



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Subcommittee Hearing Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)
Securing Democracy: Protecting Against Threats to Election Infrastructure and Voter Confidence

January 20, 2022

Ensuring the security of our elections has been a priority for me, particularly since 2016, where we witnessed unprecedented foreign interference in our electoral process. In the 115th Congress, then-House Administration Committee Ranking Member Robert Brady and I formed the Congressional Task Force on Election Security. The Task Force produced a report with ten recommendations for enhancing our Nation's election security and led to the introduction of the Election Security Act to implement these important proposals.

Unfortunately, while the House has passed these critical election security provisions as part of broader election reform legislation, unified Republican opposition has blocked passage in the Senate. While we have been unable to pass these critical provisions, Democrats have been able to secure over \$1 billion in support to the States, including through the CARES Act, to enhance the security of voting systems. Combined with the work of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency and other Federal partners, we were able to have the most secure election in American history in 2020, even amidst a global pandemic. That achievement speaks volumes about the hard work of election officials throughout the country and the potential to protect our elections when we collaborate to prioritize security.

We must build on this progress by investing additional resources in election security, replacing paperless voting machines with paper ballots, conducting evidence-based post-election audits, and ensuring the highest security standards for voter registration databases, electronic poll books, and other election technology. Unfortunately, the aftermath of the 2020 election demonstrated that even when an election is highly secure, misinformation can produce devastating consequences for our democratic system of government. If people are convinced that an election result is illegitimate - no matter how baseless that claim may be - we have seen firsthand the violence it can produce.

With social media enabling misinformation to spread at unprecedented speeds, developing strategies to respond and contain such falsehoods will require innovative solutions to address this very complex problem. I applaud Chairwoman Clarke for her efforts to authorize CISA's disinformation efforts, particularly its Rumor Control website to debunk misinformation promptly. An essential aspect of addressing misinformation is to promote accurate information from trusted sources, and I am confident that this legislation can help achieve that goal.

I look forward to working with her to move this important bill forward. The past few years has been a troubling time for our democracy. We have seen people spread lies about the integrity of our elections and use them to justify new restrictive voter laws that do nothing to enhance voter confidence. Instead,

they only make it harder for Americans, and particularly people of color, to exercise their fundamental right to vote. That only further erodes trust in our institutions and makes our democracy more vulnerable.

Fortunately, there is another way, as reflected in the Freedom to Vote: John R. Lewis Act that the House passed last week. This approach ensures voting is accessible to all who are eligible and invests in meaningful election security, helping to build confidence in the integrity of our elections. We have not been able to enact this important legislation, but we will continue to fight, as the consequences of failure on this issue are simply too high.

The panel of witnesses we have today are all individuals who have been working tirelessly in recent years to address these challenges. I look forward to hearing their ideas about how we can expand on our successes so far, continue to strengthen the security of our election infrastructure, and build back public confidence in our democratic institutions.

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