Digital Citizen™

Mission

Introduction to Features

Development Plans

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1. Intro

The broad mission of the Digital Citizen site will be to inspire, empower, and inform citizens to become more active in political issues and find greater ease of access to participation in democratic governance. While Facebook is the prime example of a successful social networking site, there are niche networking needs that have yet to be fulfilled. Digital Citizen will do for political networking what LinkedIn has done for professional social networking. LinkedIn created a social network within a professional context and was designed to meet a niche demand that helped users connect based on work experience, educational background, and job search/recruitment efforts. The company started in 2002 and as of 2013 has gone global, gaining 225 million members, with over 2 new members joining per second (LinkedIn, 2015). Digital Citizen will be a social network that meets the specific needs of people wishing to connect in a political context. Everyone is affected by politics if they live as part of a society, thus the potential market for a tool such as this reaches even more people than the market for LinkedIn. Like the other successful SNSs (Social Networking Site), Digital Citizen has the power to connect people in a unique way which can produce social changes for political betterment. This goal will be achieved by creating a host of online political access tools, as well as unifying many of the existing political access resources that have already proven effective but are scattered about the internet.

Currently, social media networking is not very well suited to political debate and organization. While great strides have been made in public political communication as a result of social network proliferation, much of that communication is limited to 250 character insults and clever quips. Rates of voter turnout and public involvement in political issues are low, and high participation rates are essential to having a strong democratic society. By helping users discover the truth about their own political views via an account creation questionnaire, express their views in a safe online debate environment, quickly research legislative actions or politician profiles, participate in writing legislative texts, contribute their knowledge to a wiki, organize events with shared calendars, create polls and petitions, help draft laws, and so much more, this site can make political participation of the future much more efficient and fun. One might call it “Digital Citizenship”.

This document shares research supporting the arguments for a need to have an online political social networking resource, introduces the core features that will be included, and briefly explains some of the logistical plans for formation of the Digital Citizen organization. This document will continue to evolve over time, but in its current state, provides a clear set of concepts for developing the website. There is a wireframe project underway that will outline more of the specific functional details of user interface and databases so that developers and programmers will be able to clearly understand how they can create a site that will serve the public well.

2. Creator Bio

The creator of the Digital Citizen project is Michael Tarkington. He has studied political science, academically and personally for over 9 years. He holds a B.A. degree in political science from the University of California Berkeley, and has been developing the idea for Digital Citizen since 2011, while attending university and working.

At Berkeley, Michael was a recipient for a competitive Leadership Scholarship offered by the Cal Alumni Association, was a member of the bipartisan political organization Common Cause, and was a fellow for the Goldman School of Public Policy Center of Civility and Democratic Engagement. He has interned as a mediator in the San Francisco District Attorney's Office under the Consumer Protection Unit, and most recently worked with C-SPAN as a web producer in their Digital Services/Media division.

Michael's experience with web site development at C-SPAN has prepared him to form and direct the team of professionals that will run digiciti.org. Prior to attending school he gained 12 years of Human Resources and Customer Service Management experience, which has helped him hone leadership, organizational, technical, and business management skills. Mike has a keen understanding for how to create a positive consumer experience and has utilized that knowledge, combined with tech savvy, and a political science background, to design concepts for a positive online user experience on digitciti.org.

3. Challenges that Digital Citizenship will Help Overcome

3A - Democracy, Digital Citizenship, and why it Matters

Before delving into the features of the site, it is important to understand why we should care about what it does. We are a society that strives to be a champion of political democracy and more developing nations around the world have become increasingly democratic. People value democracy because it is believed to protect the rights of the population. By definition, democracy is governance by the population, with power distributed across the citizenry rather than centralized in the hands of the few. The United States, and many nations striving to achieve democracy, use representative democracy to elect leaders who are expected to make laws protecting the rights and interests of their constituents. The key point of defining democracy related to digiciti.org is that success of democratic governance requires participation from well-informed citizens. The site creates a more accessible and appealing means of political participation than we have ever seen before, offering an opportunity to form a more active and well informed citizenry. Countries using a representative democracy would likely have legislative outcomes better matching the will of the people when more of the population participates in elections and pays closer attention to political issues. Quality of life for all citizens, and a measure of whether a country is more or less democratic depends on an informed and active electorate.

3B - Participation in the US

Knowing that the quantity and quality of participation is so important to having a truly democratic society, it is important to recognize that the US, along with many nations, has a significant opportunity to improve in this regard. Many experts would make the normative argument that the U.S. electorate does not sufficiently participate in political deliberation (meaning political thought, communication, and expressive action such as voting). Debating issues and expressing political views is important but there is arguably no political action of greater importance to a citizen than casting a vote.

The U.S. Census Bureau reported that only 61.8% of the eligible public voted in the 2012 presidential election (considered a good turnout by historical standards) which means 38.2% of eligible voters did not participate in the critical action of selecting the president (census.gov, 2012). During non-presidential election years the voter turnout percentages for congressional elections tended to be closer to 35% since the early 70s, which means that roughly 65% of the voting eligible population consistently did not participate in selecting members of congress (census.gov, 2012). This argument assumes that voting is a strong measure of civic engagement in the political process and contends that we have great room for improvement as a nation striving for democratic governance.

There are many factors that affect voter turnout but surely having increased access to information and making participation easier can only improve it. State and local participation also has great room for improvement across the country. The site hopes to increase voter turnout as well as the voter's sense of effectiveness in making change or defending the status quo.

3C - Awareness in the US

The other concern of maintaining an informed electorate is tied to participation and democracy. Democracy depends on the expectation that increased participation correlates with increased issue awareness which helps voters to take positions and obtain their desired policy outcomes. Unfortunately, there are many examples showing that the U.S. electorate is poorly informed on political issues. One such example is found in a 2013 poll in Louisiana which found that 29% of respondents believed Obama was responsible for mishandling the response to the hurricane Katrina, while only 28% believed G.W. Bush was responsible, and the majority claiming uncertainty (Siddiqui, 2013). President Obama was not in office until 3 years after Katrina and yet more people, in the very state that suffered from the disaster, blamed him for mismanagement than the actual president at the time (Siddiqui, 2013).

In November 2014, the Senate narrowly rejected the Keystone XL pipeline bill and most of the public believed the project was a vastly more Republican sponsored action, but in truth it has received strong bipartisan support (Edwards-Levy, 2014). Louisiana's Democratic senator Mary Landrieu was one of the strongest supporters of the bill, but "Americans are about four times more likely to think of Keystone as being supported by Republicans in Congress as they

are to say it has bipartisan support" (Edwards-Levy, 2014). Opponents sensationalizing the evils of the Republican Party have consistently aligned them with "big oil" interest groups undermining the will of the population, but in the case of the Keystone project, it is very much untrue and perhaps widespread knowledge of the fact that it actually received bipartisan support would have improved its chances for passage.

Another example of our ill informed electorate can be found in the widespread misinformation regarding the Affordable Care Act. A Politifact article revealing the "top 16 myths about the healthcare law" does an excellent job of illustrating how vulnerable an electorate can be when they are steadily misinformed to believe claims that Obamacare is supports "death panels", or has the IRS take over the system with excessive access to personal information (Holan, 2013). Prominent political figures made a wide variety of misleading claims to form these myths. National surveys from 2010 and 2012, analyzed by a Stanford University study on public understanding of the ACA, led researchers to conclude that if the public had perfect understanding of key elements in the law, "the proportion of Americans who favor the bill might increase from the current level of 32% to 70%" (Gross, 2013).

Such figures about low participation and limited issue awareness of the electorate show us that political deliberation can be improved, and that doing so would likely improve upon the awareness of the electorate thus increasing the strengthening our democracy. These are examples where increased political awareness would affect how the electorate makes decisions. As illustrated by the politically opposing examples, both liberals and conservatives stand to benefit from improved public knowledge on issues. Surely this is an important enough factor to warrant the creation of a well-known website that offers concise non-biased access to political information, as well as access to info from peers.

3D - Trends of Online Political Activity

To analyze online political deliberation and how it has formed, as well as to assess the future of online interactions, it is prudent to review the progress of widespread adoption of the internet. The first internet network was founded by the U.S. military in the form of the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) (Dusold, 1996). This was used internally within the military and was focused on transmission of data or communications in emergency or conflict situations (Dusold, 1996). Today, the internet is used across the globe, by regular civilians, for a wide variety of functions ranging from business and research, to entertainment. Pew Research found that "As of May 2013, 70% of American adults ages 18 and older have a high-speed broadband connection at home", and this trend has steadily increased since 2000 as broadband replaced dial-up and the internet became an increasingly important household resource (Zickuhr, 2013). This trend of increasing usage is also true within the political arena as Pew Research reports that in Obama's 2008 presidential campaign cycle 26% of the U.S. adult population used social networking sites (SNS) for some form of political activity (Smith, 2013). In the following election cycle for 2012 they found an increase of 13% with 39% of the public having used SNS for political activity (Smith, 2013). A sum total of public online political activity

is difficult to measure because there are so many ways that individuals can partake in political activities above and beyond SNS websites. There are countless debates, blogs, interest group websites, news media, and government sites which offer information and opportunities to express one's views. Digital Citizen would take these fragmented means of expression and customize them for political interaction, combine their unique features to make a convenient site that consolidates effective political tools and information, and intertwine public information provided by the government with user made content. It will satisfy the growing demand for a means of online political expression.

There is a well-studied trend showing that people over 65 tend to be more politically active than younger age groups. U.S. Census reports show that voter turnout rates in presidential elections for people aged 18-20 was only 41% for the 2008 election, which was its highest percentage in recent history, while 68.1% of Americans ages 65 and older voted (census.gov, 2012). The gap in turnout rates has often been much higher, and in non-presidential election cycles the gap is extremely high (census.gov, 2012). In 2010 congressional elections, voters age 18-20 only turned out at 16.4% while voters age 65 and up were at 58.9% (census.gov, 2012). In every election year there is a clear pattern of higher voter turnout correlating with increased age (census.gov, 2012). Over the next few years, generation X, and the "dotcom generation", which have been more connected to the internet than any previous generations, will grow into more politically active age groups and participate via the online mediums they grew up with. The millennial generation, which has largely been connected to the internet since their youth, will reach retirement age and have an even higher probability of further increasing online political activity with the continued trends of increasing online activity and increased political action with age. Society will have a high demand for the Digital Citizen site that will only grow larger in the near and distant future.

One of the most elusive areas of opportunity to increase participation has been amongst the youth. Presidential elections have seen some recent improvement with 18-20 year olds voting at 31% in 1996, to a turnout of roughly 41% in 2012 (Taylor, 2013). Some may speculate that the internet has already helped the youth increase their involvement. The youth, are more active online than any previous generation and if we hope to encourage more turnout amongst young adults, "We have to meet people where they are. And where they are right now is playing games and spending time on social-networking sites" (Newsom, 2013). To "meet them where they are" we provide online avenues for them to get involved on their terms.

4. Basic Description of Features

4A - Interconnected

Arguably the best general feature of digiciti.org is the interconnectivity of all its parts. The features to be described in the following sections all connect in some form, and those connections are a major part of what is unique about how Digital Citizen improves civic

engagement. At present, if someone wants to go online and comment with their response to a news article regarding a political issue they would go to Facebook, visit a blog, or perhaps comment on the online article page itself. This experience is enhanced by interconnectivity of political resources on digiciti.org because this user would be able to transform this comment into a debate with their friends or the general public. It could be used to initiate a petition, or simply be enhanced by easy connections to legislative bill information or politician profiles who are involved in the issue. Currently, if one wanted to tie these things together they would have to visit five or more separate web sites and conduct careful searches, making multiple online entries and filling out forms. The people with whom they tried to share the content have to follow a trail of breadcrumbs left behind by the poster in all the links they will have to go through and different sites they would have to navigate to fully participate in the discussion. By bringing existing resources together in one platform, with databases that can supply information across each section, and adding new means of easy political expression, the clutter of the online political sphere can be significantly reduced and draw in a larger audience with a higher sense of empowerment.

4B - Honor Badges of Digital Citizenship

Another important general feature of the site is the participation reward system of honor badges. A strong argument made by Lieutenant Governor of California Gavin Newsom (2013), in his book Citizenville, is that much of the population has come to love apps and mobile gaming, the youth and future voting population in particular. The statement that government should "meet the people where they are" also contends that a "gameification" of politics would be effective at encouraging civic involvement (2013) (*for a defense of "gameification" see section 5F – Politics is not a Game?*). Author and well known scholar of social sciences, Malcolm Gladwell (2000), in his book "The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference", argues that trends typically depend on a "stickiness factor" which in many cases is like a gimmick or simple attribute that appeals to a large portion of the population leading to an epidemic trend. The honor badge achievement system woven through the features of the site will make political participation more rewarding, fun, and for many it will be the "sticky factor", spurring ongoing participation. Digital Citizen works to have as many sticky factors as possible so that it can appeal to more of the public and take the simple and practical steps necessary for increasing political participation via this new medium.

Users can receive honor badges, which are essentially small decorative icons, by performing activities on the site. The badges appear on their profile and in various ways alongside their picture and posts on the site. These badges are achievement indicators that encourage and reward participation in various aspects of the site. Users gain a sense of personal accomplishment and can earn clout amongst their peers.

An "Achievements" page will describe the various possible achievements and what needs to be done in order to earn them so that users can even target specific badges they want to earn. Some achievements can have tiers, for example, the "Pro Debate Creator"

achievement which would reward users who create 10 debates that receive a minimum of 50 unique views and 10 comments each. That achievement would have a unique badge and be the tier one version of the debate creator achievement category while an upgraded badge would be awarded for those who make 20 such debates and so on. This type of reward system takes away feelings that political engagement is tedious, inconvenient, or downright unpleasant, by turning it into a fun activity that inspires gamesmanship amongst users. Friendly competition for badges and efforts to earn credibility and praise among peers can be powerful incentives that can distract from the tension of political issues.

Consistent participation rewards, even just for signing in daily, will motivate users to visit the site regularly for changing daily, weekly, and monthly achievements. Accumulation of badges gives a user the Honors Achiever badge collector achievement for those who complete a wide variety of badge categories. A Badge of Honor Achievements page in the site will show animations for awarded badges and show users what opportunities they have to earn more honors. Rewards can be given with automated tracking of activities on the site. A user can chose to opt out of the achievement system. Ongoing development will make honor badge earnings a robust and ever changing source of entertainment for users who get involved via the site.

While it is not ideal that users log in to simply earn badges of honor and compete for achievements, those who do are still participating in politics and will likely experience the sites intended positive effects despite their simple desire to "1-up" their peers. So even in the worst case scenario, where users log in for superficial desires to earn badges, the process of doing so will have a positive net effect of getting them more involved and connecting people to important information. If one believes in the effectiveness of democracy, then one should also believe that the "battlefield" of competing ideas will be enhanced by an environment like Digital Citizen, in which ideas live and die by their merits (*for more on this topic, see section 5F – Politics is not a Game?*).

4C - DigiCiti Builder Game

In keeping with the "meet the people where they are" theme, and the rationale behind the honor badge system, users can take the fun to higher level with the DigitCiti Builder game as they develop an interactive animated city which is enhanced by performing activities on the site. Regular behaviors on the site, as simple as logging in, can reward users with a 3D image of a city that grows and develops dynamically in response to the types of activities made by the user. For example, if one earns numerous achievements in the Learning section of the site, they will see their schools grow and their population become more talented, while other actions in other categories such as debate, events, or the wiki may improve other unique forms of economic gain or prosperity that empower users to build infrastructure in their custom city.

Users can view one another's city and comment in admiration of the creativity and achievements etc. Points allow them to color and rearrange it with many creative options and

themes. Cities can focus on various things, such as agriculture, energy production, education, medicine, transportation, tourism, military, finance, manufacturing or just partying. If possible, use of Google maps information based on user zip code might enable us to use satellite images of their actual city and model improvements to the virtual city based on a template of the user's actual one.

The user can allow the city to grow without paying any attention to it or they can choose to take control of its development and spend achievement points as they see fit. By default, it will grow on "auto pilot" and can have design presets with themes of prehistoric mankind, modern metropolis, space age, or Atlantis to name a few. If users take control they will enter into a complex game of making a city and pleasing its inhabitants. Earning badges earns building points and unique types of influence points, for example, if one earns badges from the Counterweight section of the site they can gain large bonuses for influence points which can be used to make unique types of structures for the city like parks, night clubs, recreation centers, or sports stadiums. There will be basic building points earned for every activity which support fundamental functions of the city, but for more unique and entertaining elements to be added, one has to earn specialized points such as influence, economic, human rights, charisma, or academia points to name a few. Building of basic structures like schools, hospitals, military bases, and establishing institutions to run them will be tasks to complete as users earn basic building points from their participation in various features of the site or even just logging in.

The city has a life of its own with a population that needs attention from the user who will be presented with options for how to meet their demands. The public may ask for more street infrastructure repairs and offer a few options for how that request can be satisfied. The game presents the user with a few choices about how they can participate in the site to get the citizens what they want. The action could be as simple as commenting on a debate, or voting up a suggested revision to bill text in the "Open-Source Legislation" section. After performing a few activities earning points, the user would see a message from their population thanking them for fixing the roads and cheering for them. A user might be notified that their constituents are feeling melancholy and task the user with liking 10 posts by their peers in order to earn points for building a theme park. These are just some possible examples for how to inspire and reward civic participation on the site.

This game can be a simple and addictive feature which is tied into activity on the site in a fun and creative way. It may also become source of funding as the game becomes increasingly popular and Digital Citizen offers additional customizations to the city themes, population animations/appearances, buildings, and coloring options for purchase.

4D - Safe and Respectful Environment

Other SNSs do not focus specifically on political discussion, thus they are not an ideal social space for addressing political issues. Often users may have political views they wish to share but feel that their normal social networking resources are more based on friendly

interactions that should remain upbeat. Many fear the disruption of awkwardness, or even hostility, that can be brought on by political debate in their casual social network. A socialmediatoday.com article by site owner Chris Syme (2013) illustrates this point well when it advises users to avoid topics of political nature if one fears potentially alienating members of their social network (2013). Digital Citizen provides a space separate from casual or professional networks in which users can control privacy and identity as they share political views with whomever they chose and shed any concerns they had about controversy amongst peers. If users want to share their Digital Citizen content with as many people as possible, they will find it easy to link content to other social networks and make their profile content public.

Upon account creation, users will view and agree to a code of conduct statement that will promote civil behavior on the site. There will always be some users who fail to control their emotions and post slanderous, offensive, or otherwise harmful content. The agreement is simple, informing users that such behavior is not tolerated by the site, and that they can be suspended or banned if they are reported for use of profanity, or posting disturbing or sexual content. Because this site is political, and much of the content controversial in nature, much of what is posted might be considered offensive to some while perfectly acceptable to others, and this means that a user has to have a higher degree of tolerance for the expression of opposing views. The protection of free speech is crucial to Digital Citizen and it does not wish to remove any content entered by its users, but when content is inflammatory and unproductive in civilized debate, it can hinder the goal of exchanging ideas productively.

Note: *Development of a virtual jury system may be explored in the future.*

4E - User Hub

Typical of SNSs the user will be taken to a feed of their filter controlled content giving them a snapshot of what their peers are doing and discussing. The unique thing about the hub page for a Digital Citizen user is the use of selected widgets which serve a wide range of functions. If a user doesn't choose custom widgets, a default selection will be provided. Widgets give users quick access to other areas of the site they are most interested in, and offer them "bite sized" pieces of info from the various sections of the site. For example, if one was to use the "Debate Widget", they would see a small box in their widget area that would display recent comments in debates they've created, new debates created by their peers or people they've followed, or just top debates made by other users. The well-developed widgets would be customizable to prioritize the display of selected content types within the widget purview. Another example might be a "Jargon of the Day" widget which takes terms from the learning section of the site and offers users definitions to unique political terminology. There will be many such available widgets to choose from and ongoing development will surely add and enhance them.

4F - Political Identity

Account creation is a process that offers users the opportunity to learn about their own personal political ideology and affiliations. As previously discussed, much of the population is not very politically active and does not carefully consider their ideological position based on their core values. Many of them are understandably unclear on what it actually means to be liberal, conservative, libertarian, anarchist, etc, and the site offers an optional questionnaire that helps users identify their closest matching political ideology. The questionnaire will be approved by leading academics, polling experts, and researchers in the field of political science. After the questionnaire is completed, a report explains the ideologies, compares them, suggests likely political party affiliation based on ideology, and outlines objectives in the platform of the party. The user can later use this report to compare results to those of their peers. They may disagree with the recommendations of the report and select their ideology and party affiliation preferences as they see fit. Surely an important first step in becoming politically involved is discovering more about one's own political identity and deciding what role to play as a Digital Citizen.

4G - Social Networking

Social Networking Sites (SNS) have shown great power to affect political outcomes around the world. The uprising in Tunisia that started the Arab Spring is a perfect example of the far reaching power of Twitter and Facebook which protesters used to organize (Shirky, 2013). As great as SNS tools are for politics, we as a society can do much better.

The "filter bubble" is a well-known problem in our currently consumer tailored online experiences. Google, Yahoo, and Facebook are examples of organizations many of us rely on for our searches and exposures to feeds from news sources and peers, but these organizations moderate our search results based on our history of activity online. While this has convenient advantages in terms of helping us get what we want out of our searches, particularly for purchasing goods and services, it has the adverse effect of hiding the full breadth of unfiltered online content from us. In an interview with Lynn Parramore (2010) of the Atlantic, internet activist Eli Pariser says "Since Dec. 4, 2009, Google has been personalized for everyone. So when I had two friends this spring Google "BP," one of them got a set of links that was about investment opportunities in BP. The other one got information about the oil spill". One's historical activity online shapes their exposure making them less likely to see political content that comes from sources with arguments contrary to their beliefs. Presumably, if you have made searches for investment opportunities, you would be more likely to get search results to invest in BP, rather than seeing news articles about the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. Conversely, you might never learn about BPs positive impacts in society if you typically visit environmental protection sites and your search results simply demonize the corporation. SNSs currently available to the public fall short of overcoming the filter bubble problem for political issues. Gavin Newsom (2013) quotes tech journalist Greg Ferenstein regarding the Facebook filter bubble which edits out the updates of people with contrasting political positions from our

feeds: "To me, there should be a Facebook application where people can track the things they care about and talk about it with people who disagree with them". Digital Citizen provides exactly what Ferenstein asked for and its social networking overcomes the problem by not filtering political content without explicit user awareness, and via the Counterweight section, which goes one step further by encouraging users to see content from sources with contradictory views.

Facebook is a popular place for users to link news articles and share political opinions with their peers, but there is a well-known stigma against having political conversations in settings which are, intended by most, to be places of comfort and leisure that do not cause tension by addressing controversial issues (*review section 4D, Chris Syme article*). Most users on Facebook will log in because they want to get updates about what their friends are doing, and see a video of a kitten dancing on a beach ball. Few users aim to engage in thorough debates about important issues, or to read about their friend's serious political views. Politics certainly has a special place in SNS activity and it's a good thing that politics permeates our lives in this new way. However, many people want to express detailed political views on Facebook etc. but are reluctant to do so for fear of being ostracized because of their views, or simply being perceived as a "downer" amongst peers who logged in for leisure.

By providing a social networking environment where the purpose is to interact with a focus on political issues, that reluctance is removed. There will not be any filter bubbles imposed by Digital Citizen. A user profile shows political identifiers of their choosing and gives them means of expression and an opportunity to learn about the expressed views of peers. The traditional SNS features will be in place with a profile page, messaging (mailbox and instant), shared calendars, photos, and social feeds with status updates etc. Honor badges can be earned for activities such as referring friends or by accumulating certain numbers of friends/followers ("Referral Badges" and "Popularity Badges").

4H - Debate

The debate section is a core feature of the site. It empowers users to view what issues are getting the most attention and to express their own views in a respectful debate setting. This section of the site provides an opportunity for the public to create debates, vote to affect the popularity of debates, comment on debates and vote to support the most popular arguments in the debate, and to generally become more involved and aware of political issues. It will have its own "Debate Central" page which acts as a hub for managing one's own debates and getting a snapshot of current debate activity among peers and the public. Debate creation tools allow for deep customization and attention to detail making arguments extremely thorough. Creation tools make it easy to have advanced scholarly debates, or to simply write a short topic description and start a debate within seconds using simple presets.

There are numerous debate sites on the web, but Digital Citizen will do a better job of catering specifically to political debates through the unique nature of debate creation options,

the ongoing opportunities to interact in a debate, and the convenience of connecting debates to other features and content of the site. A debate can be set to public or private, and can even invite specific users or a group list of recipients (a great opportunity for social science teachers/professors to hold a debate by inviting a group email list of their students). The creator can set the duration terms of the debate, what statics are shown from results of activity, and the voting parameters to help unveil prevailing arguments. If debates are created to be shared with the public, they can be "voted up" to gain popularity among other debates making it a more likely topic to "go viral" and get a lot of attention. In addition, within a debate, users can vote on the arguments they like most and affect the order in which those arguments appear as they are sorted from top to bottom by vote count, and then date/time for all arguments with no vote. The debate creators can add video, pictures, legislative text, politician profile info, and external links to their debates making them more compelling and providing context or support for their arguments. Debates, and debate comments, can appear in social networking streams, be convertible into calendar events, and linked to arguments for legislative text revision in Open-Source Legislation. These are some of the advantages to having a debate resource alongside a collection of tools for political interaction.

Honor badge earnings from this section of the site will be a robust opportunity for user rewards. Political debate is needed for facts to be revealed, and for prevailing arguments to reach the eyes and ears of decision makers. Thus rewards for this important work should be plentiful. The reward system will be an ongoing work-in-progress but badges for creating debates, having debates that reach benchmarks of visits or comments, and commenting in debates, are good activities to reward. Some badge types may have scaling ranks while others are simply one-time achievements.

4I - The Counterweight

One of the challenges in having a two-party political system is polarization. The extreme ideological right and extreme ideological left are more politically active than the centrist population (Doherty, 2014). Much of the gridlock in Congress, and the combative nature of political interaction today can be attributed to the fact that the US is currently at one of its most polarized points in history (Schickler, 2012). It will likely take a great deal of time and effort to overcome adverse effects of polarization. Surely the greatest force against it will be increased dialogue on political issues with a commitment to respectfully revealing the truth and stripping out sensationalism or hostility. The counterweight feature of the site will further this cause by creating an area of the site which shows users popular content from people with opposing views (*also see previous section 4G for overcoming the "filter bubble"*). Using the account creation questionnaire results, and filters set by the user, the site can show debates, posts, news, and among other things, legislation created by sources of differing ideologies. The section can include district maps showing recently updated estimates for dominant party affiliation of the area and resources to show ideological and party platform positions on current events issues.

Users will be encouraged to view this section by occasionally being sent a message with content from the Counterweight. They can also have a counterweight widget on their login page so that they regularly see a snapshot of activity from people of opposing views. In many cases this is likely to reveal the fact that most people agree on more issues than they disagree on, despite party affiliation. At the very least, it will be a way to "keep your friends close, and keep your enemies closer", having the effect of adding nuance to arguments from both sides since they know more about one another. However, this feature should be viewed in the light of fostering greater cooperation and understanding. While this section may spark what seems like harmful conflict, we cannot shy away from conflict, rather we should meet it head on using conflict resolution skills to negotiate, and constructive negotiation can only take place if we come to better understand opposing positions.

4J - Petition

There are a number of sites that do a great job of offering citizens petition tools that make impacts in society based on public demand. This section of the site aims to follow a similar model to other petition sites, but the advantage to Digital Citizen is the interconnectedness of the petitions to all the other features of the site. One can easily notify all their friends of a petition via message, turn petitions into debates, users can post a petition as a status to help make it "go viral", attach calendar events to petitions, and send them directly to political leaders. The strength of a petition can be enhanced by the easy attachment of legislative text, photos, videos, news, or content from profiles on the site. Honor badges like "petition creator" and "petition signer", which are basically self-explanatory (sign or create a certain number of petitions), can further entice users to participate.

4K - Event Calendars

Political organizing is a difficult task largely because it is hard to reach ones audience. Shared public calendars of local, state, and national political events, can help tremendously in mobilizing the public to achieve policy goals. Events can be as simple as private meetings between groups of friends, or as complex as forming a massive rally. They can be set to private invitation or viewable by the public with or without RSVP. This will also include legislative calendars of the House, Senate, activities of the White House administration, and Supreme Court. Local, and state legislative calendars will likely be added by state officials/organizers once the site becomes an integrated part of society. Once again, this type of feature is offered by other online tools, but the interconnectedness of site features, and the specific intent of this tool to be for political organization purposes, creates a uniquely enticing and easy opportunity for the public to become more engaged. Shared viewable calendars, event listings posted to profile pages, debates on past and upcoming events, followed politician events, and an event widget on one's home page will enhance the usage of this feature. The "event creator" and "event attender" badges of honor can also create a gamesmanship reward for participating.

4L - Open-Source Legislation

This is one of the most innovative features of the site. Just because the US has a representative democracy, doesn't mean the public has to rely solely on representatives to do the lawmaking. Especially in an age where we can easily create tools for the public to get involved. Being a committed legislator means facing the challenge of decision making for important issues many of us lack the will to even consider. Their job is difficult; especially when their constituents are not very actively expressing their views, giving them little guidance as to what they truly want. Lawmakers typically are not experts in any particular field, they are mired in fundraising efforts, and have to deal with regular constituent requests, but they are still tasked with making the most critical decisions affecting our nation and must seek out expert advice. Why not tap into the expertise that often lies dormant or ignored in our public sector?

Eric Cantor, former Republican House Majority Leader, set a great example for how Congress could better use technology in the process of drafting legislation when he created a site called "YouCut", where the public could vote on ways to cut federal spending and the House would conduct actual legislative votes on the floor in response to public demand on the site (Newsom, 2013). In the first week 700,000 people voted for their desired cuts and that trend of activity continued through the life of the project. Many dismissed this project as a mere PR stunt, and a poor resolution to the problems of federal spending, but Cantor defended it arguing that YouCut was less designed for solving the problem of spending cuts but rather to "change the culture in Washington" (Susteren, 2010). Matt Lira was one of Eric Cantor's advisors and said that the important effect of YouCut was to "bring people through the system in ways that can have genuine impact on the process" (Newsom, 2013). He poses the question "How can we incorporate social media into the act of governing itself – not just as a communication device. The key to that is participation" (Newsom, 2013). The answer to Lira's question can be found in the Open-Source Legislation feature offered by Digital Citizen. The site will take it several steps further than even the YouCut model.

With Open-Source Legislation we can increase transparency and participation in the legislative process by offering the public an active role in drafting laws. Much like open-source software development, which has produced some of our greatest tech advancements, Open-Source Legislation enables us to "cherry pick" all of the best contributions made by the public and bring them together to create the ultimate final product in a well drafted law. All of the open-source legislation bills would be mock bills but they could provide a great frame of reference for lawmakers and certainly give the public a greater opportunity to transparently participate in detailed discussions of laws that interest them. Who knows, maybe someday they can be used as actual bill texts.

Legislation under debate in congress will be displayed in full and the text broken down into paragraphs and sentences which can be commented on individually and "voted up" or down as part of the bill. When revisions are voted up they are moved to the top of the

suggested revisions list. The original text remains intact unless the author of the bill changes the actual bill in Congress. Politicians themselves will be strongly encouraged to use this tool by commenting and recommending revisions to show the public why they support or oppose bills based on their inner workings. This tool can also help shape legislative outcomes by giving representatives impressions of the popularity for certain aspects of bills in addition to allowing people to show support or opposition to the bill as a whole.

In this section, users would also be able to draft their own legislation from scratch and have their peers, or the general public, vote on it. Users can make their legislation open-source, meaning that others can input recommended revisions which can also be voted on. Many bills in Congress come with conditions unrelated (not germane) to the main issue addressed by the bill, and the Open-Source Legislation feature may help prevent special interests from attempting to covertly pass their legislative agendas with sneaky tactics of tucking measures into bills where no one expects them. This feature uses the power of the internet to democratize the creation of drafting legislation and is akin to the open-source projects of software developers who innovate for a better technological future. In this way, we can innovate as a society seeking a better political future.

In keeping with the theme of interconnectivity across the features of the site, these line items, paragraphs, revisions, comments, and entire bills can be turned into debates, shared events, and posts on one's profile page etc. Furthermore, honor badges can be earned in this section for those who create their own bills, suggest revisions, comment or vote on bills, vote on revisions, or meet thresholds in having their revisions/comments/bills voted up by other users. Unlockable tag lines or quotes will be a likely feature of the site and for this section one tag line could be "laying down the law!".

4M - DigiCitiWiki

The political wiki is an opportunity for people to share definitions of political jargon, gather and share political facts, and document political organization of local, state, and federal politicians and their agencies. Simply understanding the structure of government can be a difficult task, particularly without easily accessible info about where responsibilities lay. Currently, if a user wants to learn about their local government online, their best hope is to use a search engine (Google, Yahoo!, etc.) to find information, which leads to varying results. Some states, agencies, communities are actively sharing information about their state and local governing processes and helping people get info and get involved, but it's hit or miss because every state or locality has a separate and unique process, making the task of participation a bit more complicated and daunting than it has to be. If concerned "digital citizens" are empowered to catalogue information such as who the county supervisor is, and what they are responsible for, the public in any state can research it easily in the wiki. In many cases the public servants who dramatically affect our lives are unknown to us. It may not be easy to determine who represents a user by conducting searches of the World Wide Web, but simple searches based on zip code, city and county name in the wiki can bring up a wealth of

information entered by other users. The baseline data in the wiki will likely be entered by researchers working for Digital Citizen and include fundamental info about state officials. Users of the site or visitors without a profile can view this section and gather information that is not consistently provided by government.

Active users of the wiki can earn honor badges for creating entries that receive a threshold of views, as well as those which are approved by numerous users for accuracy. Wiki entries may also be voted up for accuracy and relevance to current events. A badge can be earned for those who create numerous entries that are voted up reaching specified thresholds. Voted up wiki entries can be set to appear in user home page wiki widgets.

Like Wikipedia there are certainly going to be valid concerns over accuracy of data entered since it is crowd sourced and difficult to verify for accuracy. However, numerous studies show Wikipedia to be just as accurate as traditional encyclopedias created by private organizations, and it has even more content, so we should be able to expect that over time the Digital Citizen Wiki would also develop into a treasure trove of reliable political info. Like Wikipedia, we would place editing barriers on pages that are prone to vandalism of incorrect information.

The wiki will be integrated with other general features of the site. It will be a useful resource for debaters, and bill writers, etc. who wish to cite wiki entries or reference it for evidence in their arguments. Users can earn honor badges through this section of the site by performing activities such as adding wiki entries, editing existing entries for accuracy, or having their entries voted up for quality and accuracy.

4N - Legislative Info

This section of the site displays and integrates, voting records, active and past bills, records of bill passage/rejection outcomes, bill text, Supreme Court hearings audio/text, executive orders, and significant agency activities to many of the other features of the site. Users can link to this public information in debates, posts, and for Open-Source Legislation writing. Much of this is already available to the public but is spread across multiple sources and has not been integrated with social networking features etc.

4O - Learning

The learning section gives a unique voice to academics of fields related to political issues and invites users to participate in educational activities to improve their knowledge base. Scholarly research shared by academics can help users gain access to facts and theories from those most qualified to advise the public. This section will highlight a unique category for events in academia, provide descriptions of political terms and political principles by leading academics. It explains relevant theorem and research models for those seeking to be active academics. Academics can create unique user profiles which outline their background and

research. Anyone can claim themselves to be an academic but what makes the profile special is its content.

User made content in this section will be its driving force. They can create quizzes for a fun and informative way to involve peers. Teachers/professors can use the site to quiz their students (probably not with grades but just as a sample quiz or exercise). Users can also make polls/surveys to discover interesting facts about the people in their network, or even the public at large. Ideally expert polling organizations would tap into the resources of the site to help them conduct their research about political opinions etc. These polls and their results can be private or included in the Statistics section of the site.

Users can earn badges of honor in this section by creating and filling out quizzes, creating polls/surveys meeting thresholds of responses, submitting scholarly works, creating quizzes with a threshold of responses, voting up scholarly works, voting up quizzes, and voting up polls/surveys. This section will have a uniquely large number of badge rewards to encourage as much participation as possible.

4P - Politician Profiles

These will be essentially the same as user profiles but with added public information about the leaders such as voting records, appearances in news, and house/senate debates, committee memberships, campaign finance, and personal/professional background. Politicians are able to edit their own profiles and manage their own feed but much of the information will be provided without their action since it is public knowledge provided by the government. Contacting and following politicians will be made easy by these unique profile pages. Inactive politician profiles will look noticeably different from those who have created their accounts and joined the network showing their commitment to a more transparent legislative future.

4Q - Interest Group Profiles

Interest groups dramatically shape political outcomes and mobilize the public towards specific objectives. In many cases the underlying political actors that impact legislative outcomes are the interest groups who persuade politicians to vote a certain way. Private interests have in many cases been given a bad name but a lot of them fight very hard for what they believe is best for society and many citizens would support them if they had better working knowledge of their activities. Digital Citizen gives interest groups their own unique profiles so that groups have tools to organize events and promote their cause. The difference between a regular user profile and an interest group profile will mostly be cosmetic, thus they will not be given any special advantages over individual users.

4R - Statistics

As the site develops into a place for an active community of users, the polls, surveys, posts, debates, and general activity on the site can be analyzed, much like the current practices of data mining on non-political social networks, to reveal answers about important questions

regarding society. Of course, any conclusions are affected by a sample selection bias of people who use the internet and chose to become active on the site. While that fact may undermine some conclusions drawn from analysis of the data, it is still worth taking into consideration given the challenges of polling for accurate social science data in modern society. It used to be that pollsters could get a decent sample of respondents by calling land line phones but with so much of society moving towards cellular phones (which can't legally be called so easily), and home phone users blocking solicitation calls, there is a selection bias in that process as well. Going forward, more of the population will be online, and as previously discussed (*review section 3D – Trends of Online Political Activity*), more of the population will be politically active online assuming trends continue. Thus the selection bias will be reduced as the majority of citizens become accessible online and the users of the site become a more accurate representative sample of society for discerning things like public opinion on current events.

4S - News

The news media has been a traditional means for disseminating important current events info throughout society and it has an integral role on Digital Citizen. News organizations will have their own unique profile pages with news streams to be followed. A central news page formatted with a series of custom selected news feeds will help users tie news media to all their other activities on digiciti.org. Ideally the networks partner with Digital Citizen and provide content specifically for the site, but other possibilities are gathering info from other social media sources, or perhaps purchasing API to access their content. News network specialized profile pages will show info about their network background such as founders, history, financial backers, owners, and staff bios. The profiles will link to their own sites.

4T - Agencies

While much of the activity in the executive, judiciary, and legislative branch of government is made public knowledge, a great deal of important agency activity is not very well known. At present, it is more difficult for citizens to fully understand the importance of agency leaders and their actions. This section will be founded on efforts to reveal more of what agencies are doing and the roles they play in governing our society. The aim of this feature will be to get more public access to agency information and give agencies a well-known space for them to outline their mission and update society regarding their activities.

4U - Mobile

Like every major social networking site, there should be a mobile application for Digital Citizen. It may even be more important to have a mobile app than a traditional website because so many people enjoy the convenience of cellular technology, and in many parts of the world people have greater access to the internet via a cell phone than they do a computer. However, the site is a critical developmental base for the app and most of the major social networking sites have started with a traditional site, then subsequently refined mobile apps. Like most SNS apps, the "digiciti" or "DC" app will not be likely to have all of the same robust

features as the main site but hopefully over time a very robust app can perform all the same essential functions of the site and put easier access to the democratic process in the palms of our hands. For enhanced success of both components it would be ideal to begin development of the mobile app in conjunction with roll out of the site.

4V - Voter Resources

As technology increasingly permeates society, a day will likely come in which we conduct elections by voting online. Some states have already adopted online registration and voting practices. As more of them follow, Digital Citizen would be an ideal online host to centralize state and federal registration and voter resources. Offering opportunities to tie in these resources with tools for social networking, event planning, debate, petition, and more, could prove to be an invaluable tool for improving voter experience, accuracy, and turnout. This feature would be dependent on future partnerships with federal, state, and local governments but will be an ambition of Digital Citizen.

5. Potential Challenges

Note: *This section is aimed at addressing potential societal concerns for problems impeding the success of the site or adverse social affects it may have. It is not addressing logistical problems such as security or moderation of content as those factors are covered in other sections. This is not a comprehensive list but it does exemplify that Digital Citizen is well aware of, and well prepared, to overcome the challenges it will face. This section should help relieve concerns held by skeptics.*

5A - Sparking Interest

Lack of interest in politics is probably the largest hurtle to overcome, and currently it is probably the biggest threat to the development of a stronger democracy in the US. Complacence, aversion to controversy, and a sense of helplessness to affect change have made much of society shy away from being politically active, and it is possible that Digital Citizen will fail to significantly change this in the near future. However, the alternative to creating a resource like the Digital Citizen website is really to surrender in the fight for a greater democracy. Even in the worst case scenario, if the site does not change our society overnight, it can be a catalyst for future similar projects and its persistence over time will surely make politics easier to access, less stigmatized, and more meaningful to the average citizen.

5B - Achieving Bipartisanship

Partisanship in the United States is a well-known problem as a leading cause of gridlock in Congress, and makes it harder for the public to find common ground in political deliberations (Schickler, 2012). It is possible that the Digital Citizen site could have the adverse effect of increasing partisanship, at least in the short run. Harvard law professor and author of "Wiser:

Getting Beyond Group Think to Make Groups Smarter, Cass Sunstein (2015), researched the nature of political interactions finding that when people of similar political viewpoints interact, their positions become more extreme to the right or left of the liberal/conservative spectrum. He finds that human beings have a tendency to surround themselves with likeminded people and interact in an "echo chamber" which amplifies their current beliefs and political stance. Even when evidence introduced, if that evidence conflicts with an individual's core values or belief system, they can irrationally deny its validity (Sunstein, 2015). An element of Sunstien's (2015) conclusion for combating this problem of polarization in group think is to increase our interactions with people of varying viewpoints and even to diversify the exposure of viewpoints for members of Congress.

Digital Citizen will "venture into uncharted territory" by increasing online political interaction in such a topic specific way, and the result may be an amplified "echo chamber", at least in the short run. However, the design of the site strongly encourages users to be exposed to the Counterweight section and in debates one will be likely to engage competing interests. Increased interaction across the ideological spectrum can reveal to us that we are more alike than we might expect. It can humanize a demonized opposition, make us think more carefully about our positions on issues, make more informed decisions, learn respect and humility, and take steps to find compromise. Similar to the threat of low levels of political interest, the issue of partisanship will be an ongoing battle and to neglect the opportunity of using technology to combat this problem is to surrender in defeat. The Counterweight feature of the site is designed specifically to combat this problem but the site as a whole should also help in this regard as people interact regarding political issues more than ever before.

5C - Powerful Interests

Many fear the influence of interest groups because for every group one supports, there is probably another to oppose it. Interest groups may attempt to manipulate Digital Citizen by creating fake profiles or using their social influence to simply gain more power than they already have via this new medium for mobilizing supporters. In some sense, if one fears this problem, one fears democracy itself, and does not have faith in the majority of the population to be active informed moral citizens who typically support interests that truly benefit society. Democracy is the prevailing political structure in more developed nations because many people believe that it has a unique ability to yield better societal outcomes, and is most likely to protect human rights. While Digital Citizen may simply present another opportunity for minority interest groups to seize stronger control of our political system, the more likely outcome, and significantly more valuable reward, of having an increasingly active and informed electorate, is well worth the risk of handing more control to special interests, who essentially have a hand in every legislative outcome in the status quo anyway. We almost have nothing to lose, and everything to gain on this front, assuming we believe in the ability of democracy to overcome backwards political interests with the power of increased civic activity.

5D - Digital Citizen's Defense against Conflicts of Interest

Digital Citizen may be subject to conflict of interest accusations and to combat that problem the site will seek to operate as a non-profit so that the funding it obtains does not come with any strings attached. If this method of funding does not sustain the organization it can explore a for profit model generating revenues from offerings like purchases to enhance the DigiCiti Builder game. This would also be a harmless in terms of conflicts of interest problems because it would not offer the users any political advantage and the money comes from diffuse sources in small amounts so that there is no question of incentive for Digital Citizen to be beholden to any particular political interests. The content on the site will be provided by users or drawn from public information provided by the government. Accessible news sources connected to the site are presented without filters applied by Digital Citizen. The site does not take a political stance on issues and merely acts as a platform for interaction. Any political views expressed by those under the employ of Digital Citizen are not representative of views held by the organization and shall in no way affect the content on the site. Healthy political deliberation depends on the protection of free speech and the mission of Digital Citizen is to increase the quality and amount of interaction by providing a space where anyone can express their views and can stand out as an important influence simply by the merits of their actions and support from their peers.

5E - Manipulation of Statistics

The statistics section of the site could be subject to manipulation or simply lead to inaccurate analysis of data to be used in misleading arguments. Many would contend that the present state of accessibility to social data is poor and that Digital Citizen may just be another means of accessing poor data with regard to certain issues. Despite this claim, it can likely tell us a great deal about those who are politically active online, and that group is likely to be an increasingly representative sample of society in the future.

5F - Politics is not a Game?

The honor badge system and DigiCiti Builder game might be frowned upon by some because it could lead to shallow use of the site instigated by gamesmanship instead of sincere and responsible political interest. It is the position of Digital Citizen that those who view the site as a game will still probably benefit our society by their interactions on the site, even if they are motivated by superficial factors. This is true for two main reasons; one because the superficial users will still likely find issues they consider seriously, and two because even if they never contribute in an intentionally meaningful way, the uniquely special gift of democracy's power to self-correct will have other serious users respond to baseless arguments with ideas that win by their merits. This principle is somewhat analogous to the way that inoculations work in the human body. When we defeated smallpox it was by injecting non-lethal doses of the virus so that our antibodies could learn to fight the real threat by developing immunity. Injecting weak ideas into our political deliberations can inoculate the political sphere of

communications by revealing the toxic ideas to our serious members of society and empowering them to fight off failed ideas much like creating an antibody against a virus.

Closing Note: *With all of the potential problems surrounding this site, the benefits toward a greater democracy still far outweigh all the potential problems. Many of the problems are already deeply rooted in our society and, for those of us trying to fix them, it is only common sense that we use our new found technological powers to try and overcome them.*

6. Early Development Plans

6A - Marketing

Note: *For info on demographic trends increasing demand for Digital Citizen, review section 3D – Trends of Online Political Activity.*

The target market for gaining initial users is academics and students, interest groups and organizers, political advisors and politicians, and news media leaders. The first step is to recruit activist promoters who will spread the word, and lead by example, in using the site. Promoting efforts will start with gaining support of university professors across the nation and getting them to endorse the product and have them use it for social sciences course activities such as class debates, quizzes, polls, or participation in the learning section or news media. The tools for creating group debates and networks will be ideal for supplemental activities in classes. These students will have created accounts and have been introduced to the achievements opportunities of the honor badge system and all the other features of the site. They will be one of the key catalysts for spreading the word to the general public.

Interest groups and political organizers struggle to gain influence, many of them creating their own social networking profiles and mass email campaigns only to be ignored facing difficulty reaching people who care about the initiatives they promote. Digital Citizen's interest group profiles are searchable by issue category making it easier for citizens to connect with organizations, and vice versa. Interest groups will find the site to be a great tool for organizing/promoting events using the calendar systems and spreading general information via debates and site activity drawing users to their cause. They will certainly champion use of the site.

Political advisors will be contacted and informed of the site and encouraged to advise their client politicians to create profiles, and participate on the site, joining the movement toward online democratization of power. Politicians who lead in this movement will be champions of a new wave in technologically enhanced democratic activity. Their active use of the profiles will highlight them as transparent leaders, and their participation in debates as well as "open-source legislating" will inspire users to join and set precedent for a more interactive relationship between elected officials and their constituents.

News media organizations have been turning more and more towards social media to gather information and to report it to the public through social network channels. Digital Citizen creates an ideal social networking environment for political news reporting to a concerned and active audience. News media organizations can embrace the changes to the democratization of information sharing and become respected sources of info within a new medium officially designed for political deliberation. Followers of the news media will be enticed to participate in features of Digital Citizen when they have more interactive tools with which to access and take part in their news.

6B - Funding

Ideally the site will operate as a non-profit organization and avoid any potential conflict of interest issues that one might assume if it received funding from interest groups or individuals with political agendas that could be furthered by manipulation of the site. Crowd sourced funding through resources such as Kickstarter may also be used for funding purposes. If the site simply cannot function or sufficiently expand due to lack of financial support from donors, it will have several options for generating revenues, such as selling virtual customization features for the DigiCiti Builder game [Gavin Newsom (2013) referenced a Playspan 2011 report on profits from virtual products sold in games showing its success as a business model], utilizing advertising revenue, or exploring the possibility of accepting capital from investors without strings attached. Government funding of this project is also a possibility. The founder has met several elected officials and will work with more of them for possible government support. Partnerships with other bipartisan organizations who share a similar mission will also prove helpful in funding.

6C - Partnerships

There are numerous organizations who share the core mission of increasing transparency and civic engagement in politics. Many of the features of the Digital Citizen project are inspired by their work and partnership with them may help to unify the efforts of such organizations to create the comprehensive set of tools that will be offered. To name a few of the potential partners, C-SPAN (who the founder has worked for), the Sunlight Foundation, Center for Responsive Politics (opensecrets.org), Code for America, numerous potential academic associations such as the UC Berkeley Cal Alumni Association, all major news organizations, and possibly the state and federal government. Members of congress and political leaders would also be effective partners to endorse and champion the cause of the Digital Citizen mission.

Partnerships could simply be endorsements or perhaps joint efforts to provide online content. For example, C-SPAN has an incredible video library and video feed access to current events in Congress and the White House that would tie in with activity on digiciti.org. The Sunlight Foundation does an amazing job of collecting and sharing info on members of congress and legislative activity. Use of their API (Application Programming Interface) may help

tremendously with creating politician profiles and more. Partnerships of varying types may help Digital Citizen to provide the various features of the site. Organizations with specialized content offerings could potentially enhance the content of Digital Citizen but it is certainly possible, and perhaps desirable in some cases, that many of the site features be created and maintained independently by Digital Citizen.

6D - Talent Acquisition & Organizational Structure

The Digital Citizen project is so large it will require a sizeable organization comprised of highly skilled designers, programmers, researchers, and more. Since many features of the site are complex enough to employ a team of developers and site maintenance workers on their own, it is likely that the structure of digiciti.org employees will be divided into departments by feature. To clarify, there would be separate departments for the Debate, Petition, Open-Source Legislation, and Statistics sections of the site. However, much of what these departments will do is going to depend on effective cooperation with one another. For example, the databases that each feature uses will need to be designed in such a way that all the different features of the site can be integrated and query info from one another's databases. Much of the database and programming infrastructure will need to be created with this need for future flexibility in mind, and the departments will have to cooperate effectively to produce and maintain such a complex database. Each department will need a liaison that helps them all stay connected and cooperative.

In addition to the departments for development and maintenance of the site features, there will need to be a security team. The security of private information for users will require well maintained encryption and any manipulations of the site must be prevented with thorough security. The project will also need ongoing legal advice and monitoring so it will need a legal team. The security and legal teams may initially be limited to contracted services but once Digital Citizen reaches full scale within the US, and ideally expands around the globe, it will require these teams to scale up as well.

6E - Legal

The site design, concept, structure, user interface, and ideas for functionality are legally protected by the US government IP rights for trademark and copyright. Legal consultation will be made with internet lawyers to further protect intellectual property of the site and preserve, for the owners of Digital Citizen, the sole rights to modify and update the site design, code, encryption, and elements on in the site unless otherwise specifically agreed upon. The Digital Citizen name will be trademarked, its content copyrighted, and likely patented once the site is fully developed and prepared for public use.

7. Conclusion

Development of stronger democracies around the world depends on whether or not people become more involved in their political destinies. With the ever growing power of

technological advancement bringing us greater levels of social connectivity than history has ever seen, we are primed to create tools that radically improve political processes. Digital Citizen is surely just a small fragment in a much more important social revolution that is already taking place as a result of interconnectedness via the internet. With sites like Alibaba, Wikipedia, and countless entertainment media outlets, business, education, and culture are more easily shared than ever before. This needs to be true for political information as well. Bringing together all of the features of Digital Citizen will create a new frontier for online political interaction that can propel societies forward in social advancement. Support the mission for a greater democracy and become a Digital Citizen today.

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For info or to support the project email digiciti@outlook.com or visit digiciti.org

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