



**Homeland
Security**

March 28, 2018

The Honorable Ron Wyden
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Wyden:

Thank you for your December 12, 2017 letter to the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. Your letter was referred to my office for a response.

I share your concerns about the risks of malicious cyber activity related to U.S. elections, and we are continuing to address this risk in cooperation with both Federal and non-federal entities. The Secretary of Homeland Security designated election infrastructure as a critical infrastructure subsector and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is prioritizing assistance to state, local, tribal, and territorial governments, and non-federal entities to reduce risks to election infrastructure.

In 2017, DHS's National Protection and Programs Directorate (NPPD) created an Election Task Force (ETF) to improve coordination with and support to election stakeholders. The ETF leverages personnel from across the Federal Government to improve communication with election officials, increase coordination with the intelligence community and law enforcement partners, and coordinate activities that assist election officials with their efforts to secure their systems. As the sector-specific agency for the election infrastructure subsector, NPPD has worked with federal, state, and local partners to establish the Election Infrastructure Subsector Government Coordinating Council (GCC). The GCC focuses on establishing the goals and objectives of the subsector, which include developing information sharing protocols and key working groups. Additionally, DHS has begun discussions with a range of relevant private sector companies to establish of a Sector Coordinating Council (SCC). The SCC will be focused on security issues relevant to private sector companies that support the administration of our election processes.

DHS continues to work with state officials to help them obtain security clearances in an expedited manner. DHS and our interagency partners have shared technical data and recommended actions to mitigate cybersecurity risks, best practices specific to election infrastructure, and intelligence and risk assessments. NPPD has supported election officials with cybersecurity assessments such as cyber hygiene scans and in-depth assessments. Cyber hygiene scans are automated and provide election officials with weekly scans for vulnerabilities and recommended mitigation measures. Risk and vulnerability assessments are the more in-depth assessments; when conducting these assessments, NPPD cyber operators attempt to penetrate their networks to identify vulnerabilities that can be fixed before an adversary has an opportunity

The Honorable Ron Wyden

Page 2

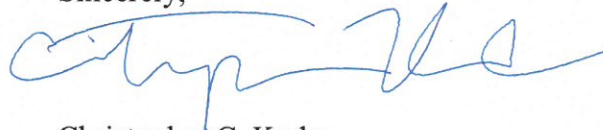
to compromise the network. NPPD has been expediting these assessments when requested by election officials.

DHS continues to urge election officials to seek assistance from NPPD or other experts as they work diligently to enhance the security of election infrastructure. It is important to note that DHS does not have the authority to compel states to act, instead our services are offered on a voluntary basis. We are promoting engagements and focusing efforts on a risk-based approach, but ultimately, DHS can only do so much given the state and local responsibility for administration of elections. Importantly, we also recognize that some states not currently receiving specific DHS services have either in-house capabilities, or third-party vendor support for similar services.

The United States Secret Service (USSS) assesses and mitigates a range of cybersecurity risks in order to ensure the security of protected persons, facilities, and events, including major Presidential and Vice Presidential candidates protected pursuant to 18 U.S.C. §§ 3056(a)(7). USSS also leads a national network of Electronic Crimes Task Forces for the purpose of preventing, detecting, and investigating various forms of electronic crimes, including potential terrorist attacks against critical infrastructure and financial payment systems.

Thank you again for your letter and interest in this important issue. Should you wish to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chris Krebs".

Christopher C. Krebs
Senior Official Performing the Duties
of the Under Secretary

cc: The Honorable Lt. Gen. H.R. McMaster, Jr.
Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs

Randolph D. Alles
Director of the Secret Service