

Microsoft offers software tools to secure elections

By FRANK BAJAK
Associated Press



AP Photo/Elaine Thompson

Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella delivers the keynote address at Build, the company's annual conference for software developers on Monday in Seattle.

Microsoft announced an ambitious effort it says will make voting secure, verifiable and subject to reliable audits. Two of the three top U.S. elections vendors have expressed interest in potentially incorporating the open-source software into their proprietary voting systems.

The software kit is being developed with Galois, an Oregon-based company separately creating a secure voting system prototype under contract with the Pentagon's advanced research agency, DARPA.

Dubbed "ElectionGuard," the Microsoft kit will be available this summer, the company says, with early prototypes ready to pilot for next year's general elections. CEO Satya Nadella announced the initiative Monday at a developer's conference in Seattle.

Nadella said the project's software, provided free of charge as part of Microsoft's Defending Democracy Program, would help "modernize all of the election infrastructure everywhere in the world." Microsoft also announced a cut-rate Office 365 application suite for political parties and cam-

aigns for what it charges nonprofits. Both Microsoft and Google provide anti-phishing email support for campaigns.

Three little-known U.S. companies control about 90 percent of the market for election equipment, but have long faced criticism for poor security, antiquated technology and insufficient transparency around their proprietary, black-box voting systems. Open-source software is inherently more secure because the underlying code is easily scrutinized by outside security experts.

Two of the leading vendors, Election Systems & Software of Omaha, Nebraska, and Hart InterCivic of Austin, Texas,

both expressed interest in partnering with Microsoft for ElectionGuard. A spokeswoman for a third vendor, Dominion Voting Systems of Denver, said the company looks forward to "learning more" about the initiative.

Anyone with an existing voting system or developing a new one will be able to incorporate the ElectionGuard development kit for jurisdictions abroad.

"It can be used with a ballot-marking device. It can be used with an optical scanner, on hand-marked paper ballots," said Josh Benaloh, a senior cryptographer at Microsoft Research and key contrib-

utor to the ElectionGuard project.

Benaloh helped produce a National Academies of Science report last year that called for an urgent overhaul of the rickety U.S. election system, which faced serious threats from Russian hackers who in 2016 attempted to infiltrate voting administration systems in several states.

That report called for all U.S. elections to be held on human-readable paper ballots by 2020. It also advocated a specific form of routine postelection audits intended to ensure that votes are accurately counted. While U.S. officials say there is no evidence of hackers tampering with election results, experts say systems used by millions of U.S. voters remain susceptible to tampering.

One official who has been in informal conversations with the ElectionGuard project leaders is Dean Logan, who runs elections for Los Angeles County, the nation's most populous, and is building an open-source voting system for it.

Election integrity activist Susan Greenhalgh of the National Election Defense Coalition said she hoped the project would encourage innovative thinking at

the level that elections are actually managed.

ElectionGuard aims to provide "end-to-end" verification of voting in two ways, Benaloh said. First, it lets voters confirm that their votes are accurately recorded.

Second, the unique coded tracker it produces registers an encrypted version of the vote that keeps the ballot choice itself secret while ensuring votes are accurately counted. Outsiders such as election watchdog groups, political parties, journalists and voters themselves can verify online that votes were properly counted without being altered.

The system would also allow for reliable postelection audits and recounts. Microsoft executives say they also plan to build a prototype voting system for reference.

A spinoff of Galois called Free & Fair developed the sophisticated post-election audits, known as "risk-limiting," for Colorado, which was the first U.S. state to require the audits recommended in the National Academies of Sciences report.

ElectionGuard is not designed to work with internet voting schemes — which experts consider too

easily hackable — and does not currently work with vote-by-mail systems.

ES&S told The Associated Press via email that it was excited to partner with Microsoft and "still exploring the potentials" for incorporated the software kit its voting systems.

Hart InterCivic, the No. 3 vendor, said it planned a pilot project with Microsoft to "incorporate ElectionGuard functionality as an additional feature" layered over its core platform.

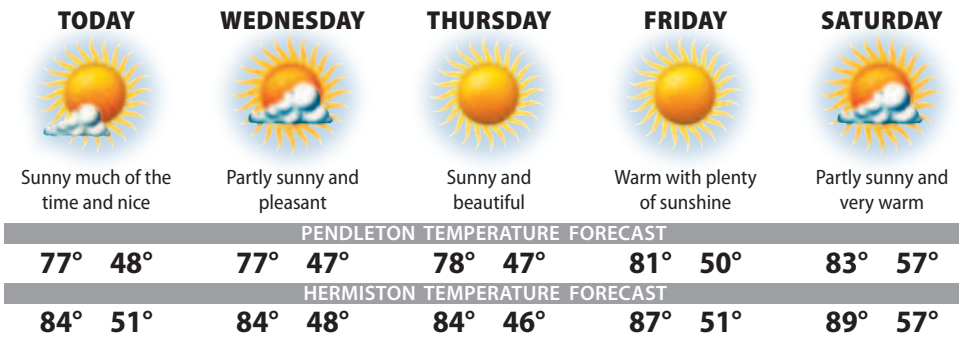
A spokeswoman for Dominion, the No. 2 vendor, said "We are very interested in learning more about the initiative and being able to review the various prototypes that are being planned, along with hearing more about other federally-supported efforts in the elections space."

Edgardo Cortés, a former Virginia elections commissioner now with New York University's Brennan Center, welcomed additional private sector support for election systems.

"I think it'll take a while to catch on and see how beneficial (ElectionGuard) ends up being," he said. "But I think it certainly does have a great deal of potential."

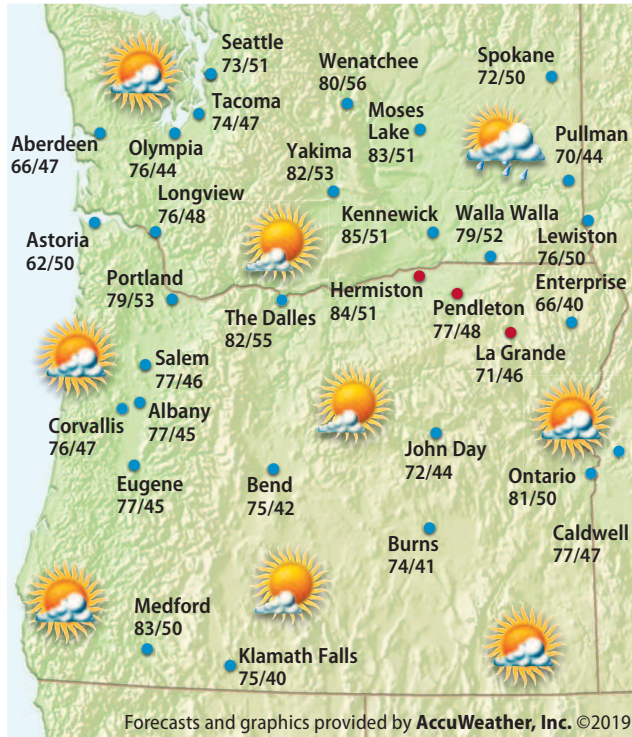
Columbia University will be partnering with Microsoft to audit the pilots.

Forecast for Pendleton Area



OREGON FORECAST

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.



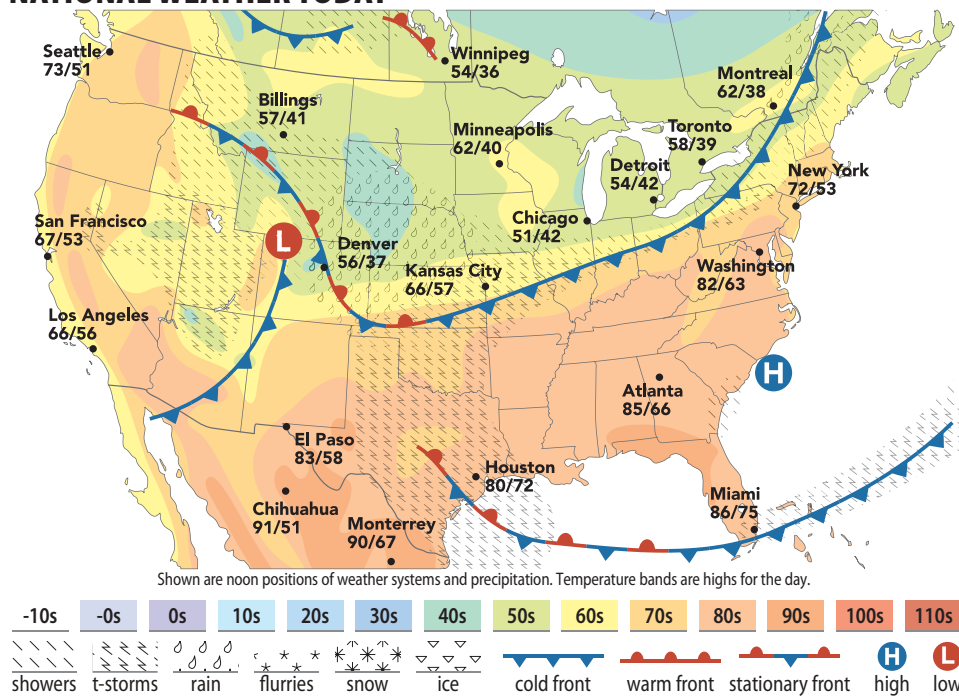
ALMANAC

PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.		
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	75°	43°
Normals	68°	44°
Records	93° (1992)	31° (1927)
PRECIPITATION		
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"	
Month to date	0.00"	
Normal month to date	0.21"	
Year to date	7.76"	
Last year to date	5.48"	
Normal year to date	5.32"	
HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.		
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	81°	42°
Normals	71°	44°
Records	95° (1966)	27° (2000)
PRECIPITATION		
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"	
Month to date	0.00"	
Normal month to date	0.24"	
Year to date	3.88"	
Last year to date	4.20"	
Normal year to date	4.23"	
WINDS (in mph)		
Today	NNW 4-8	
Wed.	NNW 4-8	
Pendleton	NW 6-12	
Wed.	NW 6-12	
SUN AND MOON		
Sunrise today	5:35 a.m.	
Sunset tonight	8:09 p.m.	
Moonrise today	7:42 a.m.	
Moonset today	11:21 p.m.	
MOON PHASES		
First	Full	Last
May 11	May 18	May 26
		June 3

NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)
High 93° in Pecos, Texas Low 19° in Rolla, N.D.

NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



Teachers across Oregon to walk out in protests over classroom funding

Associated Press

SALEM — Tens of thousands of teachers are expected to walk out across Oregon this week, adding to the string of nationwide protests over class sizes and education funding.

Schools around the state, including Oregon's largest district, Portland Public Schools, will close for at least part of Wednesday as educators press for more money from lawmakers. Some schools will stay open, as teachers opt for sit-ins or after-school rallies. Most schools participating in the walkout will still have staff on hand to administer national Advanced Placement testing or provide food

and care to low-income students.

Oregon schools have some of the highest class sizes and lowest graduation rates in the United States. Districts have just one librarian, or none at all, fewer than the recommended number of counselors and been forced to cut programs like physical education and music.

"Our educators have been trying their hardest to cover up for our funding losses and try to do more with less," said John Larson, president of the Oregon Education Association. "We are to a point now that we can't do that anymore. We want to show that Oregon isn't immune to the

problems we see in other walkouts throughout the country."

The action follows a wave of teacher activism that began in West Virginia in 2018 and was followed by Oklahoma, Kentucky and Arizona. Teachers in North Carolina and South Carolina rallied at their respective state capitols last week seeking more money.

But unlike other states, Oregon teachers want to make it clear they're not pushing for pay raises or other union demands. They say they're walking out to highlight the conditions inside the classroom and how years of lower funding has affected children's learning opportunities.

Washington lawmakers approve plan to fix the mental health system

OLYMPIA, Wash. (AP) — Washington legislators took substantial steps to reshape the mental health system, including funding for new facilities, legislation to increase the number of qualified workers, and the creation of new types of treatment centers.

The *Seattle Times* reports that lawmakers approved the plan — which sprawls across two different state budgets, as well as several other bills — in the legislative session that ended April 28.

The work comes after years of court orders and federal inspections that meticulously documented the poor treatment of psychiatric patients in the state's care, as well as a steep shortage of treatment beds and staffers to operate them.

"We've never had a plan before," said Rep. Joe

Schmick, R-Colfax, part of a bipartisan group of lawmakers who worked on the issue. "Always before, it's just 'we're going to throw money at something and we're going to put out fires.'"

It remains to be seen how the complex plan comes together in the coming years. Grants will have to be awarded, facilities sited, permitted and built, and staff must be found to run them.

The 2019-21 capital-construction budget spends roughly \$33 million for pre-design and design of a new behavioral health teaching hospital at the University of Washington. The facility would train mental health professionals while also providing as many as 150 treatment beds.

That budget includes about \$118 million toward

building new facilities, or expanding existing ones, across the state. Among other places, it funds projects in Bremerton, Centralia, Colville, Edmonds, Spokane, Issaquah, Sedro-Woolley, and for the Jamestown S'Klallam tribe.

That money also provides for psychiatric beds at new or expanded community hospitals in Everett, Auburn and Yakima.

Lawmakers included some competitive grant money for projects still to be determined and funds to build a 16-bed state-run facility and a 48-bed facility that would be partly state-run. Also, there is \$24 million in the state Housing Trust Fund for residential placements and case management for people struggling with chronic mental health issues.

CORRECTIONS: The *East Oregonian* works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

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