



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

February 16, 2018

Chairman Michael T. McCaul
Committee on Homeland Security
H2-176 Ford House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman McCaul:

I am writing to express my continued concern about election security and Russian interference in our election systems. I ask that you to take urgent action by holding a hearing on this important homeland security issue and marking up recently introduced legislation to protect our election systems, H.R. 5011, the Election Security Act. Both actions should be taken without delay as the first election of the 2018 season will take place in your home state of Texas on March 6, 2018.

In November 2016, 139 million Americans cast their votes in the wake of a massive Russian cyber-enabled influence operation designed to undermine faith in American democracy, exposing serious national security vulnerabilities in our election infrastructure.

In response, on January 6, 2017, then-Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh Johnson designated election infrastructure as a critical infrastructure subsector, citing its importance to our national interests. The same day, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) released a declassified report entitled "Background to Assessing Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent US Elections: The Analytic Process and Cyber Incident Attribution" that concluded the Kremlin would use lessons from its 2016 elections operations to influence future elections worldwide. Similarly, in March 2017, during a hearing before the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, then-Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Director James Comey warned that Russia would use its experience from the 2016 elections to attempt to influence upcoming U.S. elections.

Recognizing the alarming conclusions of our national security and intelligence agencies and ongoing reports of our foreign adversaries' intentions, on May 23, 2017, I wrote to you to request a Committee on Homeland Security investigation into Russian interference in our elections. While this Committee failed to take action, government officials continued to sound the alarm. At the Aspen Security Forum in July 2017, the Director of National Intelligence, the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, the former Secretary of Homeland Security, and the White House's Homeland Security Advisor all agreed that Russian entities targeted the 2016 elections. Additionally, in July 2017, a Department of Homeland Security official testified before the Senate

Select Committee on Intelligence that state election systems were targeted by nefarious Russian actors. Even after it came to light that almost half of U.S. states had been targeted by the Russians, including states Members of the Committee on Homeland Security call home, our Committee did not have a single noticed activity on the issue.

Absent action on my request, on June 29, 2017, I joined with colleagues from the Committee on Homeland Security and the Committee on House Administration to form the Congressional Task Force on Election Security. Earlier this week, after months of engagement with state election officials, security experts, and other stakeholders, the Task Force released a comprehensive report with findings and recommendations and unveiled the Election Security Act, which is aimed at bolstering protections for upcoming U.S. elections.

The Task Force's report comes on the heels of still more warnings from U.S. government officials that Russia seeks to interfere with our upcoming elections. Indeed, a week prior to the release of our report, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson stated that Russia is already trying to interfere in the 2018 midterm elections. On February 13, the day prior to the release of the Task Force's final report, six current intelligence officials – the Director of National Intelligence, the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, the Director of the FBI, the Director of the National Security Agency, the Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, and the Director of the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency – *unanimously agreed* that the 2018 elections are a potential target for Russian operations.

Given the seriousness of this threat to our Nation, Congress must redouble its efforts to thwart foreign influences seeking to interfere in our elections. The Committee on Homeland Security should have acted long ago. With less than ten legislative days prior to the first primary election of the year, it is critical that we hold a hearing to examine this national security issue and consider the Election Security Act without delay. We owe it to the American public to act. I look forward to working with you to secure our Nation's elections and our democracy.

Sincerely,



Bennie G. Thompson
Ranking Member