



# COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Hearing Statement of Cybersecurity, Infrastructure Protection, and Innovation Subcommittee Chairman Cedric Richmond (D-LA)**

### ***The Road to 2020: Defending Against Election Interference***

**November 19, 2019**

Today, we will take a broad look at election security issues, including efforts from the private sector to protect election infrastructure and political campaigns against malicious actors. It is an undisputable fact that, in 2016, the Russian government carried out a concerted, sophisticated operation to meddle in our presidential election. The Kremlin leveraged sophisticated cyber capabilities to target our election infrastructure and amplify divisive - and at times false - rhetoric in an unprecedented way to sow discord, undermine the public's faith in democratic institutions, and ultimately damage the global leadership of the United States. The Russian government's covert malicious foreign interference campaign attacked every aspect of our elections.

It involved engaging in conversations with personnel from a U.S. presidential campaign, hacking a national political Committee, conducting a phishing attack against a campaign chairman, targeting voter registration databases and other election infrastructure, and mobilizing bots and fake online personas to carry out influence operations. Today, two other nation-state actors, China and Iran, are following suit-- weaponizing new technologies to disrupt our democracy, distort the daily news, and compromise our election security. As we move into the heart of the 2020 election cycle, we must set aside party politics and work together to improve election security and preserve the integrity of our democracy.

To that end, I urge the White House to accept the Intelligence Community's unanimous conclusions about 2016 meddling, refrain from engaging in conspiracy theories ahead of the 2020 elections, and show some needed leadership on election security. Failing to do so will further erode public confidence in our election process and advance Vladimir Putin's goal of undermining the US-led liberal democratic order. For its part, Senate leadership must pass House-passed measures that would make election infrastructure more secure, and it should match the House's commitment to funding election security grants. Security vulnerabilities in outdated, unsupported election infrastructure could jeopardize the accuracy of voter registration databases or even the tally of votes cast. That is simply unacceptable.

Voters deserve to know that they will be able to vote when they show up, and that their vote will be counted accurately. To guard against covert malicious foreign influence campaigns, owners and operators of online platforms must understand and be candid with the public about how our adversaries use their platforms. Also, we need to educate the public so that they are informed and have the opportunity to distinguish between facts and disinformation. And our party organizations and campaigns must take cybersecurity seriously, monitor for disinformation, and refuse to take advantage of malicious disinformation circulated about their opponents. Party and campaign organizations have tremendous power to counter efforts by foreign adversaries simply by rejecting opportunities to take the cheap shots based on fake news.

Together, those truly interested in defending our elections from foreign adversaries can make real progress. For example, despite a lack of leadership from the White House, the Department of Homeland Security is building relationships and providing a full suite of election security services to State and local election officials. In addition, Office of the Director of National Intelligence, Federal Bureau of Investigation, National Security Agency, and U.S. Cyber Command have teams to coordinate and integrate election security threat information. The private sector is also stepping up. Cybersecurity researchers at non-profit and for-profit organizations are providing cybersecurity services to campaigns and election officials. I commend these efforts. I look forward to hearing more from our distinguished panel on their efforts.

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