

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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### Opening Statement Ranking Member Elijah E. Cummings

### Hearing on “Cyber-Securing the Vote: Ensuring the Integrity of the U.S. Election System”

July 24, 2018

I want to thank the Chairman for calling this very important hearing. Candidly, however, it is not enough. This is the first time since Donald Trump was elected in 2016 that the Oversight Committee has held a full committee hearing on Russian interference in the election. It took us a year and a half to finally hold today’s hearing. This hearing comes less than four months before the 2018 midterm elections, and most states have already held their primaries.

In addition, the Chairman denied our request to invite the Office of the Director of National Intelligence to testify today. Congress needs to understand how Russia attacked our states in order to help those states defend against these attacks in the future. Dan Coats, the Director of National Intelligence, recently warned that “the warning lights are blinking red.” He compared these warning signs to what we saw before 9/11.

Let me repeat that—President Trump’s own Director of National Intelligence compared our situation now to the months leading up to the attacks of September 11, 2001. Yet, Chairman Gowdy would not send an invitation to ask anyone from ODNI to testify.

We understand that we may get a classified briefing at some later date, but a closed-door briefing is no substitute for a public hearing to inform the American people about what is going on. We have DHS here—we should have the Intelligence Community as well.

We held a subcommittee hearing in November on election cybersecurity, but it was also inadequate. Mr. Krebs, who is here from DHS, also testified in November. At that hearing, we asked him for documents showing how Russia attacked our states. At first, he gave us only a single document. Later, he gave us 50 pages, much of which was already public.

We sent a letter asking Chairman Gowdy to subpoena the documents DHS is withholding, but he ignored it. We sent another letter asking him to let us vote on a subpoena, but he denied our motion. Because this issue is so important, we joined with the Ranking Members of other key committees and sent a letter to Speaker Paul Ryan. We implored him to help us get from the Trump Administration these documents about how Russia attacked our states. But all we got back was total silence.

It was not until Special Counsel Robert Mueller indicted 12 Russian military officials on July 13 that we finally learned something more about the specific attacks Russia launched against our states. The Trump Administration withheld this information from us. We should not have been forced to read about it in a press release. DHS and other agencies should have provided that information months ago—both classified and unclassified—so we could have worked with states to help secure their election systems.

It is clear that House Republicans do not want information about how Russia attacked our states in the last election—which seems like a pretty basic first step when you are trying to help these very same states defend against Russian attacks in the next one.

But even worse, House Republicans are taking active steps to hurt state efforts to protect their election systems. Just last week, House Republicans blocked all attempts to provide additional funding to secure state election systems. They argued that states do not need more money because they could cover these security upgrades on their own.

I have a letter here that we just received yesterday completely contradicting that Republican talking point, and I ask unanimous consent to make it part of the official hearing record. This letter is from a bipartisan group of 21 state Attorneys General—both Republicans and Democrats. They express “grave concern over the threat to the integrity of the American election system.” And they ask for additional funding:

We are concerned that many states lack the resources and tools they need to protect the polls. Additional funding for voting infrastructure will not only allow states to upgrade election systems, but will also allow for a comprehensive security risk assessment.

Let me conclude with this. Some Republicans have recently begun to issue more critical statements about President Trump and Russia. Chairman Hurd wrote an op-ed in the *New York Times* asserting that our Committee must conduct vigorous—and public—oversight:

I believe that lawmakers must fulfill our oversight duty as well as keep the American people informed of the current danger. ... As a member of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, I strongly believe in the importance of Congress’s oversight responsibilities and will work with my colleagues to ensure that the administration is taking the Russian threat seriously.

I agree with every syllable Chairman Hurd wrote. I think he is telling the truth. But it would be much more powerful with action to back it up. We need all of our Republican colleagues to conduct oversight—not just use strong words. Support our request to subpoena the Trump Administration for documents it is withholding about Russian attacks. Support our request for the Director of National Intelligence to testify in public. Vote in favor of additional funding for states that desperately need it. We don’t need talk. We need action. This should be a bipartisan issue, and we have less than four months to help our states before the next election.

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