

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

November 18, 2019

The Honorable John Kennedy
Chairman
Subcommittee on Financial Services
and General Government
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Christopher Coons
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Financial Services
and General Government
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mike Quigley
Chairman
Subcommittee on Financial Services
and General Government
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Tom Graves
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Financial Services
and General Government
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Kennedy, Ranking Member Coons, Chairman Quigley, and Ranking Member Graves:

As the House and Senate begin work on conferencing the Fiscal Year 2020 Financial Services and General Government Appropriations bill, we urge you to support increased funding for election security grants, and for the Election Assistance Commission (EAC).

Today, more than at any other time in our nation's history, election officials face unique challenges that require federal support. As we approach the 2020 elections, we must ensure that they have the resources they need to combat foreign interference and ensure that every American has easy access to the ballot box.

Election Security Grants

Despite the progress made by many state and local election officials, more must be done to secure our elections. In his July 2019 testimony before Congress, FBI Director Chris Wray stated that, "The Russians are absolutely intent on trying to interfere with our elections." The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence has issued two bipartisan reports on Russia's interference in the 2016 elections. The report confirmed that Russia conducted sophisticated influence operations, hacked political committees and campaigns, and targeted election administrators and private technology firms responsible for manufacturing election systems. In Illinois, the names, addresses, birth dates, and partial social security numbers of thousands of registered voters were exposed. We also learned that the election systems in two Florida counties were hacked by the Russians, and the Department of Homeland Security is conducting forensic analysis on computers used in North Carolina after it was revealed in the Mueller Report that a voting software company was hacked.

In the face of these threats, experts are asking Congress to take action. At a House Homeland Security Committee hearing in February, a bipartisan group of secretaries of state called on Congress to increase support for election security. Alabama Secretary of State John Merrill, a Republican, testified that “additional funding is imperative to ensure voting equipment can remain up-to-date and voting systems can remain secure to protect the data of those citizens.”¹ This summer, a group of 22 state attorneys general sent a letter urging Congress to support election security funding and legislation. Calls for help from the states underscore the urgent need for the federal government to step up its efforts to strengthen election security across the country.

Recently, the Senate Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government voted to approve \$250 million in grants to state and local governments to improve election security.² This is far less than what is required to address ongoing election security concerns, and is less than half of the \$600 million appropriated by the House this June.³ State and local officials require significant resources to improve election security and modernize election infrastructure. In addition to having more funding, the House Appropriations Committee includes language that would help strengthen our elections, like ensuring that federal dollars are used to replace paperless machines and improve election cybersecurity. As you work to pass appropriations for FY20, we urge you to include the highest possible appropriation and to accept the strong requirements enumerated in the House bill. These provisions are necessary to ensure election officials have the resources they need to secure our elections.

Election Assistance Commission

In addition to providing increased funding for election security grants, we must fully fund the Election Assistance Commission (EAC), the federal agency charged with promoting security standards and best practices for voting machines and election administration. The EAC provides vital assistance to election officials, and it is the only federal agency responsible for testing and certification for voting systems. Since its creation in 2002, the EAC has become an essential partner for our local and state election officials. Given ongoing threats following the 2016 election, the EAC’s work is more important than ever.

Despite the Commission’s critical role in promoting election security, it has been perennially understaffed and underfunded. A recent report by the Commission’s inspector general found that the agency’s budget for salaries and administration has fallen from a high of \$18 million in 2010, to a mere \$8 million in 2019,⁴ a decline made worse when accounting for inflation. With only 22 staff, the Commission has less than half of the employees it had in 2010.⁵ Consequently, the Commission has been unable to develop a dedicated cyber assistance unit, despite repeated requests from state and local officials. Finally, if Congress is going to require the Commission to

¹ <https://homeland.house.gov/imo/media/doc/Testimony-Merrill.pdf>

² <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/2524/summary/25?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22Financial+Services+and+General+Government+Approprations%22%5D%7D&r=2>

³ <https://www.congress.gov/116/bills/hr3351/BILLS-116hr3351rfs.pdf>

⁴ https://www.eac.gov/assets/1/6/OIG_Strategic_Plan_FY_2020-2025_Final.pdf

⁵ <https://www.govexec.com/management/2019/09/senates-election-security-funding-bill-leaves-key-agency-strapped-cash/160167/>

administer additional election security grants, as it should, it must also ensure that the Commission has sufficient resources to administer them properly and carry out its broader mission.

It is vital to ensure that the EAC, the only federal agency charged with improving federal elections, has the funding it needs to be successful. The FY20 budget in the Senate for the EAC is \$11,995,000 while the House appropriated \$16,171,000. This is a difference of \$4,426,000 and all EAC Commissioners, including the Republican Commissioners, have said that the agency cannot continue to properly function on the Senate funding levels. As you finalize appropriations for FY20, we urge you to fund the EAC at the House level and ensure that there are strong strings attached to the election security grants.

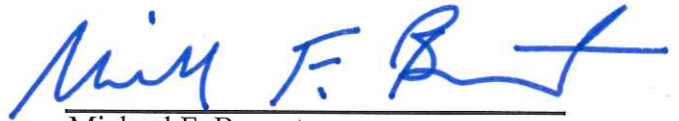
The security of our elections is paramount, and we are grateful for your work to ensure that state and local officials across the country have the resources and support they need as we head into another election year.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.


Sincerely,




Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator




Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



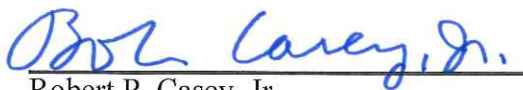
Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



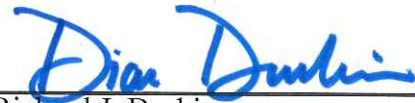
Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator



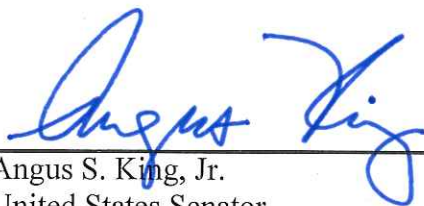
Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



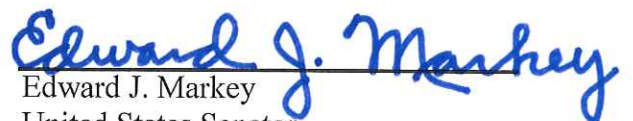
Mazie Hirono
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



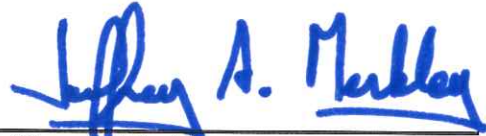
Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



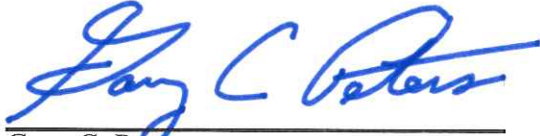
Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



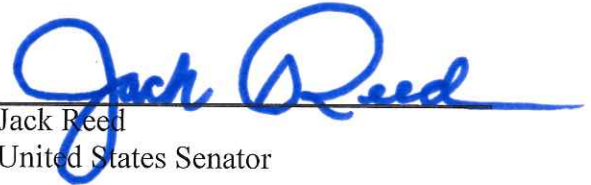
Robert Menendez
United States Senator



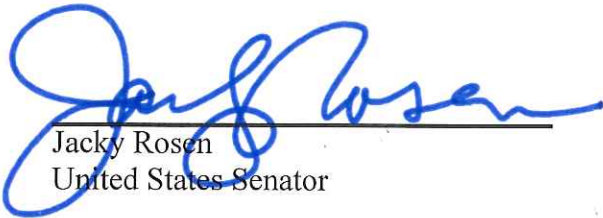
Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator



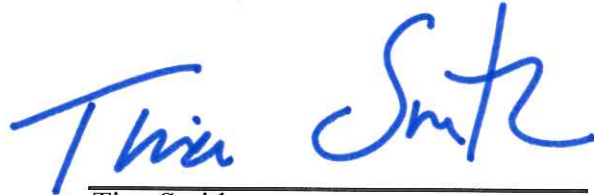
Jacky Rosen
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



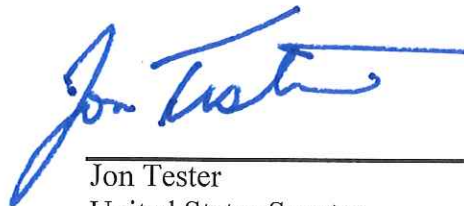
Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Tina Smith
United States Senator



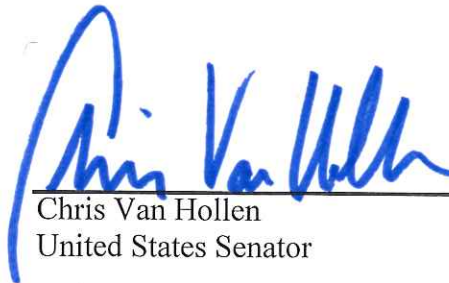
Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator




Jon Tester
United States Senator




Tom Udall
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator




Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator




Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator




Sherrod Brown
United States Senator




Doug Jones
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Brian Schatz
United States Senator



Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator