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New Political Startup Crowdpac Ramps Up for California Primaries with Non-partisan Voting Guide

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Hi-res photos available at www.crowdpac.com/press

MENLO PARK, California – May 27, 2014. Crowdpac, a new non-partisan political technology startup, is testing a limited version of its platform in advance of the California Primary Election on June 3 with an online voting guide tailored to users' political preferences.

Through a quick and easy online questionnaire, the Silicon Valley company matches users with the Congressional, statewide, and state legislative candidates most likely to reflect their political priorities. Crowdpac calculates objective scores for political candidates based on three sources of publicly available information:

- **money** – which individuals or organizations have contributed to the candidates' campaigns and which campaigns the candidates themselves have contributed to;
- **speech** – what the candidates say in speeches, the media, and other official communications; and
- **votes** – the candidates' previous voting record.

A complex series of algorithms created by Crowdpac co-founder Adam Bonica of Stanford University processes campaign contributions data to generate a score which places candidates on a liberal/conservative scale, ranging from 10L as the most liberal to 10C as the most conservative. The data model is based on Bonica's research indicating that donors to political campaigns will tend to support candidates who share their policy preferences and/or personal interests. This is supplemented by data on candidates' personal contributions to other campaigns, helping to forecast how a candidate would likely vote and legislate if elected.

The idea for Crowdpac was developed in 2013 by CEO and co-founder Steve Hilton soon after arriving at Stanford University as a visiting professor. Hilton, formerly Senior Advisor to British Prime Minister David Cameron, saw a way to use technology "to democratize the levers of power," continuing the work on government transparency and accountability he had started in the UK government.

"We want to help give politics back to people," said Hilton. "We're trying to make a contribution to political change and do our small part to end the way in which big money seems to have a stranglehold on the American political system."

Hilton and other members of the Crowdpac team will be visiting California's 33rd district in Los Angeles this week to promote the website. The primary for veteran Congressman Henry Waxman's seat provides a good demonstration of the usefulness of Crowdpac's new election tool – helping voters distinguish among the wide range of candidates in the race.

Through collaboration with co-founders Adam Bonica, an assistant professor of political science at Stanford University, and Gisel Kordestani, a Harvard MBA with eight years of senior management experience at Google, the Crowdpac concept began to gel when Hilton was serving as an entrepreneur-in-residence at NEA, the prestigious Sand Hill Road venture capital firm. The prototype was created by summer 2013 and \$2 million was raised in seed funding from several top-tier venture capital firms including NEA, InterWest, SV Angel, and a range of angel investors.

In addition to its online voting guide, Crowdpac compiles typically dispersed information on candidates' funding sources, positions on key issues, trends in political speech, voting behavior, interest group ratings, and past political activity into individual candidate pages. The information is represented graphically to make it easily digestible for users.

"A fundamental problem in American politics is that it is very difficult for voters to access the information they need to make informed decisions at the polls," said Bonica. "With Crowdpac, we are taking an important step to alleviate that problem."

Crowdpac is eager to collect feedback from this early testing phase in order to improve its service in time for a full launch ahead of the November midterm elections. In the meantime, the Crowdpac team is working to expand available candidate information and add the capability for users to make direct donations to candidates. Users are encouraged to submit feedback to data@crowdpac.com.

"We hope that our personalized voting guide will be particularly useful for the California primaries because the party label alone doesn't give voters enough information about the choice on offer," said Kordestani. "Our research indicates that political donations are the best predictor of what a politician will do in office, and since we use campaign contributions to calculate objective scores for candidates, users can easily figure out who on the ballot best matches their preferences."

Crowdpac is promoting its online voting guide with a limited marketing campaign in California under the slogan: "This election, vote wisely, not blindly."

About Crowdpac

Crowdpac aims to make it easier for people to engage effectively in the political process. We believe that by building the most useful, trusted destination for non-partisan political information – and developing simple tools that enable people to act on that information – we can put power back in people's hands and help create a more representative democracy. Crowdpac is testing its products and features during the 2014 primary season before its full launch prior to the November midterm elections. At that time users will be able to browse data on candidates in all 50 states and donate directly to their campaigns.

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