

# This MIT PhD Wants to Replace America's Broken Voting Machines with Open Source Software, Chromebooks, and iPads

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Tuesday morning, as millions of Americans lined up at their polling places to participate in the often quite literally broken democratic process, a new Twitter account tweeted a link to a short manifesto: "today's voting machines are often insecure, not particularly easy-to-use, and so expensive that they're often used much longer than they were designed for and election officials are forced to hunt for replacement parts on eBay. The market has failed us."

The announcement, from a new nonprofit called VotingWorks, ended with a promise to build a "secure, affordable, open-source voting machine" from the ground up. The letter wasn't signed, but it's the work of Ben Adida, a software developer who has studied voting machines for more than 20 years and had a PhD from MIT in secure voting.

"I thought this launch would be pretty quiet, I thought it would be buried in the news of the actual election, but already a lot of people have reached out to volunteer to make it happen," Adida told me on the phone. "It's super early days, but the response to the announcement shows that people are hungry for this."

Adida says that VotingWorks plans to use already existing, commodity hardware and open-source software to compete with the proprietary, expensive, and often insecure voting machines that currently dominate the market. He pitches it as an attempt to rethink voting machine from "first principles," to reconsider what a voting machine is.

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