



from the **PRESIDENT**

What Would Adams and Jefferson Say?

The end of summer has sadly arrived as I write this column. Although that signals the start of the football season, it was a great American summer for the Livingston family, and we regret its passing. I checked the quotations books for "summer" and found the obvious — only Shakespeare captured it: "Summer's lease hath all too short a date."

Making it truly the great American summer was reading David McCullough's best-selling biography, *John Adams*. Trips to Wyoming and Colorado — coupled with this great tale of Adams' and Jefferson's joint struggles to declare independence, define our nation and establish credibility, credit and military alliances in Europe — make me ever more appreciative of our incredible country and dynamic democracy.

But when you contrast Adams' violent trips across the Atlantic and the focus and passion with which he took up important debates, one feels that our generation lacks the ability to deal with tough matters directly, quickly and conclusively. Less than a year ago, the Florida recount held our nation in a gripping debate and deadlock, yet today, voting reform is a matter largely off the nation's agenda. Only Florida appears to have addressed the issue in a substantial way.

On the national level, it appears to be an issue that has no monied interests pressing for progress and change. I suspect that Adams and Jefferson would turn over in their graves when learning of the need for such financial sponsorship of important issues. I further suspect that since Adams and Jefferson were both so powerful as to will their lives to end exactly on the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, they could still manage to simultaneously turn in their graves and cause the ground to shake.

Voting reform does not mean electoral college reform. It means updating the technology by which we conduct votes on a local level. The use of Internet voting, telephone voting and mail voting will not only bring accuracy to elections, but also inclusiveness and enhanced information.

We need a flexible, technology-based platform that can be offered for state and county use. Corporations already employ such technology for their annual proxy votes. A broader voting platform will only enhance the dynamic leadership position our democracy enjoys and ensure that we can deal with the unseen challenges that the future will surely bring. Disenfranchised and disinterested citizens can be empowered and included in our system as a result of such an effort.

It is my hope that some of our leading companies will employ their resources to develop these flexible, technology-based platforms to enhance voting, with the nation's interest in mind. What's good for our structural strength is good for our economic strength, and a little focus and dedication in the spirit of Adams and Jefferson would be a welcome change from the current environment.

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I'm sure that all FEI members join with me and the rest of the leadership team in condemning the calamitous attacks on America on Sept. 11. American values and freedoms remain the envy of the world and, unfortunately, targets for terrorists.

In the coming months, there are certain to be repercussions in the financial markets, here and abroad. FEI stands ready to help members deal with important issues confronting their companies in the uncertain times ahead.

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