



**Statement from the  
Honorable Jim Condos**

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**President-elect, National Association of Secretaries of State  
Member, Election Infrastructure Government Coordinating  
Council (EIS-GCC)**

**Before the U.S. Senate Committee on Rules & Administration**

**Open Hearing on Election Security Preparations:  
A State and Local Perspective**

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My name is Jim Condos, and I am Vermont's Secretary of State. I am also president-elect of the nonpartisan National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS), and a member of the Department of Homeland Security's Election Infrastructure Subsector Government Coordinating Council (EIS-GCC). I will become the new NASS president on July 16, 2018, and I have every intention of continuing the positive work of current president Secretary Connie Lawson of Indiana, and those that served before her. NASS is fortunate to have outstanding leaders and I am proud to be a part of the association.

Thank you for the chance to appear before you today to join my colleagues and address some of the things happening at the national level, some work specific to Vermont, and also my goals for NASS and the Election Infrastructure Government Coordinating Council as I become the President of NASS when Secretary Lawson's term ends in mid-July.

In March 2018, I had the privilege of testifying before the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence regarding election security.

Primary elections across the country are well underway, with states administering elections in a secure, accurate, and fair manner.

## **I. STATE AND FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP EFFORTS TO SECURE ELECTION INFRASTRUCTURE**

State and local election officials and the federal government have worked very hard to create a productive relationship since former DHS Secretary Jeh Johnson announced the "critical infrastructure" designation for election systems in January 2017. As you may know, NASS and its members raised many questions and expressed serious concerns about the potential federal overreach into the administration of elections – a state and local government responsibility.

While we remain vigilant about possible federal overreach, we will work together to ensure that the "critical infrastructure" designation functions in a positive and effective way. Thus, we have chosen to actively focus on improving communication between the states and the federal government to achieve our shared goal of securing elections. In particular, we have utilized the Election Infrastructure Subsector Government Coordinating Council (EIS-GCC), which Secretary Lawson mentioned in her testimony, to open communications channels and guide future collaborative election security endeavors.

For instance, within the EIS-GCC's Subsector Specific Plan, there are many short and long-term goals and projects to support election officials, federal partners and stakeholders. These include deploying an online training environment for election officials, identifying resource gaps at the state level, and establishing a digital portal to increase communication between all levels. Many of these will be discussed at the July EIS-GCC meeting in Philadelphia. At that meeting, we will also begin important discussions with the Elections Infrastructure Sector Coordinating Council. This is the council that represents the private sector and non-profit sector stakeholders that support election officials.

As I transition to NASS president in less than a month, I will also take Secretary Lawson's place on the



EIS-GCC Executive Committee. It is my objective to continue Secretary Lawson’s vital work with this group on behalf of NASS.

However, I would be remiss if I didn’t point out many of the organizations that have eagerly stepped up to help state and local governments with their election security efforts. NASS focuses a great deal on election security; and our meetings are replete with shared practices from our colleagues around the country including presentations by security and audit experts. We also hold forums twice a year for our office CIO/CISOs to come together to discuss challenges and solutions. The Belfer Center has developed a Tabletop Exercise that we can implement in our states to train both state and local election officials on addressing challenges leading up to and on Election Day. The Center for Internet Security has developed a handbook of election cybersecurity best practices and a checklist for states to monitor their progress. The Democracy Fund is supporting the convening of state and local officials to improve communication and governance between state agencies, and between state and local governments. And private sector companies like Google and Cloudflare have stepped up to provide free resources to state and local governments to assist with preventing distributed denial-of-service (DDos) attacks and protecting our data and websites. The list truly goes on, but my time is limited.

## **II. STATE SPECIFIC EFFORTS TO SECURE 2018 AND 2020 ELECTIONS**

In regards to specific state preparations for 2018 and beyond, I would like to thank you and your colleagues for appropriating the remaining Help America Vote Act (HAVA) funds to states in the recent omnibus bill. We truly appreciate this money and it will go a long way in helping states strengthen and improve their elections systems. While our upgrades to equipment and cybersecurity improvements will be an ongoing challenge, and for many states the federal funding received will regrettably be insufficient to do all that they want and need, we are grateful for the boost that these federal funds provide.

In Vermont, we have already requested and received our \$3 million grant of HAVA dollars from the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC), which as the Vermont Secretary of State I believe the EAC has done a great job of dispersing these funds. And because of this and their positive work as a whole, I believe they should receive any resources needed moving forward.

In regards to specific plans in using these new HAVA funds, in Vermont we plan to:

- Implement, prior to Vermont’s 2018 Primary, two factor authentication for our local clerks and SOS staff to access our Election Management System
- Implement, prior to Vermont’s 2018 primary election, a new user-friendly ADA compliant Accessible Voting System that will allow voters with disabilities to vote privately and independently at the polling place and from home during the early voting period
- Conduct an additional round of penetration testing on our election management system by an independent vendor this spring and will do so at regular intervals going forward
- We have offered an online cyber-security training webinar to our local clerks and will continue to offer additional rounds of these at regular intervals going forward
- Following the 2018 General election and every General election going forward we will perform

- a robust audit of our election results using state-of-the-art auditing technology
- Prior to 2020 Election, new Vote Tabulators with Paper Ballot and Audit Capabilities

This plan is in addition to what we are already currently doing, including:

- Continued improvements to our cyber defense
- Mandatory election trainings to Vermont’s municipal clerks
- Cyber summit convening state and local partners to inform Vermonters of our efforts and build confidence in the integrity of our process

## **BACKGROUND ON VERMONT’S ACTIONS SECURING OUR ELECTION INTEGRITY**

My agency began a thorough review of its cyber posture in 2013, when we issued an RFP for both physical and cybersecurity risk assessments which was completed in 2014. In the fall of 2015, we completed implementation of a new election management platform which included a vulnerability assessment and penetration testing prior to deployment. This new system provides:

- A statewide voter registration database
- Statewide absentee ballot request and tracking system
- Election night reporting
- Canvassing and official results reporting
- Online voter registration and My Voter Page
- Ballot production

Over the past four years, my office has overseen reforms of Vermont’s voting laws and process which simultaneously improve the integrity of our elections and encourage voter participation and access to elections. These include:

- Expansion of No Excuse Early/Absentee Voting for 45 days before the election
- Online Voter Registration and the My Voter Page
- Election Day registration and elimination of a pre-election registration deadline
- Automatic Voter registration at the DMV

Some of the acknowledged “best practices” that Vermont already uses include:

- Paper ballots
- Post-election audits
- No internet (Wi-Fi or hard-wire) connection of our vote tabulators
- Daily backup of our voter registration database
- Daily monitoring of traffic to our site
- Blacklisting of known problem or suspected IP addresses
- Periodic Penetration Testing
- “Secure the Human” training for Vermont’s municipal clerks



We have no less than three firewalls between the outside internet and our cyber systems as well as:

- Joining the Election Infrastructure – Information Sharing Analysis Center (EI-ISAC)
- Installation of a real-time Albert monitor (MS-ISAC)
- Receiving weekly DHS cyber-hygiene scans
- Contacts with both DHS and FBI personnel

I can elaborate further during the question and answer portion of this hearing or anytime in the future.

### III. THE FUTURE OF ELECTIONS AND VOTER CONFIDENCE

Much of the national attention over the past 18-24 months has focused on election security issues – especially cybersecurity – which are of course, extremely important. If people are confident that the voting process is secure, they will be much more likely to participate. This is why we need members of this committee, DHS and our other federal partners to share with Americans that our elections are indeed secure, accurate and fair.

The risks to our election system are real and we have and will continue to address them appropriately. However, it is important to understand that those systems with the highest risk – online voter registration systems and election night reporting are removed from the process of casting a ballot. It is also important to recognize that requiring a paper ballot with a robust post-election audit should be considered critical.

If our protections to our voter registration system are breached, we can address that and the vote count is not impacted. If our protections to our website posting election night reporting are breached, we can address that and the vote count is not impacted.

Voter confidence may be impacted, and that is not insignificant, but they need to understand that the casting of a vote is separate from all these other parts of the system. While we all need to work together to combat misinformation – intentional and accidental - to maintain voter confidence, I also encourage those citizens watching today to get involved in the process by becoming a poll worker, reaching out to their state and local election officials with questions, and ultimately casting a vote in November.

In the meantime, please know that state election officials will continue their work to increase cybersecurity and run elections with the utmost integrity. The 2018 election will be a test of what we learned from 2016. I feel that we are ready for 2018 and as the next president of NASS and as Vermont's Secretary of State I will continue to focus on improvement as time marches forward.

Your vote is your voice!

Thank you again, Members of this Committee for inviting me and my peers to testify before this hearing and for giving me the opportunity to speak about this important matter on behalf of NASS and Vermont.

I look forward to answering any questions you may have for me.