

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF THE STATE

2020 Connecticut Election Plan



FROM THE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF THE STATE
165 Capitol Avenue, Hartford CT 06106

OUR CHALLENGE

The foundation of democracy in America is our system of elections. The legitimacy of our electoral system is the bedrock upon which a government of the people, by the people and for the people is accepted and established. That legitimacy depends on public confidence in our election system.

This year, there are forces both foreign and domestic that are placing unprecedented stress and strain on our system of elections.

Authoritarian regimes opposed to American democracy continue to **pose a threat of** cyber attacks against election systems in the United States. They possess the capabilities to significantly disrupt the 2020 election cycle, thus undermining public confidence in the fairness and accuracy of election results. Disinformation campaigns being run by these authoritarian states (Russia, China, and Iran) that are currently sowing division and discord in the American electorate can also be weaponized to spread false information about the election process itself. We can expect these efforts to intensify, all in an attempt to undermine public confidence in the election system and by extension in democracy itself.

In addition to this foreign threat to the integrity of our elections, here at home a once in a century pandemic has created an unprecedented strain on election systems across the country. The ranks of election workers, donned in the gear of first responders, are thinned out due to the crisis. Our ability to conduct a general election in a pandemic is untested, and the public is rightfully concerned. Such fear may cause election officials to abandon their posts. Such fears may cause voters to stay home (and under current conditions in Connecticut) be denied their right to vote.

The forces arrayed against us are formidable. The challenge to our democracy is real.

OUR ANSWER

Here in Connecticut we are already at work to meet and master this challenge to our democracy. The Office of the Secretary of the State has been working with Connecticut's Congressional delegation to get the resources necessary to secure election systems from cyber attack. We are working with the Governor and Legislative leadership to gain the legal authorities necessary to overcome disruptions to the election calendar. We have built an unprecedented partnership with local election officials to carry out an election in the midst of a pandemic. Our answer to the challenge before us is to build these partnerships and marshal our forces behind a plan that ensured Connecticut's elections will be safe, secure and accessible for all voters.

SAFE

- (1) The Safe Polls Plan- Require all municipalities to submit a plan for the primary and general elections in the 2020 election cycle that includes a list of polling locations, staffing levels for each polling location, an identified list of poll workers and moderators ready to work on election day, list of cleaning and safety products required and an emergency plan. Municipalities which complete their Safe Polls Plan will be eligible for a Safe Polls Grant from the Office of the Secretary of the State. **May 1, 2020 – No Cost**
- (2) Safe Polls Grant Program- Municipalities that submit their Safe Polls Plan, will be eligible for a Safe Polls Grant which can be applied to meet the costs incurred to conduct an election in a pandemic environment. These expenses include cleaning and safety products and additional personnel if necessary. **June 1, 2020 - \$525,000 COVID**
- (3) Poll worker Recruitment Program- The Secretary of the State will launch a campaign to recruit poll workers for the 2020 general election. The campaign will be based on existing models, will leverage the Governor's efforts to recruit volunteers to respond to the COVID crisis and will direct potential recruits to municipal election officials **June 1, 2020 – \$100,000 COVID**
- (4) Cleaning of Polling Locations- There are vendors who may provide cleaning services to polling locations statewide after elections are completed. This would restore each polling place after its use in the election for its usual use by means of a deep cleaning. **August / November - Reached out to local vendors to inquire about cleaning locations. Details to follow.**
- (5) Physical Security- The Department of Homeland Security is providing equipment to be deployed at five high volume polling places in the state to protect the voting location with the use of physical barriers. **December 31, 2020 \$214,000 Pending Submission of DHS Grant by DEMHS**

SECURE

- (1) National Guard Cybersecurity Assessment- The Connecticut National Guard, at the direction of the Secretary of the State, will perform a high-level assessment of the cybersecurity posture of each town as it relates to their elections infrastructure. **Pending awaiting proposal from National Guard – HAVA I \$500,000 plus \$100,000 DHS Emergency Management Grant**
- (2) Town Network Upgrades- Our office has identified approximately 20 municipalities which have chronic issues with their connections to networks necessary for the election process. We are providing upgrades to these towns networks to eliminate cyber “hot spots” which present potential security risks. **In Process- December 31, 2020- \$250,000 HAVA I**
- (3) Replacement Workstations- The offices of local election officials are chronically underfunded and as a result, many are using outmoded PC hardware and software that makes them vulnerable to cyber attacks. Our office will provide 50% matching grants to municipalities that commit to investing in upgrading outmoded workstations. **May 30, 2020 - \$200,000 HAVA I**
- (4) Virtual Desktop Infrastructure- We have successfully pilot tested a virtual desktop infrastructure which helps secure local cyber infrastructure from intrusion. The virtual desktop gives our technicians remote access to local election officials workstations for the purposes of ongoing security checks and upgrades. We will deploy this system statewide over the course of the election cycle. **11 Months after COVID Lock-Down End In Process - \$842,554 / 5 years HAVA I**
- (5) Protecting the Connecticut Voter Registration System- Over the course of the past several months our office has imposed a two-factor authentication requirement to gain access to the CVRS. We will continue to keep current with this program. **Complete – No cost, used State funds as Match for HAVA I**
- (6) Upgrade the Connecticut Voter Registration System- CVRS is the backbone of the election administration system in the State of Connecticut. It is also a system showing its age and in need of a comprehensive upgrade to increase efficiency and reduce vulnerabilities. We will conduct the necessary planning for this upgrade so that implementation can begin upon the conclusion of the 2020 election cycle. **May 1, 2022 \$5.1 Million – HAVA II**
- (7) Security Audit of Vendors- Connecticut’s election system runs on the IT services provided by private vendors such as PCC, LHS, Adkins and IVS. We will conduct a security audit of those firms. **10 Months after COVID Lock-Down End \$200,000 – HAVA I**
- (8) App Development to Secure Systems- We are developing a two-factor authentication system to enhance security for the EMS. We will also reserve funds to develop applications for CVRS and OLVR so that we can react to emerging security challenges. **Complete Pending Roll-Out \$200,000 HAVA I (Includes reserve funding)**

- (9) Online Courses for Certification of Registrars of Voters- The University of Connecticut is converting the certification process for Connecticut's Registrars of Voters to online courses. A course on cybersecurity is also included. This will streamline the certification process, upgrade skills for local election officials and clearly identify those in need of removal. **Pending UCONN Completion \$200,000 HAVA I**
- (10) Security Awareness Training for Local Election Officials- The Security Mentor system will provide cybersecurity awareness training for registrars of voters, town clerks and moderators. This will raise the awareness of Connecticut's election officials to cybersecurity threats and remind them of best practices in daily operations. **July 30, 2020 \$10,000 HAVA I**
- (11) Trainer to Conduct Classes- We will provide ongoing classes for local election officials instructing them on best practices in the use of online election systems such as EMS and CVRS. **Pending \$95,000 HAVA I**
- (12) Election Support Officers- To enhance engagement with local election officials and improve accountability within our office, The Elections Division at the Office of the Secretary of the State has recently been reconfigured into five Election Support Teams (one for each Congressional District). Each Election Support Team is made up of an Elections Attorney, an Elections officer and a support staffer. In addition, each Election Support Team will have a part time staffer to be designated "Election Support Officer". Formerly known as "Election Monitors", these officers will be hired by and accountable to the Secretary of the State for the purposes of serving as field support for local election officials. They will also support the post election audit process in the field. **Pending Personnel Identification \$150,000 HAVA I**
- (13) Election Information Security **Monitor**- Foreign powers have launched disinformation campaigns against the United State designed to sow discord and division amongst the American people. US Intelligence officials see the potential for these campaigns to become weaponized and used to spread disinformation about the election process itself. Our office will hire an Election Information Security Officer to scan social media and the dark web in an effort to identify and counter misinformation about Connecticut's elections process. **Communication Project PSA Potential Depending on Salary. If Salary too high may have to go through OPM. HAVA I**
- (14) Cybersecurity Policy Advisor- The Secretary of the State will, for the 2020 election cycle, be advised on cybersecurity policy by former Deputy Director of National Intelligence Arthur House. In addition to his knowledge of the US Intelligence Community, Mr. House previously served as Cybersecurity Advisor to the Governor of Connecticut. His responsibilities for our office will include engaging with federal agencies and experts to ascertain current intelligence and best practices, serving as a resource to our IT Director and writing a review of our cybersecurity work to be released in early October 2020. **July 1, 2020 PSA Potential Depending on Salary. If Salary too high may have to go through OPM HAVA I**

ACCESS

The people of Connecticut should not have to choose between protecting their health and exercising their right to vote. Current circumstances of this pandemic make that choice a reality for many of our fellow citizens. The Secretary of the State is taking action to ensure that access to voting is a reality no matter what the circumstances.

(1) Expansion of Absentee Ballot-

- a- The Office of the Secretary of the State will provide an absentee ballot application to all eligible voters for the 2020 primary and general elections.
- b- After processing by their Town Clerks, those who request absentee ballots will also be provided with absentee ballots via the a mail house contracted by the Office of the Secretary of the State.
- c- Drop boxes will be provided to every municipality in which Absentee ballots may be deposited by voters
- d- The Secretary of the State will offer a grant program to meet extra costs for processing personnel which might be required of Town Clerks
- e- Pre-paid postage may be provided so that voters do not have to pay to mail back their ballots **May 15, 2020 \$5,887,000 (postage included @ \$0.50) COVID**

(2) Public Information Campaign-

The Office of the Secretary of State will conduct a public information campaign using social media as well as more traditional outreach methods to convey information about our safe polls program and the absentee ballot option for voting in a pandemic. **Communication Project. HAVA I**

(3) IVS Hardware Maintenance- We will pay for the maintenance of voting machines used by localities which allow for accommodation for disabled citizens to cast their votes. **July 1, 2020 \$660,000 / 3 years. HAVA I**

(4) Videos for IVS, OLVR- Our office will produce and distribute training videos for those who operate and use IVS and OLVR systems. **Communication project - \$75,000 HAVA I**

(5) Backup Voting Machines- We have procured fifty back up voting machines which can be used to provide for replacement parts for existing voting machines. **Complete- \$75,000 HAVA I**

(6) SEEC- We have provided funds to the State Elections Enforcement Commission to upgrade their systems to strengthen their cybersecurity defenses. **Complete - \$42,000 HAVA I**