April 23, 2018

Dear State Election Officer:

On March 23rd, Congress allocated $380 million to states to upgrade election security. This is a positive development. In the age of unprecedented hacking risks, researchers have found that electronic voting infrastructure — including voting machines and registration databases — have serious vulnerabilities. While there’s no evidence that vote totals were hacked in 2016, there’s strong evidence that hackers have been testing the waters.

While federal funding can help states address these issues, simply upgrading or replacing election infrastructure is not sufficient. It is essential that states work with the Department of Homeland Security or other trusted providers to scan their systems for cyber vulnerabilities, and follow best practices identified by computer scientists, national security leaders, and bipartisan experts in elections administration to mitigate hacking risks. On March 20, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence released its long-awaited recommendations on election security and concluded that requiring paper ballots, banning wireless components and implementing statistically sound audits of election results are essential safeguards. Last year, a group of 100 leading computer scientists and other election administration experts voiced the same conclusion. Through years of researching voting equipment security in real election administration environments, the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) has come to similar conclusions about what it will take to defend elections.

As you begin to make use of the new federal funding, we strongly urge you to follow best practices identified by these and other leading experts for election security:

1. Replace paperless voting machines with systems that count a paper ballot — a physical record of the vote that is out of reach from cyberattacks.

2. Conduct robust post-election audits in federal elections. Congress explicitly requested that states “implement a post-election audit system that provides a high-level of confidence in the accuracy of the final vote tally” as part of its report language accompanying the Omnibus. Well-designed audits involve election officials checking only a small random sample of the voters’ choices on paper ballots so that they can quickly and affordably provide high assurance that the election outcome was accurate.

3. Upgrade systems to ensure that states’ election websites, statewide registration systems, and election night reporting systems are defended against threats of intrusion and manipulation.

4. Prohibit wireless connectivity in voting machines to limit vulnerabilities to hacking risks.

5. Train and educate election officials at all levels on how they need to incorporate security into their elections practices.
We, the undersigned, believe that these represent sensible and cost-effective solutions to the rising challenges of election security. We urge you to take steps to safeguard elections using these proven best practices.

Sincerely,

Adam Brandon  
President, FreedomWorks

Duncan Buell  
NCR Professor of Computer Science and Engineering, University of South Carolina

Michael Chertoff  
Former Secretary of Homeland Security

Kristen Clarke  
President, Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law

Edgardo Cortes  
Former Commissioner of Elections, Virginia

David L. Dill  
Donald E. Knuth Professor, Emeritus, in the School of Engineering, Stanford University

Jamie Fly  
Senior Fellow, German Marshall Fund

Karen Hobert Flynn  
President, Common Cause

Trey Grayson  
Former Secretary of State, Kentucky

Alex Halderman  
Professor of Computer Science, University of Michigan

Joseph Lorenzo Hall  
Chief Technologist, Center for Democracy and Technology

General Michael Hayden (Ret.)  
Former Director of the National Security Agency and Director of Central Intelligence

David Jefferson (Ret.)  
Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory

Douglas W. Jones  
Department of Computer Science, University of Iowa

Rick Ledgett  
Former Deputy Director of the National Security Agency

Ambassador Douglas Lute (Ret.)  
Former US Ambassador to NATO, Lieutenant General, US Army

Michael Morell  
Former Acting Director and Deputy Director of the Central Intelligence Agency

Lawrence Norden  
Deputy Director, Democracy Program, Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law

Grover Norquist  
President, Americans for Tax Reform

Michael O’Hanlon  
Senior Fellow, Brookings Institution

Tammy Patrick  
Senior Advisor at Democracy Fund; Former Member of the Presidential Commission on Election Administration
Ben Ptashnik
National Election Defense Coalition

Mark Ritchie
Former Secretary of State, Minnesota

Ronald L. Rivest
MIT Institute Professor

Mike Rogers
Former Member of Congress (R-MI); Chair of the House Intelligence Committee

Laura Rosenberger
Director, Alliance for Securing Democracy

Paul Rosenzweig
Senior Fellow, R Street Institute; Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security for Policy

Kori Schake
Former Director for Defense Strategy at the National Security Council

Marian Schneider
President, Verified Voting Foundation; Former Deputy Secretary of Elections and Administration, Pennsylvania Department of State

Bruce Schneier
Fellow and Lecturer, Harvard Kennedy School and Berkman-Klein Center for Internet and Society

Lt. Col. Tony Shaffer (Ret.)
Vice President, London Center for Policy Research

Barbara Simons
IBM Research (Ret.); Board Chair, Verified Voting Foundation

Rev. DeForest Soaries
Former Chair, Election Assistance Commission

Admiral James Stavridis (Ret.)
Former NATO supreme Allied Commander

Neera Tanden
President and CEO, Center for American Progress

Natalie Tennant
Former Secretary of State, West Virginia

Poorvi L. Vora
Professor of Computer Science, The George Washington University

Dan S. Wallach
Professor of Computer Science, Rice University

Rob Weissman
President, Public Citizen

Nicole Wong
Former Deputy US Chief Technology Officer

*Affiliations listed for Identification Purposes Only