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August 3, 2017

Hon. Bennie Thompson and Hon. Robert Brady
Co-Chairs, Congressional Task Force on Election Security
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Thompson and Brady:

Thank you for your letter of August 1, 2017 to the members of the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) asking for feedback on how the federal government can empower states to protect their election systems. While individual states may respond to your letter independently, I would like to respond on behalf of the organization.

First, please be assured that Secretaries of State are bolstering cybersecurity and resilience levels for future elections by focusing on key digital components of their state systems: voter registration systems, election management systems, election night reporting systems and electronic voting machines.

We are committed to working with federal, state and local partners on a voluntary basis, including the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), to solicit input on threats and share information on risk assessment and threat mitigation pertaining to election infrastructure. Additional steps may be taken based upon credible or specific threats that are identified and shared with election officials.

Secretaries of State are also working in collaboration via the NASS Election Security Task Force, created for sharing resources, best practices and technical advice between states. Areas of shared interest include:

- Establishing clear and effective structures for threat and intelligence information-sharing, victim notification processes and cyber incident responses.
- Identifying threat mitigation practices and state legislation/policy trends for consideration.
- Conducting risk assessments and implementing continuous vulnerability assessments.



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- Ensuring that election officials have sufficient equipment, technical support and resources to maintain a sound security posture for their computer-based systems.
- Fostering a culture of risk awareness with strong cyber hygiene practices.

Many states are working on these issues now, in preparation for state and local elections this November.

Additionally, there are some important activities that involve the federal government, and any assistance that you can provide regarding these fortifications in securing election infrastructure would be greatly appreciated:

1. As a result of the NASS July 20, 2017 letter to (now former) U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Kelly, DHS requested - and received - from NASS a list of contact information for the nations' chief state election officials (CEOs). DHS has told us that they began contacting CEOs on July 31, 2017. We have also been told that they are expeditiously working on some proposed incident notification and response plans to share with state election officials. Work has also begun on the framework for coordinating councils for election infrastructure, which is scheduled to be complete by mid-September 2017.
2. DHS has a menu of services that are available to states. While the cyber hygiene scans they offer can be done relatively quickly, their risk and vulnerability assessments require a longer wait time due to a significant backlog. A recent update from DHS indicated the wait time is currently at nine months. Under the new critical infrastructure designation, state election officials were told prioritization was going to be a benefit.
3. Since passage of the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA), NASS has maintained the [position](#) that HAVA should be fully funded. More than \$395 million of the original \$3.9 billion authorized has yet to be appropriated for state election modernization. States would clearly benefit from the appropriation of the outstanding balance of federal HAVA funds to aid them in ensuring that they have sufficient equipment, technical support and resources to maintain a sound security posture for their computer-based systems.



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We appreciate your assurance that this is not “another vehicle for Federal scrutiny” and that political motives are not a part of this Task Force. The public has entrusted state and local election officials with securing our election systems and we understand the tremendous imperative that exists for our nation to address credible and persistent threats from any foreign adversaries. Any assistance you could provide to address items 1-3 above would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Connie Lawson

Hon. Connie Lawson, Indiana Secretary of State
NASS President

cc: NASS Elections Committee Members