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Opening Statement
Ranking Member Val Deming's

Hearing on "Cybersecurity of Voting Machines"

November 29, 2017

Thank you Chairman Hurd and Chairman Palmer for convening this hearing today. I'd also like to thank Ranking Member Kelly for her friendship and leadership, and all our witnesses for participating today.

I am pleased that we are holding this hearing on a matter so essential to Democracy. While there are many issues that divide us, the integrity of the voting process should not be in question. Regardless of race, gender, sexual identity, ZIP code, or income, every vote counts the same — the last true equalizer.

However, Russia's interference in the 2016 election and intrusions in at least 21 states' voter registration databases, indisputable and confirmed by U.S. intelligence agencies, has forced us to acknowledge voting system security has not kept pace with the current and emerging threats from nations, organizations, or even a single individual determined to undermine our Democracy.

Recently, I joined the Congressional Task Force on Election Security. Just as we keep our homeland safe from physical harm, so, too, must we harden our soft targets against cyber attacks. The task force has heard from security professionals, academia, and state and local election officials. Their message is clear: We must act now to protect voting systems.

In over 40 states, elections are carried out using voting machines and voter registration databases created more than a decade ago. These technologies are more likely to suffer from known vulnerabilities that cannot be patched easily, if at all. As we saw in the Voting Village set up at this year's DEFCON hacking conference, even hackers with limited prior knowledge, tools, and resources are able to breach voting machines in a matter of minutes.

We should not assume that state voting systems are secure enough to withstand a state-sponsored cyber-attack, and there is no reason to believe these attacks will subside.

Congress must do its part and help states fund and maintain secure election systems. This means: funding to purchase newer, more secure election systems and voting machines with voter-mark paper ballots; helping establish and certify baseline cybersecurity standards for those systems and the vendors that service them; and encouraging states to conduct post-election risk-limiting audits.

Moreover, this is not the time to diminish federal efforts or shut down important lines of dialogue between DHS and election administrators. Federal agencies like DHS and EAC (Election Assistance Commission) are important partners in this effort, but they need resources and consistent support from Congress.

Where DHS has rendered assistance, officials report that cyber hygiene scans and other services are valuable. However, there is currently a 9-month wait list for Risk and Vulnerability Assessments, and questions remain about how to ensure threat information reaches election officials, many of whom lack security clearances.

Similarly, the EAC has played a crucial role by serving as a clearinghouse of information for state and local election officials, facilitating communications between these officials and DHS, providing easy-to-use cybersecurity guidance, and testing and certifying voting machines. Numerous state and local officials have expressed support and appreciation for the EAC's work.

Our Democratic process relies on voters' faith that their vote counts. Election security is national security, and our election infrastructure is critical infrastructure.

With just under a year until the 2018 midterm elections, it is critical that we understand the vulnerabilities of the past and secure our networks, registration databases, voting equipment, and tabulation systems.

I thank our witnesses for sharing their testimony today, and I look forward to this important discussion.

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