

## **Your Vote Is Safe: How Alaska is partnering with DHS to protect elections**

**by**

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Since 2016, voters have heard about the threat of foreign actors interfering in our elections. What they haven't heard is that election officials and the Federal government are working tirelessly behind the scenes to protect our elections, and there is no evidence any votes were changed in 2016.

Alaska and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) are working together to tackle the challenges of election security. DHS has provided support through cyber and physical security assessments, information sharing, training, and exercises. Together, we are making our state's election infrastructure more resilient than ever.

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, not connected to the internet and is thoroughly tested prior to each election.

Since 2016, the Division of Elections and Office of Information Technology have partnered to introduce more robust access control to the State's Voter Registration and Election Management Database which further reduces the likelihood of unauthorized access to voter data. We've implemented 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.

We're only as good as our understanding of the threat, and information sharing is a key tool for staying ahead of the bad guys. Alaska is a partner in the Election Infrastructure Information Sharing & Analysis Center, a collaboration that brings together all 50 states and over 1,000 election jurisdictions nation-wide. The Center works with state election officials to provide real-time threat sharing, monitor ALBERT sensors, and cyber defense training, and has ensured that Alaska is part of a broad national defense against foreign attempts to interfere with our elections.

The partnership between our offices helps to ensure Alaska elections, whether this year's midterms or further down the road, are more secure than they've ever been. We will continue to work together to promote strong cybersecurity practices, including threat information sharing, "cyber hygiene" scans, phishing campaign assessments, and joint exercises.

Alaska has taken many steps to secure our elections, but let's be clear: there will always be new recommendations, new technology, and new best practices where cybersecurity is concerned. We take our responsibility seriously, and the way we administer elections must continue to evolve to stay ahead of the threats, because this is a race without a finish line. We are fully committed to

ensuring that we continue to move forward, using every tool at our disposal to maintain safe and secure voting for all.