



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

September 15, 2017

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

Dear Secretary Hosemann:

I write to you regarding our shared interest in protecting the State of Mississippi's networks from compromise. In light of the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS or the Department) issuance of a binding operational directive (BOD) on Wednesday<sup>1</sup> barring Kaspersky Lab software from Federal networks, I urge you to take similar precautions to protect networks under your control, particularly as they relate to elections.

DHS' BOD comes months after the General Services Administration removed Kaspersky from its list of approved vendors, and long after the U.S. intelligence community began assessing the company's ties to Russia.<sup>2</sup> In its official statement, the Department said that "[t]he risk that the Russian government, whether acting on its own or in collaboration with Kaspersky, could capitalize on access provided by Kaspersky products to compromise federal information and information systems directly implicates U.S. national security."<sup>3</sup> Consequently, DHS directed all Federal agencies to begin implementing plans to discontinue use of and remove Kaspersky software from its systems.

As you are well aware, Article 1, Section 4 of the U.S. Constitution vests the power of administering elections in the States. With this privilege, it is the duty of States and their election officials to ensure that elections are free, fair, and secure. The extensive Russian interference in the 2016 election requires that we shore up our election systems and put safeguards in place for

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<sup>1</sup> Ellen Nakashima and Jack Gillum, "U.S. moves to ban Kaspersky software in federal agencies amid concerns of Russian espionage," *The Washington Post* (Sep. 14, 2017), [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-to-ban-use-of-kaspersky-software-in-federal-agencies-amid-concerns-of-russian-espionage/2017/09/13/36b717d0-989e-11e7-82e4-f1076f6d6152\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.e2ee90329a29](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-to-ban-use-of-kaspersky-software-in-federal-agencies-amid-concerns-of-russian-espionage/2017/09/13/36b717d0-989e-11e7-82e4-f1076f6d6152_story.html?utm_term=.e2ee90329a29).

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> Department of Homeland Security Press Release, "DHS Statement on the Issuance of Binding Operational Directive 17-01" (Sep. 13, 2017), <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2017/09/13/dhs-statement-issuance-binding-operational-directive-17-01>.

future elections. For this reason, I urge you to heed this determination by senior DHS officials that Kaspersky products pose “an unacceptable amount of risk,”<sup>4</sup> to our national security, which includes the security of our elections. If Federal agencies are prohibited from employing products from a company with ties to the Kremlin, for obvious reasons, States, which are charged with protecting the heart of our democracy, should follow suit.

I share your concern that the threat of foreign governments breaching U.S. government systems will hamper our ability to protect Mississippians’ personally identifiable information.<sup>5</sup> As voter registration databases house such information, we must be certain the software used does not give Russia or other malicious actors a back door to it. Therefore, I strongly advise that you take the necessary steps to identify any use or presence of Kaspersky products on Mississippi election systems and remove it.

Thank you for your attention to this request. If you or your staff have any questions regarding this request, please contact Alison Northrop, Chief Director for Oversight, at 202-226-2616.

Sincerely,



BENNIE G. THOMPSON

Ranking Member

Committee on Homeland Security

U.S. House of Representatives

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<sup>4</sup> Ellen Nakashima and Jack Gillum, “U.S. moves to ban Kaspersky software in federal agencies amid concerns of Russian espionage,” *The Washington Post* (Sep. 14, 2017), [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-to-ban-use-of-kaspersky-software-in-federal-agencies-amid-concerns-of-russian-espionage/2017/09/13/36b717d0-989e-11e7-82e4-f1076f6d6152\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.e2ee90329a29](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-to-ban-use-of-kaspersky-software-in-federal-agencies-amid-concerns-of-russian-espionage/2017/09/13/36b717d0-989e-11e7-82e4-f1076f6d6152_story.html?utm_term=.e2ee90329a29).

<sup>5</sup> Zachary Oren Smith, “Hosemann decries Homeland Security move,” *Mississippi Today* (Jan. 10, 2017), <https://mississippitoday.org/2017/01/10/hosemann-decries-homeland-security-decision/>.