

# News

## Federal Vote-Protection Efforts Lag Ahead of First Primaries

Experts say too little has been done to shore up a vulnerable mishmash of 10,000 U.S. voting jurisdictions

By Frank Bajak and  
Christina A. Cassidy  
Associated Press

**W**ith the first primaries of the 2018 elections less than a month away, you might expect federal officials to be wrapping up efforts to safeguard the vote against expected Russian interference.

You'd be wrong.

Federal efforts to help states button down elections systems have crawled, hamstrung in part by wariness of federal meddling. Just 14 states and three local election agencies have so far asked for detailed vulnerability assessments offered by the Department of Homeland Security — and only five of the two-week examinations are complete.

Illinois, for instance —

one of two states where voter registration databases were breached in 2016 — requested an assessment in January and is still waiting. Primary voters go to the polls there March 20; state officials can't say whether the assessment will happen beforehand. DHS says the assessments should be finished by mid-April.

Meantime, fewer than half of the estimated 50 senior state elections officials who requested federal security clearances have received them, DHS says. That can hinder information sharing designed to help states deal with election disruptions.

And Congress is still sitting on three bipartisan bills that address election integrity issues, including funding to upgrade antiquated equip-

ment.

Overall, experts say far too little has been done to shore up a vulnerable mishmash of 10,000 U.S. voting jurisdictions that mostly run on obsolete and imperfectly secured technology. Russian agents targeted election systems in 21 states ahead of the 2016 general election, DHS says, and separately launched a social media blitz aimed at inflaming social tensions and sowing confusion.

The CIA director and two other top U.S. intelligence officials told the Senate Tuesday they've seen indications Russian agents are preparing a new round of election subterfuge. The secretary of state has said the same. Texas will hold the first primary of 2018 on March 6; Illinois follows two weeks later.

That makes local elec-



AP PHOTO/MATT ROURKE, FILE

In this Oct. 14, 2016, file photo, a technician works to prepare voting machines to be used in the upcoming presidential election in Philadelphia. Since last July, a bipartisan team at Harvard, including former U.S. Marine and Army cyberwarriors, national security eggheads and Google engineers, has been looking into how to safeguard the vote against interference. The group drafted its latest protect-the-vote election "playbooks" intended to prepare state and local officials for the worst.

tion officials "the front lines of the information age," said Eric Rosenbach, co-director of Harvard's Belfer Center and a former Defense Department chief of staff in the

2016 Clinton campaign, which was stung by multiple email thefts later traced to Russian agents. "The question is: 'How resilient are we and what are we doing to protect

a key election-staging server was exposed on the open internet for months then wiped clean without a forensic exam — that haven't been independently investigated.

And federal delays are legion. In the last election, DHS took nearly a year to inform the affected states of hacking attempts, blaming it in part on a lack of security clearances. But it hasn't made up enough lost ground to satisfy critics on Capitol Hill.

In Illinois, for instance, the executive director of the state elections board submitted his application in August and has yet to receive his clearance, according to agency spokesman Matt Dietrich.

As a stopgap, DHS is providing one-day "read-ins" on secret information this week in Washington to about 100 senior state officials — secretaries of state and elections directors — gathered there for a meeting. "That's a way to deal with the fact that the process hasn't worked as quickly as we'd hoped," Bob Kolasky, deputy assistant secretary at DHS for infrastructure pro-

See VOTE on page 15

 **Constructing Hope**  
Pre-Apprenticeship Program

**PUTTING PEOPLE  
TO WORK** in the  
**CONSTRUCTION  
INDUSTRY**



**FREE**

Ten weeks of construction training for those with legal history, minorities and low income, ages 18 years and older.

### WE OFFER:

- Free construction training
- We provide tools
- Safety certifications
- Career placement
- Begin a career with starting wage of \$16.00/hr.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, please contact us:

405 NE Church Street, Portland, OR 97211  
503-281-1234 • [www.constructinghope.org](http://www.constructinghope.org)

**“It’s not a question of whether somebody is going to try to breach the system. The question is: ‘How resilient are we and what are we doing to protect ourselves?’”**

Obama administration. “After what the Russians did, every other bad guy is going to come after our democracy now.”

Since last July, a bipartisan team at Harvard — including former U.S. Marine and Army cyberwarriors, national security eggheads and Google engineers — has been trying to shore up that local line. The group, which calls itself the Defending Digital Democracy initiative, has just drafted its latest protect-the-vote election “playbooks” intended to prepare state and local officials for the worst.

“It’s not a question of whether somebody is going to try to breach the system,” said Robby Mook, manager of the

ourselves?”

Mook helps run the effort with Matt Rhoades, who managed Mitt Romney’s 2012 presidential run. Over six months, the authors visited 34 state and county offices and ran simulations to help local officials improve their “threat awareness.”

The team’s findings highlight resource-strapped election systems that can’t secure their own operations, vulnerable voting-equipment vendors and the threat posed by insiders and people looking for political advantage.

There’s no evidence that any hack in the November 2016 election affected election results. But there are also cases — such as in Georgia, where



## A career you can be proud of.

Being a carpenter isn't just a job. It's a way of life. We're devoted to strengthening the lives of our members with steady work, wealth and personal growth.

We take a stand for our members and all workers.

We work together to lead the building industry in safety, training and compensation. We create rich lives for our members and partners.

To learn more about becoming a union carpenter, go to [NWCarpenters.org](http://NWCarpenters.org).

PORTLAND: 1636 East Burnside, Portland, OR 97214 | 503.261.1862  
HEADQUARTERS: 25120 Pacific Hwy S, #200, Kent, WA 98032 | 253.954.8800  
[NWCarpenters.org](http://NWCarpenters.org)

More than 20,000 members in the Pacific Northwest.

