

Testimony of Aquene Freechild

Campaign Co-Director, Democracy Campaign at Public Citizen

Chair Tsernoglou, Members of the Committee,

We are devoted to ensuring every American can vote and have that vote counted, including Americans abroad serving our country.

That's why I'm so excited that Michigan voters extended the receipt deadline for military ballots by 6 days last year.

But, internet voting or "electronic ballot return" - can destroy entire elections, or it can simply take away the right to vote should an error or hack occur. Unless the voter can verify a paper ballot independently from the software they sent it through, there's no easy way to detect or recover from a problem. By promising last minute convenience, internet voting leaves little recourse when things break down.

For example, in 2021, the state that includes Sydney, Australia had to re-run an election because their limited online voting system crashed.

More than 30,000 people with disabilities or overseas called the iVote helpline to try to figure out how they could vote.

All they got was a voicemail saying something like "we're sorry for the inconvenience. We're working on the problem."

An unknown number of people lost their right to vote.

Because, if you can't tell how many votes there should have been, you can't tell how many are missing. Or how many were added in the case of software error or malware infecting the system.

19 contests thrown in question.

The state had to sue 3 winning candidates to force them to re-run. There were tears in court - one candidate said she couldn't afford to run again.

If they had to do a re-run in Australia, imagine what could happen here, following an insurrection based on lies about an election WITH paper ballots, that were recounted by bipartisan teams and lots of observers. Worse, in the U.S., we don't typically re-run elections when large numbers of people can't vote.

The Australian internet voting system was shut down until further notice.

I do think there is an interesting idea worth \*piloting\* for overseas/military voters with the least postal options.

It's called video voting. Voters could schedule an appointment during early voting. At the appointment they would verify their ID with a service like ID.me. They would then be transferred

to a separate poll worker who would electronically receive and print their ballot and hold it up for them to visually verify, or use a ballot reader device for visually impaired voters; then scan it.

This would be a pilot, different from the current bill, but would provide a voter verified, private paper ballot that is the gold standard for secure elections.

Thank you.