

**From:** [Brandon Philips](#)  
**To:** [Board of Supervisors, \(BOS\)](#); [Young, Victor \(BOS\)](#)  
**Subject:** Comment in Support of the Open Source Voting Pilot Legislation, File No. 211303  
**Date:** Friday, December 31, 2021 9:20:59 PM

---

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

Dear San Francisco Board of Supervisors-

I write to comment in support of the open-source voting pilot legislation, File No. 211303.

From September 2018 to July 2019 I served on the San Francisco Open Source Voting System Technical Advisory Committee (OSVTAC). I also served as a San Francisco Polling Place Inspector in November 2018 to gain firsthand experience on SF Elections training, processes, and hardware.

I have also spent my entire career working on open source software. Recently, I was Co-Founder and CTO of a company, CoreOS, which built open source and commercial infrastructure software that is used by companies like Nike, Starbucks, Verizon and many others. And we created many open source software products that power critical components of services run at Microsoft, Google, Amazon, and countless others.

My combined experiences with elections and open source development, I believe, give me a useful perspective to comment on the legislation under consideration. In short, I want to encourage you to pass the open-source voting pilot legislation (File No. 211303) and enable the City's open source voting pilot program with VotingWorks to proceed.

In January 2019 as part of my SF OSVTAC research I met Ben Adida, founder of VotingWorks. We discussed the challenges of creating organizations that can both build open source software and also deliver that software to enterprise users with complex requirements. Ben and I shared the same view that early on a successful open source product requires both an engaged set of early users and a core team of engineers who enjoy solving those users' problems.

Throughout the remainder of 2019 VotingWorks built an impressive initial product, piloted in a real election, and received significant donations to expand their work. It was clear that VotingWorks was rapidly becoming an organization up to the challenges we had discussed in January.

In September 2019 my family made our first donation to VotingWorks. The same motivation that motivated my volunteer efforts on the OSVTAC motivated our donation to VotingWorks: I want to see municipalities using the best possible technologies for voting systems, and my experience has shown the best possible technologies for critical systems are open source.

Further, VotingWorks does what no municipality pursuing an open source voting system on its own can accomplish: create a center for collaboration. Having a non-profit organization, like VotingWorks, focused on solving the common problems of many municipalities ensures the open source products are adaptable to municipal requirements, well documented, and encodes

the reliability that naturally emerges from lots of demanding users.

Finally, based on my personal experience as a SF Polling Place Inspector, I believe the proposed plan to pilot VotingWorks as an alternative to existing Dominion ballot marking devices will delight users, SF Elections Staff, and Poll Workers alike. I think all Poll Workers and Staff can agree the accessible ballot marking devices currently deployed in SF are unwieldy and failure-prone. So, a replacement using modern web technologies will be a welcome change.

Moving forward with this VotingWorks pilot will help San Francisco lead California in adopting open source voting technology. And I am confident that SF Staff, Poll Workers, and Voters will see excellent results with the product just as Mississippi has.

Thank You,

Brandon