



CHRISTI JACOBSEN

MONTANA SECRETARY OF STATE



December 3, 2021

Dear Chair Ellis and SAVA committee members,

On November 19th, Secretary of State's Office received a request for "a list of 'golden button' or 'red flag' issues that have been flagged during testing and development of the system to date." There is some confusion regarding the way those terms are being used, so I would like to provide some background and clarification on the status of the electMT project.

Background

The current system, MTVotes, was the first statewide voter registration system used in Montana and was created in 2005. Since then, there have been updates, fixes and modifications to the system. Advancements in technology, security, as well as election management have greatly progressed since 2005, leading the Secretary of State to begin the process of looking for a new election management system in 2018. Since the signing of the contract in 2019 to develop electMT (the software-based program that is being developed to replace MTVotes), the Secretary of State's Office has reported quarterly to the Legislative Finance Committee regarding the project. The Secretary of State's Office has also discussed the project with SAVA on various occasions and the newly established Interim Budget Committee. Legislative oversight has been a key component from the beginning.

Project Information

A project management process is in place to guide the implementation of electMT. There are a few different ways to develop systems. Secretary of State and the vendor have been working in an agile methodology, meaning requirements for the system were initially gathered and compiled. The vendor, the County Election Administrator Team, and Secretary of State reviewed those requirements and grouped them into sprints where the development team would develop in iterations or cycles, then the County Election Administrator Team and Secretary of State would test each group of requirements developed. This iterative process continued in 3 week increments for 16 cycles. Developing in this manner allows end users (County Election Administrator Team and SOS) to be able to work within and test the system throughout the whole process and make changes as necessary.

Each project has phases as well. Phase one consists of all 'must have' requirements, meaning functionality that is necessary for the end user to do their day-to-day job. Consecutive phases typically consist of 'nice to have' functionality, which are items that come about through testing. These are items that are not necessary to complete the day-to-day task although could improve the efficiency of work.

Throughout the process of testing any system, it's not unusual to find issues with a requirement that has been developed. A change may have been made which causes this issue, and in turn this is submitted back to the development team to be resolved and then re-tested.

Current Project Status

This project had 406 phase one requirements (also known as user stories), of these, 368 are complete and the remaining 38 are being developed in the final iteration (November 16th – December 6th) according to the project plan. That means, going into the final testing sprint, 91% of the phase one requirements had been tested and passed. In addition to the remaining 38 user stories, 33 issues were identified during testing that are also being resolved in the final iteration.

In November, SOS worked with the County Election Administrator Team to finalize the "Readiness Criteria" (a draft was sent to the committee in the 11/11/21 email). This document will be used by the Secretary of State with input and collaboration from the County Election Administrator Team and vendor to determine whether the system is ready to launch or not during the December 20th "Go/No Go" meeting.

This is a critical point in the project.

- The results of the last testing sprint will be known at noon Monday, December 6th.
- According to the plan, the SOS and County Election Administrator Team will begin end-to-end testing of the system based on the "Readiness Criteria" starting Wednesday, December 8th and will continue, as needed, through December 17th.
- The Go/No Go Decision meeting is scheduled for Monday, December 20th.

Conclusion

The Secretary of State, the people of Montana, the election administrators, and the Montana Legislature all share the common goal of doing what is best to uphold election integrity in Montana to ensure our elections are transparent and secure. Implementation of electMT will be a data-driven decision. The Secretary of State's highly skilled project management team is in place to lead the project management process.

We appreciate the county election officials for their dedication to this project and continued partnership.

Thank you for the opportunity to share additional information about the project.

Sincerely,



Angela Nunn and the SOS Elections Project Management Team