

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

March 19, 2018

The Honorable Rodney P. Frelinghuysen  
Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nita M. Lowey  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Tom Graves  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Financial Services and  
General Government  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mike Quigley  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Financial Services and  
General Government  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Frelinghuysen, Chairman Graves, Ranking Member Lowey, and Ranking Member Quigley:

As the only federal agency charged with helping states administer elections, the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) plays a vital role in our democracy. Now more than ever, the EAC must be fully funded so it can help states defend their election systems against foreign actors seeking to interfere in our elections. Accordingly, we request that the Election Assistance Commission receive \$23 million for Fiscal Year 2019, and that you appropriate \$1.2 billion under the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA) for states to use to secure their voting systems from future attack.

The Election Assistance Commission was created in the wake of the chaos of the 2000 election. Congress passed HAVA on a bipartisan basis, recognizing that the federal government has a responsibility to protect our democracy and ensure that states can administer elections smoothly. Since then, the EAC has been an invaluable resource to election officials by serving as an information clearinghouse, testing and certifying voting machines, and providing guidance on a variety of administration issues. In 2016, the EAC's role expanded significantly in the face of Russian hackers' attempts to penetrate state voter registration databases. The Commission is now integrally involved with assisting states on cybersecurity issues and serving as a bridge between state and local officials and the Department of Homeland Security.

Appropriating \$23 million would enable the EAC to take on crucial election security work. The agency would be able to spend \$5 million on research on secure voting equipment and cybersecurity best practices. In addition, it could transfer \$3.5 million to the National Institute of Standards and Technology for its assistance creating technical guidelines for voting machines. Finally, the EAC could have an operating budget of \$14.5 million, which would enable the EAC to hire additional staff to provide full-time assistance to state and local election officials on security issues.

Despite the critical work being done by the EAC, Republicans in Congress have repeatedly sought to undermine the Commission. Since 2011, there have been several failed legislative attempts to terminate the agency. Between 2011 and 2015, the EAC did not have any commissioners as the Senate would not confirm nominees. During this time, the EAC was unable to approve new voting machine guidelines, and some states were forced to delay purchasing new voting machines. Instead of attempting to terminate the

agency, Congress should work to provide the EAC with more resources so it can provide badly needed election security assistance to states.

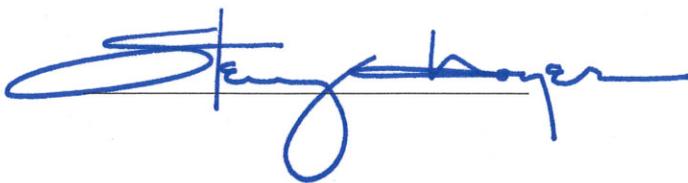
Just as significantly, we must defend our democracy in the face of Russian interference in our elections. Russian propaganda and misinformation were seen by approximately 126 million people on Facebook and 1.4 million people on Twitter. Russia targeted voter registration databases in 21 states and successfully breached the database in Illinois. Had the hackers been successful in altering or deleting voting records, Election Day would have been filled with chaos, and public confidence in the election would have been undermined.

It is clear that states and localities need federal funding to fortify their election systems. Providing states with \$1.2 billion – less than half of the amount initially authorized to fight hanging chads in HAVA – would enable them to replace aging and vulnerable voting machines that are at risk of being hacked or breaking down on Election Day and causing chaos and confusion. In addition, they would be able to hire IT staff, upgrade and maintain IT infrastructure, implement risk limiting audits, develop more secure election technology and provide cybersecurity training to all election officials and poll workers. While some may argue that states and localities should fund these improvements, states are struggling to find that funding. In most states, legislatures are not increasing their election security budgets. In some cases, Governors are actively undermining funding efforts – in Florida and Ohio, Republican Governors have vetoed provisions that would have provided more funding for election security.

This issue is simply too important to sit back and watch state governments and the federal government pass the buck back and forth. A foreign nation attacked 21 states, and the federal government should provide the funds necessary for states to defend themselves. As Michael Chertoff, former Secretary of Homeland Security, and Grover Norquist wrote in The Washington Post, “It’s not practical to expect local election administrators in rural Missouri or small-town Maine to go toe-to-toe with the premier government-backed cyber-mercenaries in China or North Korea.”

We urge you to recognize that ensuring the security and integrity of our election system is a bipartisan imperative and to support the EAC and fund additional HAVA grants so states have the assistance they need to secure our democratic process.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.



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