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NJOHSP



New Jersey Announces \$10.2 Million in Election Security Initiatives

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TRENTON, N.J. — New Jersey has finalized a spending plan utilizing \$10.2 million in federal and state election security funds. The plan will fund programs into 2023 and will address critical election infrastructure, such as cybersecurity, database improvements, and election auditing. The New Jersey Department of State, through its Division of Elections, and the New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness, through its New Jersey Cybersecurity and Communications Integration Cell, released the following statement regarding the continued confidence in the security of the State's election systems.

“Our citizens deserve a secure election system that fulfills their unalienable right to participate in their government free from interference. Improving New Jersey’s current election infrastructure has been an ongoing process, which has included planned database upgrades and increased cybersecurity partnerships. But this infusion of funding can help set the foundation for what we hope can be one of the most advanced and secure election systems in the nation,” **said New Jersey Secretary of State Tahesha Way**. “I have had one priority since assuming leadership over the Division of Elections, which is to protect each citizen’s vote like it were my own. That is what I’ll continue to do as we take the necessary steps to upgrade our election infrastructure.”

“The cybersecurity assistance that we provide to state and local officials in the form of vulnerability assessments of polling places, warehouses, and ballot storage areas will continue throughout this election cycle,” **said New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness Director Jared Maples**. “We are working with municipal, county, and state election officials to offer services to ensure the security and integrity of the Statewide Voter Registration System. To that end, the New Jersey Cybersecurity and Communications Integration Cell will continue to provide real-time monitoring of cyber threats, tailored analysis, and share information on resilience and risk mitigation strategies.” State officials are increasing deterrence, detection, and response resources and making relevant upgrades to the State’s election systems.

Of the total funding, \$9.7 million was awarded to New Jersey following congressional appropriation and the State provided nearly half a million dollars in matching funds. Secretary Way, in consultation with Director Maples, county election officials, and other State officials, developed the spending plan to include the following spending categories (details below):

- Cybersecurity
 - Physical Security
 - Training
 - Communication
 - Voter Registration System
 - Voting Equipment
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- Election Auditing
- ADA Compliance

BACKGROUND

On March 23, 2018, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018 was signed into law by Congress and included \$380 million in grants to be allocated among the states. The purpose of these funds is to improve the administration of elections for federal office, including enhancing election technology and improving election security. These funds are distributed by the United States Election Assistance Commission (EAC) under Title I Section 101 of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) of 2002.

On April 17, 2018, the Secretary Way received an award packet and Notice of Grant Award for the 2018 HAVA Election Security Grants. The packet included notification that New Jersey was eligible to receive \$9,757,450 and would be required to contribute a State Match of \$487,873.

The Division of Elections is currently engaged in several active measures to continue to improve New Jersey's security posture on elections, including:

- Conducting tabletop cybersecurity training exercises, in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, for election officials across the state;
- Continuing to address physical security processes, including pre-election testing protocols, seal use protocols, and seal use protocol training;
- Assisting county election officials review their voter registration information prior to integration into the updated statewide voter registration system;
- Continuing to work closely with the N.J. Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness to increase cybersecurity preparedness.

The New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness (NJOHSP), through its New Jersey Cybersecurity and Communications Integration Cell (NJCCIC), is constantly collaborating with federal, state and local authorities, as well as other third parties, on securing New Jersey's voter registration and election systems. NJCCIC is committed to providing cybersecurity assistance to state and local officials throughout this election cycle and beyond. To that end, the NJCCIC provides near real-time awareness of cyber threats and analysis, shares information on sound digital resilience and risk mitigation practices, and acts as a resource for cybersecurity incident reporting. NJOHSP is continuously working with the New Jersey Department of State and its Division of Elections, as well as the New Jersey Office of Information Technology, to proactively assess and enhance controls that protect New Jersey's election systems. This includes:

- Continuous monitoring of systems for signs of suspicious activity;
- Conducting risk and vulnerability assessments and penetration tests;
- Implementing administrative, physical, and technical security controls to address emerging threats and vulnerabilities;
- Providing security awareness training to State and local elections personnel;
- Ensuring continuity of operations plans are in place in the event of an incident.

SPENDING NARRATIVE

Cybersecurity

The State has been working diligently to secure its election related systems and this funding will allow that work to develop even further. The Department of State (DOS) will fund an employee at the New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness (NJOHSP) or Division of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMAVA), who will be solely dedicated to elections. This individual will also be the liaison to the IT directors at each county to assist them in securing their election systems. Since New Jersey is a "Top Down" model for its voter registration system it is

important to assist counties in securing the systems that connect to the Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS). DOS will develop a program to help counties conduct a risk and vulnerability assessment on their current systems. This assessment will result in the counties receiving a gap analysis as well as a remediation plan. DOS will offer a sub-grant to the counties to help them implement the remediation plan.

Physical Security

To help ensure the security of the State's election equipment, DOS will offer a physical vulnerability assessment program for county election officials, in partnership with NJOHSP and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The goal of the vulnerability assessment will be to inspect and develop a remediation plan for any deficiencies with the physical security of voting machines, election material, data, and devices used in the electoral process. The county election officials will then be eligible to receive funding through a sub-grant to help execute the remediation plan. County election officials have inquired about resources for physical security at polling locations, where appropriate. Additional security needs and responsive strategies will be developed through the findings of the vulnerability assessments.

Training

The Division of Elections (Division) in conjunction with NJOHSP will develop a Tabletop Training Exercise (TTX) program based on the training the State received from the Defending Digital Democracy project. This will allow the county election officials to engage in simulated real world threats to help them develop the skills necessary to respond should an actual incident occur. In conjunction with the TTX the State intends to develop an election security playbook. The Division will work with the county election officials to develop online poll worker training. This will allow for more training options for poll workers so they have the most up to date training.

Communication

The Secretary of State will develop an election specific mobile app so voters can easily find verifiable, trustworthy sources of information concerning elections. New Jersey law allows for the possibility of more than nine separate elections a year; this app will assist in helping keep New Jersey voters informed.

Voter Registration System

As discussed earlier, New Jersey's SVRS is a "Top Down" model and therefore requires the State to maintain the system. As laws change and threats evolve it is up to the State to ensure the SVRS continues to function as required in a safe and secure manner. Funds from this grant will be allocated to help successfully implement any necessary changes to the SVRS. As part of modernization of the SVRS the State will use GIS mapping technology as well as geocoding each individual street address. In an effort to assist the county election officials confirm the accuracy of their newly geocoded addresses the State will offer a sub-grant to reimburse the county election officials for the cost of this project. Funds will also be used toward the efficient and secure implementation of Automatic Voter Registration at the Motor Vehicle Commission agencies.

Voting Equipment

The State will develop a pilot program to allow county election officials to lease or purchase a small number of voting systems that utilize a voter verified paper audit trail. The pilots will be conducted in small jurisdictions with a small number of voting systems. The funds will also be used to update the existing voting machine and seal tracking system.

Election Auditing

In conjunction with the voting system pilot program the county election officials will participate in an additional pilot program to conduct post-election audits of the results from the voting system used in the voting system pilot program.

ADA Compliance

DOS will administer sub-grants to the county election officials to help ensure polling places are compliant with the Americans with Disability Act (ADA). In addition, as part of the online poll worker training, there can be specific training directly related to assisting voters with disabilities.

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The New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness (NJOHSP), a Cabinet-level agency, was created in 2006. The Director serves as the Governor's Homeland Security Advisor, and is responsible for leading and coordinating the State's counterterrorism, cybersecurity, and emergency preparedness efforts while building resiliency throughout the State across all levels of government and the private sector. NJOHSP oversees and distributes discretionary State and federal homeland security and emergency preparedness funds on behalf of New Jersey. More information about NJOHSP can be found at <https://www.njhomelandsecurity.gov>.

In addition to overseeing the orderly conduct of elections, the **New Jersey Department of State's Division of Elections** is the filing office for state and federal elective offices, state ballot questions, and bond issues placed on the ballot. The Division also assists county election officials, county clerks, and the public on matters of election administration. It also certifies and publishes election results, certifies voting machines, and manages the statewide voter registration system to ensure compliance with the National Voter Registration Act of 1993. For more information on the Division of Elections, please visit www.elections.nj.gov or follow the Department of State on Twitter at @NJStateDept.