★ ELECTION SECURITY ACT ★

Introduced by Reps. Bennie G. Thompson, Zoe Lofgren, & John Sarbanes
May 2019

Authorizes a $1 billion Election Assistance Commission (EAC) grant program to assist in securing election infrastructure

Provides grants to State and local election officials to replace aging voting machines with voter-verified paper ballot voting systems. Grants also support hiring IT staff, cybersecurity training, security and risk vulnerability assessments, and other activities to secure election infrastructure.

Provides States with $175 million in biannual sustainment funding to help maintain election infrastructure.

Seeks to ensure States can maintain security gains by providing each State with $1 per voter who participated in the most recent election to maintain election security.

Establishes a $20 million grant program for States to use in implementing risk-limiting audits.

Establishes a new $20 million grant program for States to access risk-limiting audits, a critical tool to ensuring the integrity of elections. These audits, which involve hand counting a certain number of ballots and using statistical methods to determine the accuracy of the original vote tally, are effective at detecting any incorrect election outcomes, whether caused by a cyberattack or something more mundane like a programming error.

Establishes a $5 million grant program to study and report on accessible paper ballot voting systems.

Directs the National Science foundation to administer a $5 million grant program to study and report on accessible paper ballot verification mechanisms, including for individuals with disabilities, voters with difficulties in literacy, and voters whose primary language is not English.

Directs the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to expand assistance to chief State election officials.

Requires DHS to expedite security clearances for State election officials in order to provide timely threat information and commence a security risk and vulnerability of a State's election systems within 90 days of receiving the request.

Requires Director of National Intelligence (DNI) to conduct regular threat assessments.

At least 180 days prior to a general election, the DNI would be required to complete a full-scope assessment of threats to election infrastructure.

Enhances protections for U.S. democratic institutions.

Directs the President, within a year of enactment, to issue a national strategy to protect U.S. democratic institutions against cyber attacks, influence operations, disinformation campaigns, and other activities that could undermine the security and integrity of such institutions. Additionally, it directs the establishment of a bipartisan commission to develop recommendations, drawing upon lessons learned from European allies, to counter such efforts.

Fosters accountability for election technology vendors.

Limits State expenditures on goods and services with grant monies provided under this Act to purchases from "qualified election infrastructure vendors"; EAC, in coordination with DHS, establishes the criteria for achieving such status, which includes maintaining IT infrastructure in a manner consistent with the best practices provided by EAC and DHS and agreeing to report any known or suspected security incidents involving election infrastructure. Additionally, it creates a certification program for voter registration software.

Creates a new DHS election infrastructure innovation grant program.

Authorizes $20 million annually, for DHS to award grants for research and development on improving the security, quality, reliability, accuracy, accessibility and affordability of election infrastructure.

Establishes a voting system 'bug bounty' program.

Directs the Secretary of Homeland Security to establish a voluntary Election Security Bug Bounty Program, which would help State and local election officials and election service providers make their systems more secure by providing cybersecurity researchers the opportunity and incentive to find previously unidentified security vulnerablites in election systems so they can be fixed before bad actors exploit them.

Requires that voting machines be manufactured in the United States.

Directs States to make best efforts to ensure that its voting machines are manufactured in the United States.