Gore says 'democracy has been hacked' at SXSW

March 13 2012, By JAKE COYLE , AP Entertainment Writer

(AP) -- In a wide-ranging talk about the Internet and government, Al Gore urged the techie crowd at South By Southwest to use digital tools to improve government.

The former vice president sat for a conversation with Napster co-founder and Web entrepreneur Sean Parker on Monday at SXSW in a flashy tete-a-tete that drew an audience of thousands at the Austin Convention Center and more viewers via a live stream.

"Our democracy has been hacked," said Gore, framing Washington gridlock and the effects of special interest money in digital terms.

To fix what he called a no-longer functional U.S. government, Gore urged the audience to begin a new "Occupy Democracy" movement. He pushed for the creation and implementation of digital tools and social media to "change the democratic conversation."

Gore talked of a "Wiki-democracy" of "digital flash mobs calling out the truth" and "a government square that holds people accountable."

Parker, who was famously portrayed by Justin Timberlake in "The Social Network," has gotten into politics by investing in Votizen, an online network of voters that leverages social networks to campaign for their issues. He also sits on the board of NationBuilder, which also seeks to organize political change.

Parker said he believes social media is only its infancy of what it can do to spur action. He cited the Internet rally against the Stop Online Piracy Act as a hint of the power of social networks. He called the protest "Nerd Spring," alluding to the Arab Spring uprisings in the Middle East.

Both Gore and Parker derided the dominant role of television in elections and political dialogue. Change, Parker said, won't come from within the political system.

To applause, Gore added; "I can confirm that."

More information: http://sxsw.com

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