Montgomery Philanthropies was created by Bradley Tusk, Founder and CEO of Tusk Holdings & Tusk Ventures, for the purpose of working on reducing hunger
throughout the United States by providing greater access to programs like school breakfast and to dramatically increase voter turnout and participation in U.S. elections through mobile voting, beginning with qualified military service members. Mobile voting is a non-partisan initiative designed to not favor any one candidate or party but to expand voting options to increase participation in our electoral process.

For comments from or additional information about Tusk/Montgomery Philanthropies, please contact Lance Trover at Lance@tuskventures.com or by phone at (618) 201-2997.

Additional Resources:

For more information about UOCAVA, go to FVAP’s website (https://www.fvap.gov/military-voter/overview).

For more information about West Virginia's Primary and General elections timeline, see (https://www.fvap.gov/guide/chapter2/west-virginia)

For more information about the secure military mobile voting pilot for the 2018 Primary Election, or related questions, please contact the Secretary of State’s Office at election@wvsos.gov or call (304) 558-6000.