



State of Vermont

Office of the Secretary of State
128 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633-1101

[phone] 802-828-2363
[fax] 802-828-2496
www.sec.state.vt.us

James C. Condos, Secretary of State
Christopher D. Winters, Deputy Secretary

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Contact: Eric Covey, 802-828-2148

Secretary of State Jim Condos Speaks at National Forum on Election Cyber-Security

On Saturday, October 28th, Vermont Secretary of State Jim Condos spoke on a national panel at the State Legislative Leaders Foundation's 2017 Technology Summit regarding cybersecurity in elections and electronic threats to voting systems. The Summit was attended by over fifty legislative leaders from across the nation. Secretary Condos was joined on the panel by Tennessee Secretary of State Tre Hargett and Dr. Lawrence Norden, Deputy Director of the NYU Law School's Brennan Center for Justice.

"In a world of ever-changing technology, states must constantly reassess the cybersecurity protections to our elections systems," said Secretary Condos. "Anyone who thinks that their system is fully protected, and lets their guard down for even a moment, gives cyber-criminals an opportunity to hack into their system. The Vermont Secretary of State's staff monitors our system daily to try to stay one step ahead of the bad guys."

The Summit focused on ways states can best protect their election systems from technology-based interference. Earlier this year, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security released information that they found 21 states' elections systems had been targeted by foreign hackers. To date, there have been no substantiated findings of vote-count alterations via hacking in any U.S. election. Vermont was not one of the targeted states according to Homeland Security.

"Being proactive, and prior to the 2016 election, we conducted a cybersecurity risk audit and our systems were determined to be very secure. Vermont also utilizes auditable paper ballots, and optical scan tabulators that are not connected to other tabulators or the internet. As such, hacking our system in any widespread way would be difficult. Our office also conducts multiple random audits following elections to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the vote-counts," said Secretary Condos.

As a part of the ongoing effort to protect the nation's elections systems from cyber-attacks, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and U.S. Election Assistance Commission have formed an inter-governmental coordinating council to improve communications on election cyber-threats and help with risk mitigation. Secretary Condos has a leadership role on this taskforce, representing the National Association of Secretaries of State. The taskforce met for the first time during early October.

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