



ROY BLUNT *of* MISSOURI, CHAIRMAN

Chairman Blunt's Opening Statement Election Security Preparations: A State and Local Perspective

I would like to welcome our witnesses to today's hearing. I am particularly grateful to my fellow Missourians, Secretary of State Jay Ashcroft and Greene County Clerk Shane Schoeller, for being here. I thank each of you for taking time out of your busy schedules to travel to Washington to share your thoughts on election security.

As the Rules Committee begins its review of federal elections, Senator Klobuchar and I are in agreement that the best starting point is the state and local officials who are responsible for the administration of those elections.

Elections are the keystone to our democracy and depend on the efforts and abilities of County Clerks, Election Directors, Secretaries of State, and many others. While each state is different, these officials are responsible for the day-to-day work of election administration and they are the front lines for election security.

During the 2016 election cycle, state and local election officials were tested like never before by cyberattacks and we anticipate that these attempts to interfere will continue. To thwart these attempts, state and local governments need access to timely and actionable information and technical assistance, when necessary.

One of my goals for today is to find out more about the information sharing that is occurring between federal, state and local officials and to learn more about the local authority's ability to act upon it.

In January 2017, the Department of Homeland Security designated our country's election infrastructure to be critical infrastructure. This designation began the formalization of information sharing and collaboration among state, local, and federal governments through the creation of a Government Coordinating Council (GCC). Many of our witnesses sit on the newly formed GCC and I look forward to learning more about their experiences to date.

More recently, in the FY2018 Omnibus, Congress appropriated \$380 million to the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) to help states enhance their election infrastructure.

While we will hold a hearing with the EAC at a later date, I am very interested to learn more about our witnesses' experiences with this process and the plans for their states.

Finally, the attempts to influence the 2016 election have spurred many to call for additional laws. I remain open to learning more about any legal gaps that must be filled to ensure fair elections, but before Congress passes any legislation I think it is key that we understand what is happening on the ground from the people before us and learn what their real needs are.

Thank you all for being here, I look forward to hearing your perspective.

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