

February 2020

Election security is a big discussion topic for the 2020 elections. The 2016 election saw the use of misinformation used in connection with elections like never before. We know that no votes were changed in 2016 and we also know that one state voter registration database was compromised. In Oregon in 2016, adversaries tried to get into our voter registration system and we stopped them. Our voting systems were very secure in 2016, but there is more we are doing to make them even more secure for 2020.

For 2020 misinformation is the biggest threat to elections. While we make efforts to educate Oregonians so they are not fooled by misinformation, we are also continually improving the physical and cyber security of our election systems.

Earlier this month the Secretary of State partnered with the US Attorney and FBI to host an Election Security Symposium. There were over 160 attendees that encompassed local election officials, members of the legislature, candidates and federal and state partners. The symposium included information on election security risks and threats as well as tools and strategies to minimize and combat those risks and threats. Speakers came from the FBI, Department of Homeland Security, Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, representatives from Deloitte and Touche and Facebook, as well as the Oregon Titan Fusion Center. The event is being modeled as a best practice for the country.

In 2018 the Oregon TIGER (Threat Information Gathering and Election Resources) Team was born. The goal of the team is to identify threats and vulnerabilities to Oregon's election system and to work together using the resources of federal, state, and local governments to mitigate those threats and vulnerabilities. Members of the TIGER Team consist of the Oregon Elections Division, US Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, Oregon Emergency Management, Oregon Chief Information Officer- Cyber Security Services, Oregon National Guard, Oregon Titan Fusion Center, and FBI.

As part of the work of the TIGER Team, the Department of Homeland Security has been conducting onsite assessments at each of Oregon's 36 county election offices. They are assessing physical and cyber threats and vulnerabilities. Actions are then taken to mitigate those vulnerabilities that are identified. Each of the counties have also been trained on strong passwords and to be cautious of clicking on links. The Elections Division has conducted phishing campaigns targeting the counties to further help them learn how to avoid practices that could leave our systems vulnerable.

In preparation for this year's elections, an exercise was conducted for all of the counties at their annual conference last summer simulating attacks on our elections. During the simulation exercise, official election websites were being hacked. Disinformation was being spread on social media. Electrical power and communications went down. There

was also training on avoiding phishing attempts and strengthening passwords. This exercise helped us be more prepared in case we are attacked.

The Secretary of State's office has multiple layers of defense controls, including hardware and software designed to prevent cybercriminals from gaining access or misusing our systems. We have hired cybersecurity professionals to maintain and defend our election systems. We continue to improve security processes and protections for all systems.

All 36 Oregon counties are members of the Elections Infrastructure Information Sharing and Analysis Center (EI-ISAC). The EI-ISAC was established to support the cybersecurity needs of election administrators. Through the EI-ISAC, election agencies gain access to an elections-focused cyber defense suite, including incident response and remediation, threat and vulnerability monitoring, cybersecurity awareness and training products, and tools for implementing security best practices. These are all things election administrators have had to learn over the past 5 years as we are now on the front lines of defending democracy against attacks.

The security of Oregon's election systems has never been stronger. We thwarted efforts to compromise our system in 2016 and are in an even stronger position now to combat any attacks on our election systems. Security systems are never finished and need to continue to be improved and modernized. We will continue to implement best practices to protect our election systems and you can have confidence your vote is secure.

Steve Trout, Director of Elections
Oregon Secretary of State Office

Gayle V. Trotter, County Clerk
Malheur County Clerks' Office