Texas Election Security

There is no evidence that any voting or voter registration systems in Texas were compromised before the 2016 Election or in any subsequent elections.   Additionally, The Department of Homeland Security has offered a statement reiterating this fact as well.   Election security is a top priority for our agency as we continue to employ effective and forward-thinking cybersecurity measures to further strengthen our state's elections systems and safeguard against any malicious cyber activity. We have worked to educate our election officials through both in person training and written materials on the numerous protections that are in place and are required by state law.

These safeguards include:

- No voting system is ever connected to the internet at any point - either when votes are being cast or when they are being counted. (Section 129.054 Texas Election Code)
- Only software certified by the Texas Secretary of State can be loaded on a computer used for counting or accumulating vote totals. (Section 129.055, Texas Election Code)
- Before and after use each day, all voting systems are sealed with locks and with seals with unique serial numbers, and all election workers must follow proper chain of custody procedures during the election, including a careful tracking of the serial numbers used to seal the machines at the end of each period of voting. (Secs. 129.051, 129.053, Texas Election Code)
- While voting is occurring, election judges are required to periodically inspect the equipment to ensure there is no tampering or damage to the equipment (Section 125.005, Texas Election Code).
- All voting systems are tested three times, twice before the machines are used in the election and once immediately after. The tests consist of a deck of ballots being voted on the machines and then tabulated to ensure that the machine results are correct and match the test stack of ballots. The machines cannot be used or deployed until the test is 100% successful. Note that one of the tests conducted before the machines are used in an election is open to the public, and notice of this test is published in a local paper. Each political party has the right to submit names of individuals to represent that party on the testing board and thus every county usually has a testing board that consists of at least one person from each political party. (Sec. 129.023 and Subchapter D, Chapter 127, Texas Election Code).
- The election worker at the polling place (both during early voting and election day) must confirm that there are zero votes cast at the opening of voting and at the end of voting they must compare the number of ballots cast to the number of voters that have checked-in on the poll list. (Advisory 2014-06, 127.068, Texas Election Code)
- Background checks are required for all personnel that prepare, test or service all voting system equipment. (Sec. 129.051, Texas Election Code)
- Poll watchers are allowed to observe at all early voting and election day polling locations and at the central counting or accumulation station where ballots are being counted or vote totals accumulated. (Chapter 33, Texas Election Code)
- A post-election audit (partial manual count) is required for all elections that have paper ballots. (Sec. 127.201, Texas Election Code).
- The Secretary of State has the authority to conduct a manual or electronic recount of any election using electronic voting systems (Sec. 127.202, Texas Election Code).

Our office has also taken the following steps to further strengthen election infrastructure security in the State of Texas:

- Established effective communication protocols with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to coordinate cybersecurity monitoring and response.
- Engaged in a pilot program with DHS and the Multi-State Information Sharing & Analysis Center (MS-ISAC), which helped develop and improve information sharing protocols between the federal government and the states in the realm of election security.
- Instituted multi-factor authentication for election officials to ensure that only those who are authorized to do so can gain access to the statewide voter registration database.
- Installed an active Albert sensor on our voter registration database that alerts our agency when any suspicious cyber-activity occurs.
- Submitted our proposal to the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) for implementing new cybersecurity and election security measures – both at the state and local levels – using funds from the 2018 HAVA disbursement to states for election security.

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