MIT Elections Audit Summit

Ballots, voters & election workers

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Democracy is a design problem
“An audit is no better than the paper trail it uses.”

Philip Stark
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Ballot design can fool voters

Even voters who think they know the rules.

Better Ballots (2008)
https://www.brennancenter.org/publication/better-ballots
We know the problem
And we have best practices for ballot design

EAC ballot best practices (2007)
https://www.eac.gov/election-officials/designing-polling-place-materials/
Let’s have a better paper trail

We can have ballots that are the result of a conversation between the voter and the voting system and avoid ambiguous or inaccurate marks
Options ▶ Selections (plus undervotes)

For Mayor (vote for 1)
You voted for
Candidate Name

For Commissioner (vote for 1)
You voted for
Candidate Name

For City Council (vote for 3)
You voted for
Candidate Name
Candidate Name
No selection made
Election workers are people, too
With good instructions, complex procedures make sense.

The Field Guides to Ensuring Voter Intent
https://civicdesign.org/fieldguides/
Let’s try a quick experiment
Elections work better when procedures are usable, accessible, and clear.

For everyone!