

Alaska's Election Security FAQ Sheet

"Cyber Hacks on State Election Systems have been in the news lately. The national media coverage over 'spear phishing' or scanning of State Voter Registration Databases has increased scrutiny among some voters. I join my colleagues with the National Association of State Election Directors and the U. S. Department of Homeland Security to assure Alaskans that the Division of Elections and Information Technology Experts are working hard to ensure that our systems remain secure." ---Josie Bahnke, Division Director

Was Alaska a target of Russian hacking Efforts in the 2016 General Election?

In Alaska, there is no evidence that cyber intruders tried to delete or alter voter data prior to or after the November 8, 2016 election. After thorough analysis, there were no instances of 'spear phishing' emails received by the State's system. Although we continue to judge all newly available information, our elections have been and will continue to be conducted with integrity and transparency.

What did the Alaska Division of Elections do to secure our state's voting system?

In an effort to boost confidence in our voting systems, the Division of Elections embarked on an unprecedented opportunity to work collaboratively with the Department of Homeland Security to ensure that all aspects of our election system remained secure. The partnership allowed us to assess vulnerabilities by performing a variety of security tests, identify mitigation plans, and share information on reports of incidents or threats. This partnership between election officials and IT experts is just one example of ways we are working to ensure our voting systems remain secure.

Why is Alaska's system still one of the best in the nation?

Alaska has and will continue to employ best practices raised by election security experts such as having an all paper-based system, including verifiable paper audit trails; independent testing; post-election audits; and physical security of tabulation equipment and software. The ballot tabulation system used in Alaska to produce and count ballots is fully integrated, federally certified and is thoroughly tested prior to each election.

In 2016, Alaska introduced more robust access control to the State's Voter Registration and Election Management Database. This effort further reduced the likelihood of unauthorized access to voter data. We have also introduced better intrusion detection processes and practices. In the case of a breach, these tools allow for the rapid awareness of what was compromised and potentially reduce the scope of the breach.

Alaska's multi-layered election security model is continuously improving as technology and better practices become known. Alaska has introduced improved tools and practices in encrypted communication which reduces the risk of the loss of voter data during transmission. These added layers provide defense of depth and can provide early warning of attacks in time for election officials to take action.

There are multiple steps in the voting process, from the time Alaskans go to the polls until the director of elections certifies the results. The extensive process includes a number of security features that make it among the safest in the country.

For more information about the Division of Elections Security Project, visit this link:

<http://elections.alaska.gov/Core/testvotecountsystemandsecurity.php>