Research & Technology Subcommittee Ranking Member Jim Baird, PhD
Joint Investigations & Oversight and Research & Technology Subcommittee Hearing Statement
"Election Security: Voting Technology Vulnerabilities"
June 25, 2019

Thank you, Chairwoman Sherrill and Chairwoman Stevens, for convening today's hearing to review the security of U.S. election system technologies.

Voting is a fundamental right of every American citizen and ensuring the right to safe and secure elections is the responsibility of every Member of Congress.

Without security, integrity, and accuracy in our electoral process, the foundation of our nation – our democracy – is weakened.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses this afternoon about how the federal government can support State and local governments in ensuring safe and secure elections through research, technology testing, audits and voluntary guidance.

As we all know, under our Constitution and federal system, election administration is and should be the responsibility of State and local governments.

Our Founders believed that government is more transparent, responsive, and accountable when it is closest to the people, which is why the Constitution gave the responsibility of our elections to the States.

To this end, Congress' role is to empower state officials to strengthen the security of their unique election systems and effectively administer elections, not to try to dictate a one-size-fits-all approach.

The Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA) established the federal Election Assistance Commission (EAC) and requires the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) to work with the Commission on technical, voluntary guidelines for voting systems.

These voluntary guidelines are an important tool for state and local election officials to ensure the functionality and accuracy of that state's unique system.

They allow for the testing of voting systems to determine the basic functionality, accessibility, and security capabilities.

They also offer flexibility, which is important given the variation of election infrastructure from state to state.

I look forward to hearing from Dr. Romine about the most recent iteration of the Voluntary Voting System Guidelines, which is expected to be released soon.

I believe it is also valuable that this Committee has the opportunity to hear what new and evolving challenges states are facing and how states are using federal resource to overcome these unique challenges – including how and if these guidelines and protections are being effectively adopted.

I expect Secretary Ziriax and Mr. Kelley will have particularly good insight into these challenges.

There is no doubt that there is a need for improved security of our elections – we know that at least 21 states were targeted by foreign state actors prior to the 2016 U.S. election and we know that Russia undertook disinformation campaigns on social media in that same election.

This is troubling, but we must also acknowledge that no votes were changed in the 2016 election and the 2018 midterm elections were secure with a record number of voter participation.

We must examine what we can learn from these past elections and improve upon them. We can make progress on this issue.

I want to again thank Chairwoman Sherrill and Chairwoman Stevens for holding this hearing, and what I hope will be, a bipartisan look at the challenges of election security.

As my colleague, Ranking Member Norman noted, this matter has not been addressed in a bi-partisan manner thus far this Congress, but I hope this hearing will illustrate how progress can be made in keeping our nation's elections secure and free from interference.

Thank you and I yield back the balance of my time.