

CIVIL GRAND JURY | 2017-2018

CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO



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Why doesn't San Francisco Have Open Source Voting after a decade of discussion? The 2017-18 San Francisco Civil Grand Jury wanted to know why, in the global center of technological innovation, San Francisco's boldest technology idea has failed to gain traction.

For nine years, the City has discussed a transition to Open Source Voting, where San Francisco would write widely available election software for itself, rather than renting from a company. The project would free the City from a provider monopoly, but is accompanied by real risks and costs. Open Source Voting has broad support from many City stakeholders, but has failed to make concrete progress despite affirmations of support from city leaders.

The report fully explains the concept, issues, advantages, and liabilities of an Open Source Software solution, in language easily accessible to readers with little or no technical knowledge. It delves into the City's inability to advance from discussion to actual implementation. The jury offers a critical eye to the claims about OSV, and recommendations for how the City can move forward with this tool for democracy.

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