



**One Hundred Sixteenth Congress**  
**Committee on Homeland Security**  
**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

February 21, 2020

The Honorable Chad F. Wolf  
Acting Secretary  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Acting Secretary Wolf:

I write to express my appreciation of the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) election security efforts and to communicate my expectation that those activities will continue despite the actions taken by the President against officials from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) for providing a candid intelligence assessment to Congress.

Since 2016, DHS has proactively worked with State and local election officials to secure election infrastructure from foreign threats. Additionally, DHS has supported interagency efforts to counter foreign influence campaigns, including by coordinating with and supporting the efforts of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Foreign Influence Task Force. Importantly, for the past three-and-a-half years, DHS has provided candid information to Congress about threats to election infrastructure, foreign influence campaigns, and how DHS and its interagency partners are working to ensure the integrity of U.S. elections.

Although this Committee has at times raised concerns about the adequacy of Federal efforts to secure elections – including the lack of leadership from the highest levels at the White House – I have appreciated DHS' efforts to mature its election security services and provide honest threat assessments to Congress. In light of the President's receptiveness to Russian President Vladimir Putin's denials over our intelligence services' conclusions, I have also appreciated that the various iterations of DHS leadership has generally agreed to accept the findings of the ODNI's January 6, 2017, report that found Russia meddled the 2016 election,<sup>1</sup> even if some refused to expressly

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<sup>1</sup> Office of the Director of National Intelligence, *Assessing Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent U.S. Elections*, ICA 2017-01D (Jan. 6, 2017), [https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/ICA\\_2017\\_01.pdf](https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/ICA_2017_01.pdf).

acknowledge the Intelligence Community's finding that Russia did so to help President Trump's campaign.<sup>2</sup>

I am concerned, however, that the President's recent decision to remove certain ODNI officials for providing comprehensive intelligence information to the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence may make officials across the Federal government - including at DHS - reluctant to share important election security information with Congress, or publicly accept the conclusions of the Intelligence Community. That cannot happen. The American people are depending on the executive branch to work effectively with Congress to protect elections from foreign interference. Candor must be the hallmark of that effort.

I understand that you and others responsible for DHS' elections security efforts may be operating under the cloud of fear that the President will retaliate against those who provide Congress honest intelligence assessments that he perceives as unflattering to him or his ability to win re-election unaided. I expect, however, that those fears will not affect the information DHS shares with Congress or its public messaging about foreign threats to U.S. elections.

I look forward to a candid conversation with the Department and the interagency at our election security briefing in early March. I stand ready to work with you to secure our elections and will help protect Federal employees engaged in that effort.

Sincerely,



BENNIE G. THOMPSON  
Chairman

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<sup>2</sup> See e.g. Connor O'Brien, "DHS Secretary Agrees Russia Meddled in Election, but Dodges Whether It Helped Trump," *Politico* (July 19, 2018), <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/07/19/kirstjen-nielsen-russia-election-meddling-733144>.