

Then this Friday from Homeland Security:

On Friday, US Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson designated election systems to be part of the nation's critical US infrastructure. He said this move would better protect elections from increasingly sophisticated hacking.

"Now more than ever, it is important that we offer our assistance to state and local election officials in the cybersecurity of their systems," Johnson wrote in a statement published late Friday afternoon. "Election infrastructure is vital to our national interests, and cyber attacks on this country are becoming more sophisticated, and bad cyber actors—ranging from nation states, cyber criminals and hacktivists—are becoming more sophisticated and dangerous."

News

Blog

Data

Events

Fact Sheets

Homeland Security LIVE

In Focus

Media Contacts

Multimedia

National Terrorism Advisory System

Press Releases

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Publications Library

Social Media

Speeches

Testimony

Statement by Secretary Jeh Johnson on the Designation of Election Infrastructure as a Critical Infrastructure Subsector

Release Date: January 6, 2017

For Immediate Release

Office of the Press Secretary

Contact: 202-282-8010

I have determined that election infrastructure in this country should be designated as a subsector of the existing Government Facilities critical infrastructure sector. Given the vital role elections play in this country, it is clear that certain systems and assets of election infrastructure meet the definition of critical infrastructure, in fact and in law.

I have reached this determination so that election infrastructure will, on a more formal and enduring basis, be a priority for cybersecurity assistance and protections that the Department of Homeland Security provides to a range of private and public sector entities. By "election infrastructure," we mean storage facilities, polling places, and centralized vote tabulations locations used to support the election process, and information and communications technology to include voter registration databases, voting machines, and other systems to manage the election process and report and display results on behalf of state and local governments.

Prior to reaching this determination, my staff and I consulted many state and local election officials; I am aware that many of them are opposed to this designation. It is important to stress what this designation does and does not mean. This designation does not mean a federal takeover, regulation, oversight or intrusion concerning elections in this country. This designation does nothing to change the role state and local governments have in administering and running elections.

The designation of election infrastructure as critical infrastructure subsector does mean that election infrastructure becomes a priority within the National Infrastructure Protection Plan. It also enables this Department to prioritize our cybersecurity assistance to state and local election officials, but only for those who request it. Further, the designation makes clear both domestically and internationally that election infrastructure enjoys all the benefits and protections of critical infrastructure that the U.S. government has to offer. Finally, a designation makes it easier for the federal government to have full and frank discussions with key stakeholders regarding sensitive vulnerability information.

Particularly in these times, this designation is simply the right and obvious thing to do.