



From the Office of Secretary of State John A. Gale

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Contact:

Joni Sailors

402-471-1572

Your Vote Is Secure: How a Close Federal and State Partnership Enhances Election Security

The following op-ed was submitted by Nebraska Secretary of State John Gale and Chris Krebs, Under Secretary for the Department of Homeland Security's National Protection and Programs Directorate.

For several years, Nebraska voters have been aware of the threat of foreign actors interfering in our elections. What they may not know, however, is that election officials and the Federal government have been working and continue to work tirelessly behind the scenes to protect our elections.

Nebraska and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) are working together to tackle the challenges of election security. DHS has provided support through cyber and physical security assessments, information sharing, training, and exercises. By working together, Nebraska's election infrastructure is more resilient than ever.

My office has had close and proactive support as well from Nebraska Chief Information Officer Ed Toner and his team in cooperation with DHS. The OCIO security protections for state websites and email transmissions are cutting-edge with multiple firewalls.

Nebraska was at the forefront on working with DHS to allow resources to be extended to vendors who provide Election Services to the States. We are proud to say that all three of Nebraska's Election Vendors have signed on to work with DHS to enhance Election Security.

In addition, Nebraska put into effect front-end and back-end protections to the Statewide Voter Registration System. First, a two-factor authentication process to access the Voter Registration System was implemented. By taking this step, it has become even more difficult for malicious actors to try to gain access. Now a username, password and a randomly generated code must be used to access the system. In addition, we worked with DHS to have an ALBERT Monitor,

which detects suspicious activity 24 hours a day, 365 days a year in real time be placed at our Vendor to protect Nebraska's voter registration system.

Information sharing is a key tool for staying ahead of those who may wish to interfere, as we are only as good as our understanding of the threat. Nebraska is a partner in the Election Infrastructure Information Sharing & Analysis Center (EI-ISAC), a collaboration that brings together all 50 states and over 1,000 election jurisdictions nationwide. The Center works with state election officials to provide real-time threat sharing and cyber defense training. The EI-ISAC has ensured that Nebraska is a crucial part of a broad national defense against foreign attempts to interfere with our elections.

These partnerships between our offices help ensure Nebraska's elections, including those taking place yet this year and in the future, are more secure. We will continue to work together to promote strong cybersecurity practices, including threat information sharing, "cyber hygiene" scans, phishing campaign assessments, and joint exercises.

Though Nebraska has taken many steps to secure our elections, there will always be new recommendations, new technology, and new best practices where cybersecurity is concerned. We take our responsibility seriously, and the way we administer elections must continue to evolve to stay ahead of the threats, because this is a race where the finish line continues to move.

Even with all of our efforts, Nebraska's best defense remains the paper ballot. A paper ballot cannot be hacked, and taken in conjunction with our recent efforts, Nebraskans can be confident that their ballot will be secure and counted. Your ballot is waiting for you.... Go cast it!