



**One Hundred Fifteenth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20515**

May 21, 2018

The Honorable Delbert Hosemann
Secretary of State
State of Mississippi
401 Mississippi Street
Jackson, MS 39201

Dear Secretary Hosemann:

I write to express my concern that the State of Mississippi has reportedly not yet submitted its initial paperwork to the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) to receive grants available under Title 1 Section 101 of the Help America Vote Act of 2002. According to grant guidance issued by EAC last month, the State of Mississippi is eligible to receive nearly \$4.5 million in funding to enhance election technology and improve election security, and I urge you to act quickly to ensure the integrity of Mississippi's elections.

Russian interference in the 2016 election was a watershed moment for our democracy. In January of 2017, US intelligence agencies reported that "Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered an influence campaign aimed at the 2016 US presidential election" by which Russian intelligence attempted to breach multiple state or local election boards.¹ Although DHS has made clear that "the types of systems Russian actors targeted or compromised were not involved in vote tallying,"² Russia's efforts have affected public confidence in elections and its efforts have shown no signs of cooling. In fact, numerous well-respected foreign policy analysts, including many former intelligence analysts and diplomats, have expressed concern that Russia will seek to interfere in our elections in the future, and that nation states including North Korea, Iran and China may also seek to exploit the vulnerabilities in our election infrastructure.

Over the past year, I have co-chaired the Congressional Task Force on Election Security. In that capacity, I undertook a thorough review of vulnerabilities to election infrastructure, as well as an assessment of existing capabilities at the State and local level to secure that infrastructure. I found

¹ Office of the Director of National Intelligence, *Assessing Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent U.S. Elections*, ICA 2017-01D (Jan. 6, 2017), https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/ICA_2017_01.pdf.

² Testimony of Jeanette Manfra, Under Secretary for Cyber Security and Communications, National Protection and Programs Directorate, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, before the Select Committee on Intelligence, U.S. Senate (June 21, 2017), available at <https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/sites/default/files/documents/os-jmanfra-062117.PDF>.

that State and local election officials are acutely aware of what it would take to better secure their elections, however, they lack the resources to update technology and implement cybersecurity training for their workforce. That is why I have fought for increased funding for State and local governments, both through sponsoring H.R. 5011, the Election Security Act, and by urging my colleagues to appropriate the remaining \$380 million in funding initially authorized under the Help America Vote Act of 2002. That funding was included in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018, which was enacted into law in March.

As you know, Mississippi currently uses a combination of paper ballots and direct recording electronic voting machines (DRE) without a voter verified paper audit trail (VVPAT). Cyber experts agree that the use of DREs without VVPAT is less secure and should be retired, and that States should implement risk-limiting audits regardless of the method of voting used in the State. Moreover, I believe that election officials in Mississippi would benefit from cybersecurity training. Although the funding provided through this initial grant program may not pay for all Mississippi plans to do to secure its elections, it will certainly help.

In the meantime, I urge you and State election officials to take advantage of existing Federal resources the Department of Homeland Security offers States to secure their election infrastructure at no cost, including risk and vulnerability assessments and cyber hygiene scanning. If you need assistance requesting these services, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to working with you to make Mississippi's election infrastructure more secure. If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Alison Northrop, Chief Director for Oversight, at (202) 226-2616.

Sincerely,



BENNIE G. THOMPSON
Ranking Member