

Secretaries of State Ask President Trump to Undo More Obama Damage

Mere days before he left office last month, President Barack Obama issued a directive that labeled the nation's election system as "critical infrastructure" that should fall under the jurisdiction of the Department of Homeland Security.

At the time, the National Association of Secretaries of State issued a statement that was critical of the executive order:

U.S. Homeland Secretary Jeh Johnson's announcement of a critical infrastructure classification for election systems is legally and historically unprecedented, raising many questions and concerns for states and localities with authority over the administration of our voting process.

Americans need to know that the Nov. 2016 election—the voting process itself—was not hacked or subject to manipulation in any way. No credible evidence of hacking, including attempted hacking of voting machines or vote counting, was ever presented or discovered in any state. State and local autonomy over elections is our greatest asset against malicious cyberattacks and manipulation. Our decentralized, low-connectivity electoral process is inherently designed to withstand such threats.

While we recognize the need to share information on threats and risk mitigation in our elections at all levels of government, as we did throughout the 2016 cycle, it is unclear why a critical infrastructure classification is now necessary for this purpose.

As we seek to learn more about the Department of Homeland Security's decision, it must be said that no facet of

government relies more on public trust and confidence than the American electoral process. We will work to uphold these principles before all else, along with the checks and balances that have served our democracy well for more than 200 years.

During its winter meeting last weekend, NASS voted to press the issue with President Donald Trump. Its leadership is seeking a meeting with Vice President Mike Pence and Secretary of Homeland Security John Kelly as well.

The Daily Caller reported on the resolution:

State officials initially felt they could count on DHS under Trump to rescind the designation, but now there are indications the new administration may be retreating from its early opposition to the policy.

Since the country's founding, the U.S. Constitution recognized the authority of states—not the federal government—to regulate and administer elections.

Some state officials worry the Obama policy could lead to a federal takeover of elections.

Louisiana Secretary of State Tom Schedler, a Republican and immediate past-NASS president, told The DCNF at the winter meeting that the Obama administration “stonewalled” when asked about the ramifications of the federal designation.

“The biggest difficulty was the stonewalling from the previous administration. They just don’t seem to give us any answers to our repeated requests,” Schedler said. He said Trump administration officials have also not been forthcoming about the meaning of the designation.

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