

# Managing Volunteers for **Value-Driven** Projects

Nick O'Neill ★ QCon SF 2018

# Hi, I'm **Nick O'Neill**

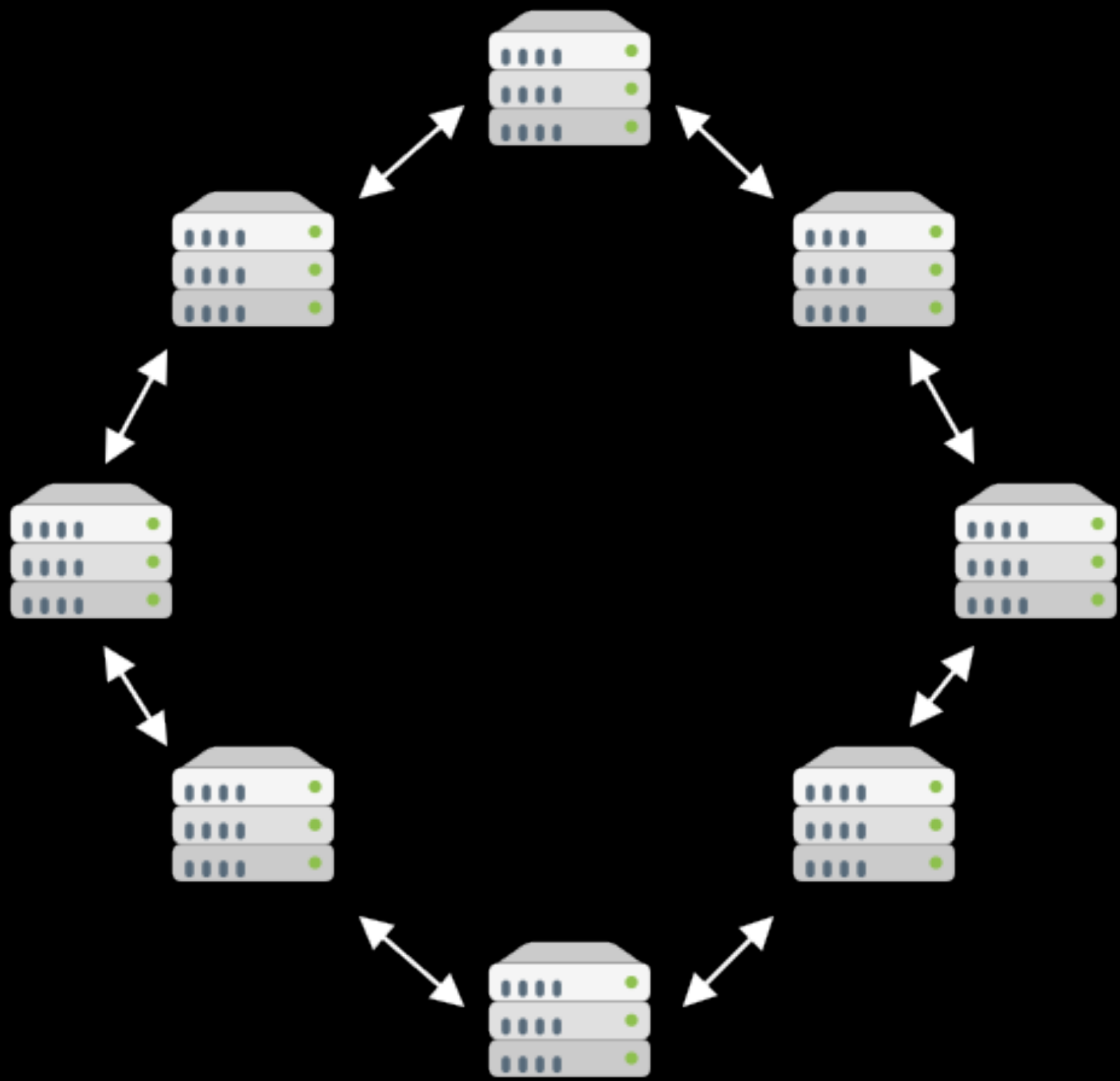
- **Generalist UI Engineer**
- **Mobile team lead**
- **Political non-profit founder?**

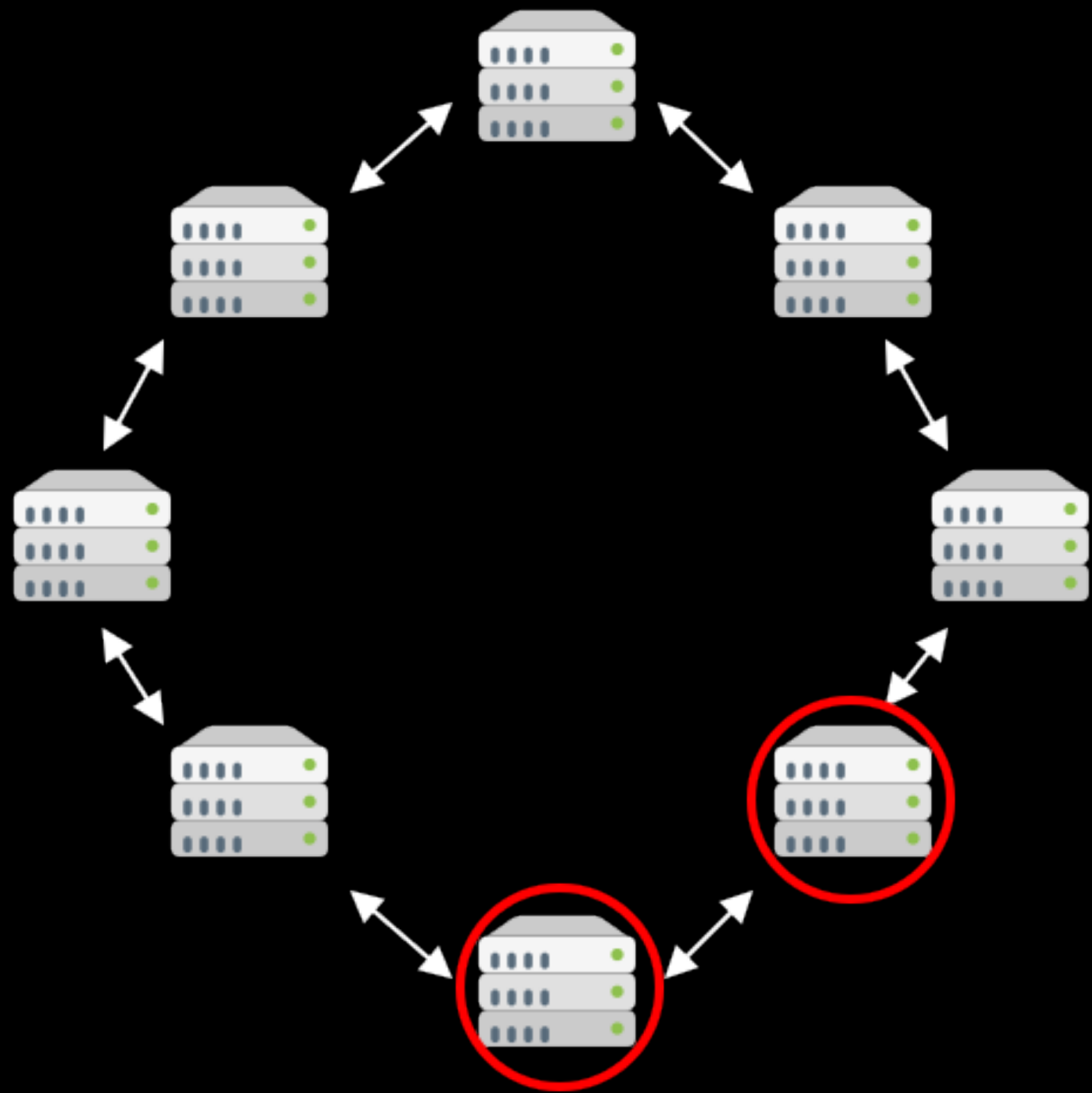
# A Short Prelude

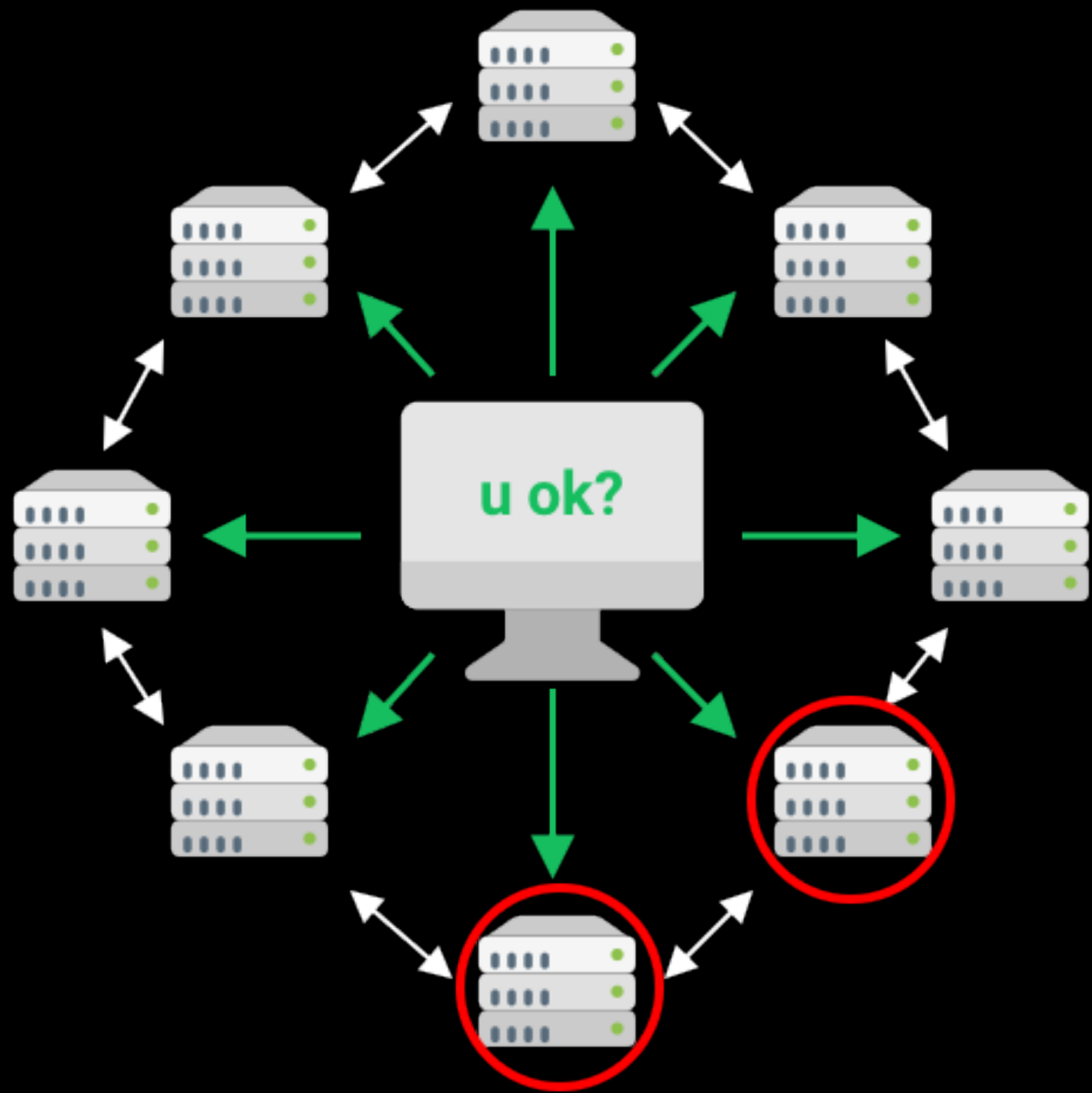
on voting, of course

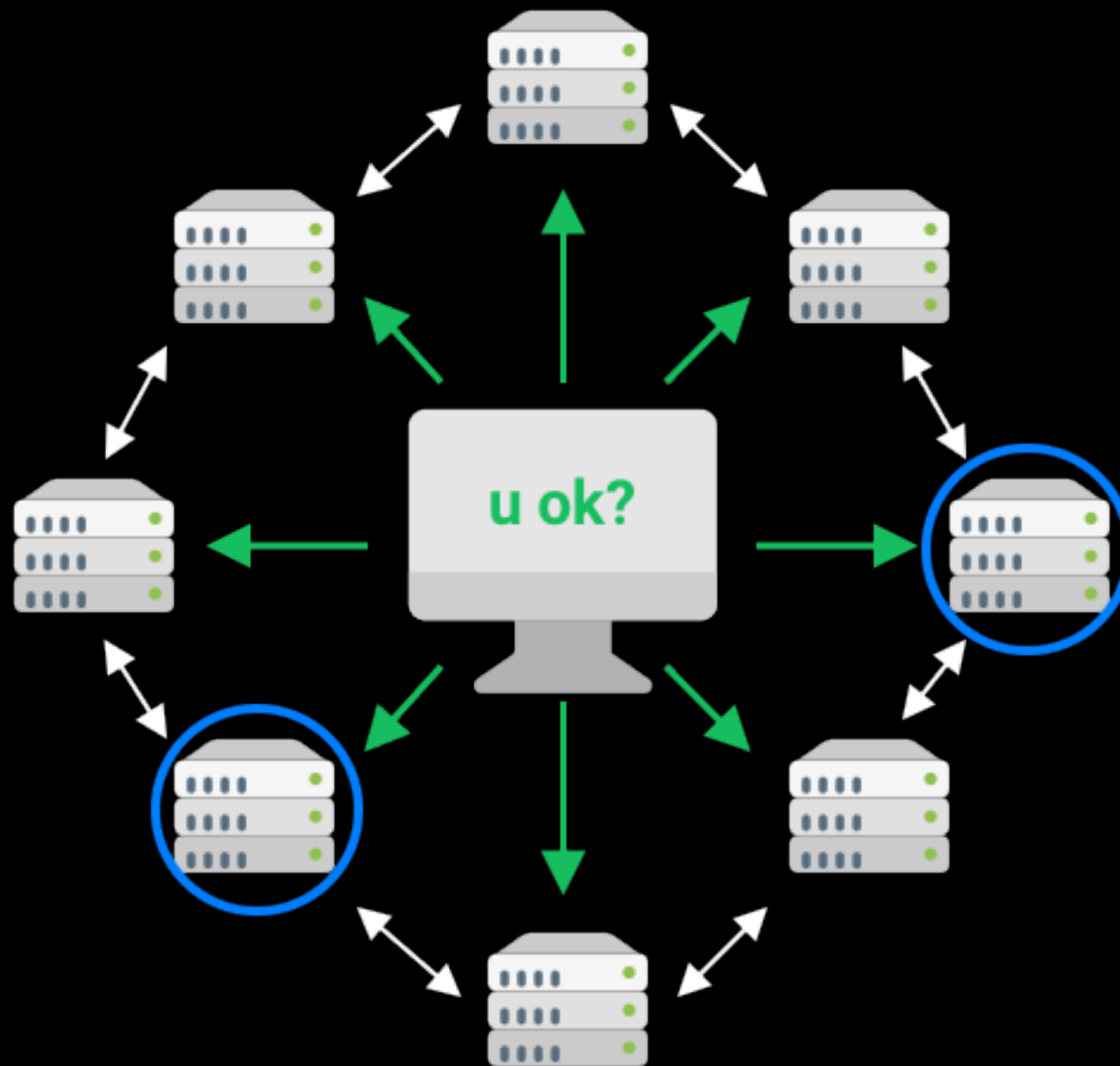
# High Availability Consensus Algorithms

I.E. why voting is important

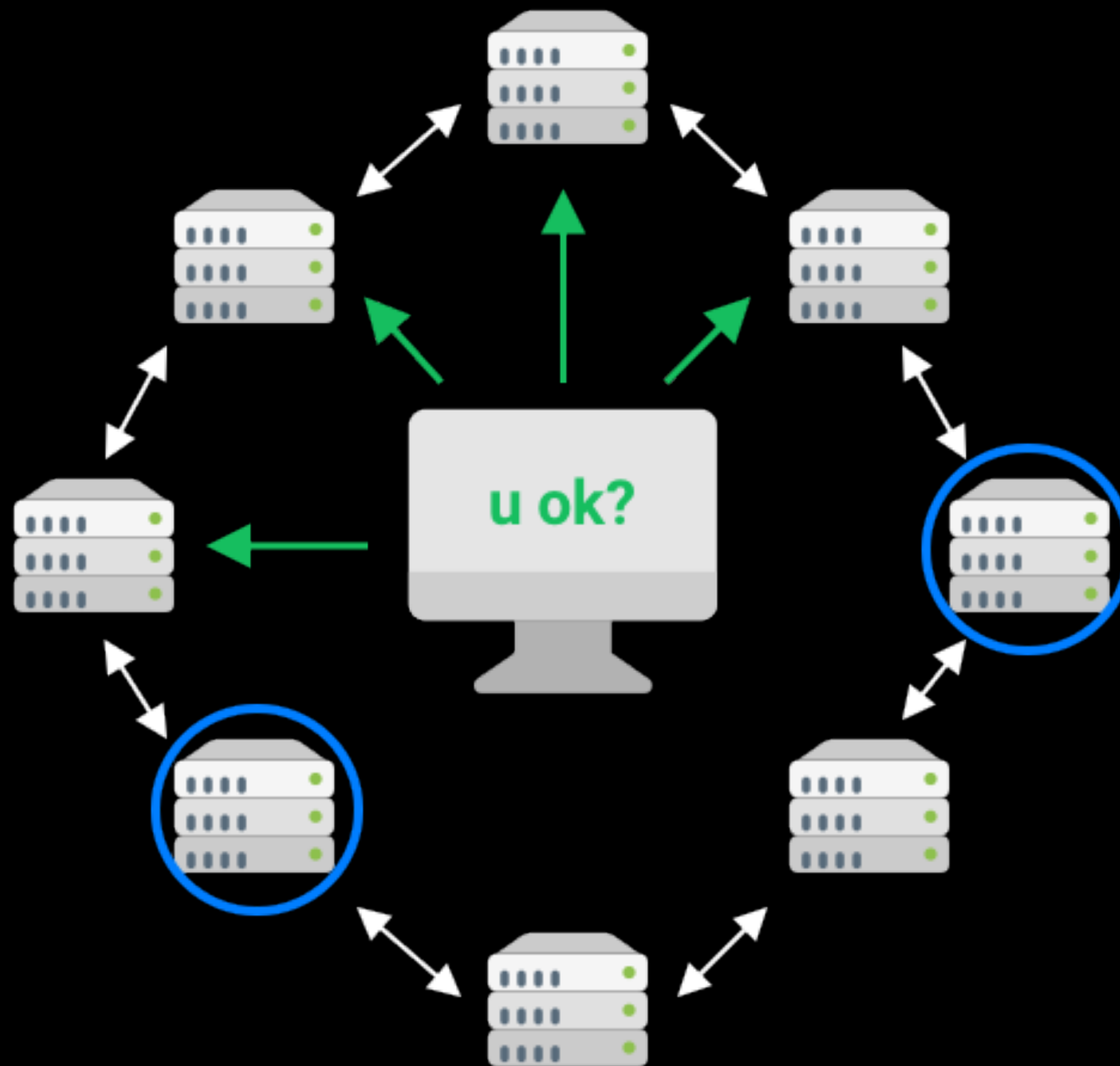


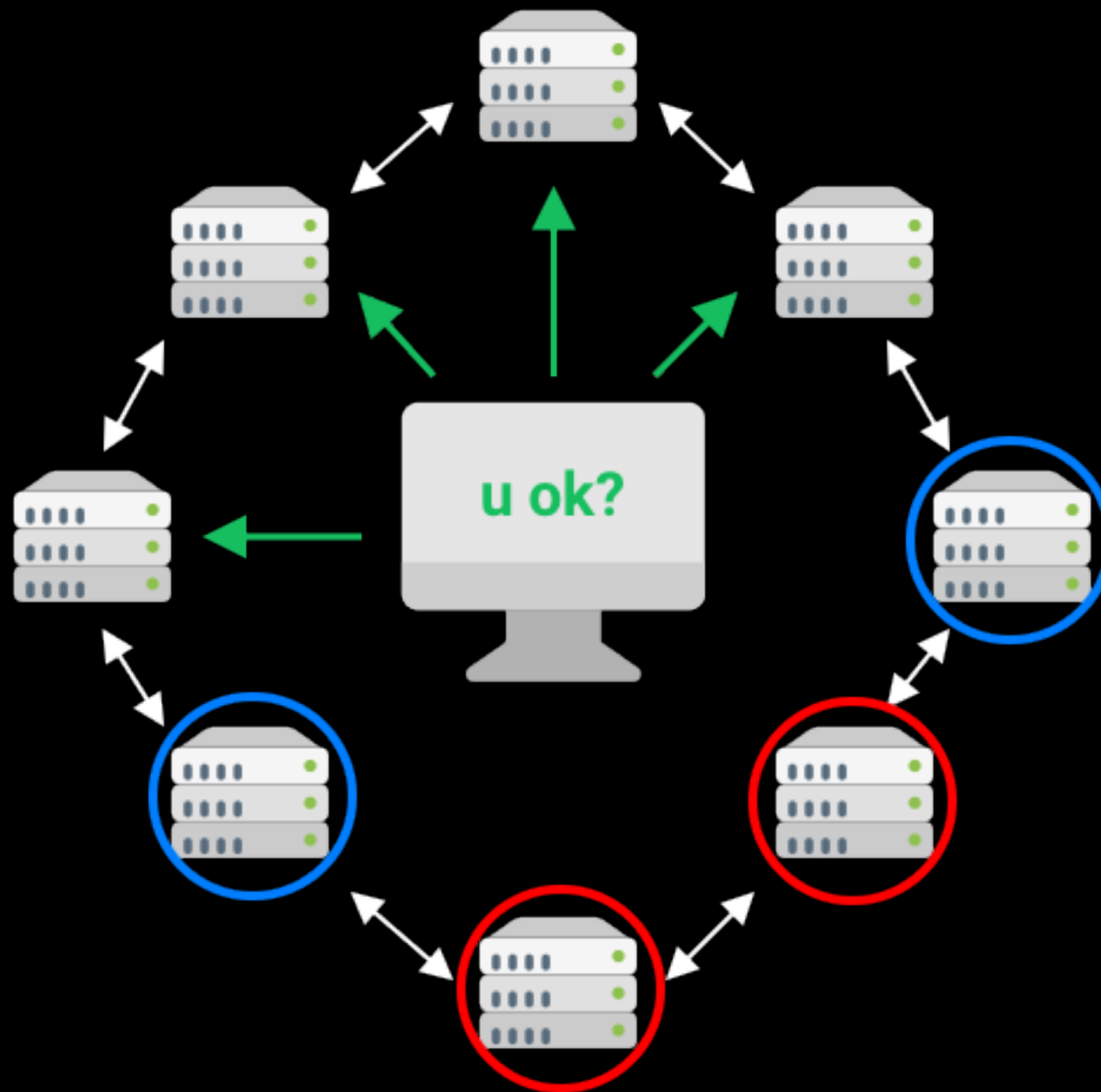












# 50calls

**Makes it easy to contact your  
representative on progressive  
issues you care about**

Your location: **San Francisco**

CHANGE LOCATION

## What's important to you?

- Midterm Challenge Week 8: VOTE!
- Demand Action Against Gun Violence
- Protect the Affordable Care Act and Protections for Preexisting Conditions
- STATES: Pass Legislation to Protect Transgender People from Discrimination

## Contacts for this topic



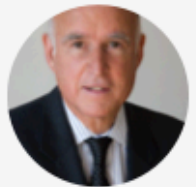
**Kamala Harris • D-CA**

One of your two Senators • [More details](#)



**Diane Feinstein • D-CA**

One of your two Senators • [More details](#)



**Jerry Brown • D-CA**

This is your governor • [More details](#)

Hi, my name is **Nick** and I'm a constituent from **San Francisco**.

I'm calling in support of H.R.6545, the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2018. Congress must act swiftly to pass this critical legislation to preserve funding for crucial programs protecting people from domestic violence, sexual assault, and dating violence.

Thank you for all your hard work answering phones.

[IF LEAVING VOICEMAIL: Please leave your full address to ensure your call is tallied]

**Enter your call result to get the next contact:**

**UNAVAILABLE**

**LEFT VOICEMAIL**

**MADE CONTACT**

**SKIP**

# How'd we do?

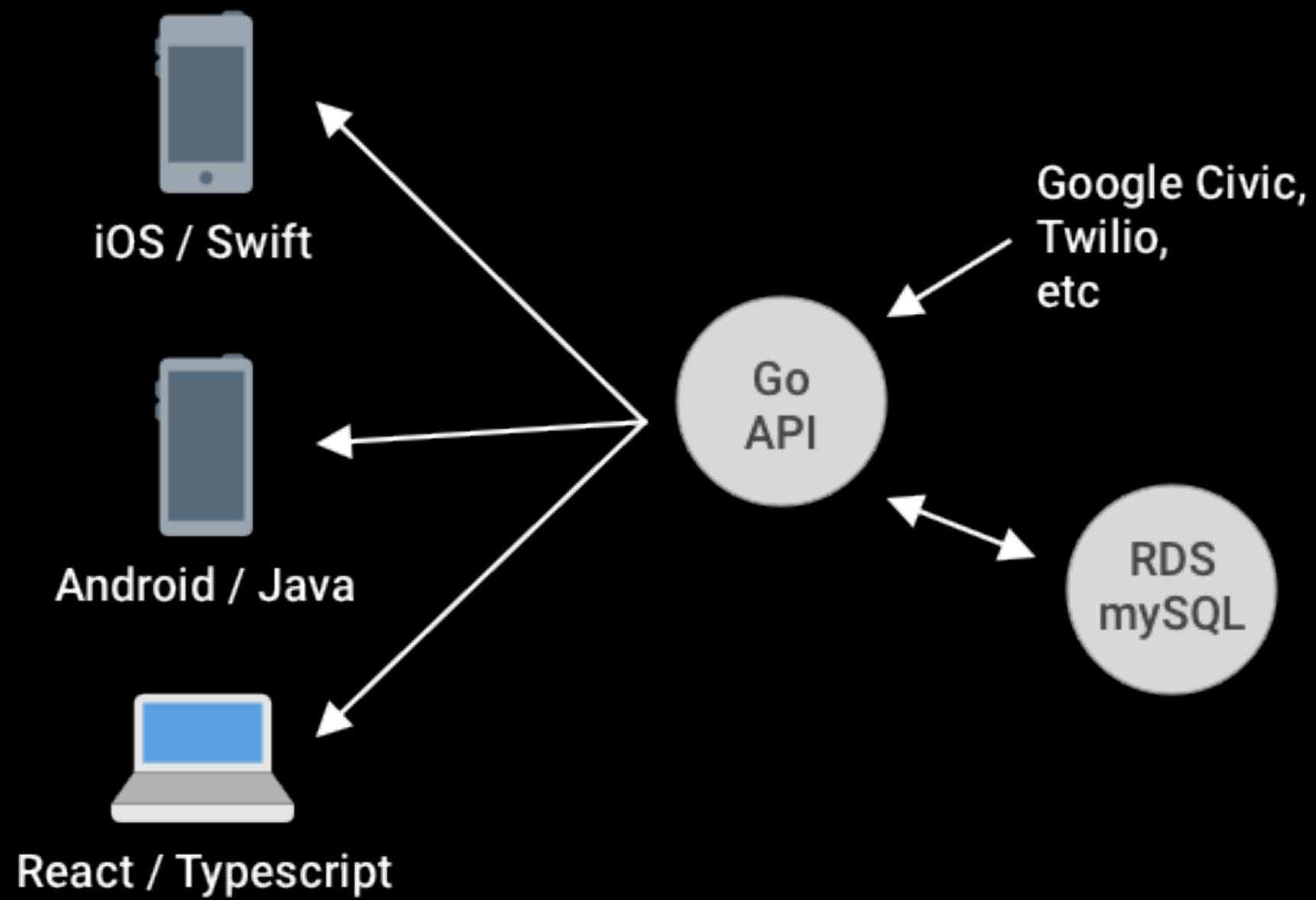
- **~2.5M Calls to Congress**
- **100+ Volunteers**
- **3 Platforms**

**A way to stay involved between elections**

# **Open Source** as a software team

- **Figuring out how to "hire" and motivate people**
- **Coordinating across vastly different products**
- **Stories of failing under huge load**





# Need help? **Go boring**

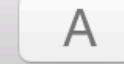
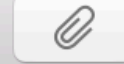
- **Purpose-driven projects don't need tech motivation**
- **Bigger pool of volunteers**
- **Boring → Simple → More reliable**

# Lessons from volunteers

**Mostly on github**

**(also some slack)**

**Lowering the bar for  
getting started**



To: Five Calls <hello@5calls.org> ▾

Cc:

Bcc:

Subject:

From: Nick O'Neill – nick.oneill@gmail.com

uh...

# Lowering the bar for getting started

- Readme with goals, expectations and values
- Labeled starter tasks
- Good getting started guides for each project

# 3 types of volunteers



# Experienced with open source

- Lots of work in open source before
- Know the thing they want to fix (probably technical)
- Not a lot of time for your project

# **Solid coders** **for the mission**

- **Solid, no-hands-held code**
- **Needs only rough guidance on tasks**
- **Will come back with ownership**

# Fresh coders who want to learn

- Mission-driven, but inexperienced
- Needs hand-holding for and review
- Good contributors in time

# It's about **time**

- "When will you have time to do this?"
- Don't make it a meeting

Anyone can  
flake



# Communicate

- **Lower the bar to entry**
- **Get light committments**
- **Check in often**

Work by your  
values



Can you be **open source**, but also  
against some use cases?

**\* This has **never** actually been an issue for us**

Probably **net-positive**

**Have your **strong opinion****

**But communicate it clearly to people working on your project.**

Decide on your **strong opinion**

**And then** communicate them clearly to people working on your project.

**Microsoft / ICE**  
**Google / Defense Dept**

# Contributors

**Do you know where your software is right now?**

# Maintainers

**Do your contributors know what your values are?**



OK, we know our values  
**now what?**

**No warranty**

**No limitations** **No responsibility**

# At Minimum

- **What is the software I'm writing going to be used for?**
- **Should my software be used in ways I disagree with?**

# Review

- Tech for some projects is **just the means**
- **Lower the bar to entry** for new vols
- **Lead with your values**

**Thanks**

# Questions

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**or @nickoneill**

**hello@5calls.org**

**or @make5calls**