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Barr, Wray and top security officials: Help us protect the 2020 elections and your vote

Our state-based system protects us from election disruption. You can help by being on guard against social media disinformation and divisive messages.

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Election season is in full swing, and Americans have already begun to cast their votes in the 2020 presidential primaries. As we exercise this precious right, we must be mindful that foreign interference and malign influence in our elections are still threats to our democracy.

Combating these threats requires a whole-of-society approach that deserves the attention of all Americans. While these threats to our elections are perennial, our efforts to defend our democracy are unwavering. As leaders of our government, we are committed to defending our democracy, but we need your help, too.

Safeguarding the sanctity of your vote is paramount. States have made significant progress since 2016, but as long as the threat remains, there is work to be done. We have yet to identify any activity designed to prevent voting or change votes. However, we remain watchful of any malicious activities from cybercriminals and from foreign actors like Russia, China and Iran.

The states' autonomy over elections makes our elections more resilient. The diversity of election systems among the states, multiple checks and redundancies in those systems, and post-election auditing all make it extraordinarily difficult for foreign adversaries to disrupt or change vote tallies.

States have plans in place, like provisional ballots, to enable a reliable election to proceed in the case that interference does occur. While the states have primary responsibility for administering elections under our Constitution, our agencies continue to provide them with support by identifying best practices for voting systems, sharing threat information and offering services and resources.

Several of our agencies are working directly with campaigns and candidates to educate them about ways to help keep their networks secure. We are mobilized and working with states to identify cybersecurity threats to their own systems and to campaigns, and we are better able to warn them about threats today than ever before.

You can play an important role, too:

► First, you can participate in the process. All Americans should be undeterred by concerns of attempted foreign interference and have full confidence that a vote cast is a vote counted. The best way to understand how your elections are secured is to engage with your state and local officials, or to volunteer to serve as a poll worker and help support the election process yourself. Don't fall prey to disinformation about your election — such as when, where or how to vote — from untrusted sources. State and local government websites are the authoritative sources for this information.

► Second, we encourage candidates, election officials, technology companies and others involved in elections to report suspicious cyber activity to us. The FBI and the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency have set up election-focused websites that host additional information about election security and provide avenues to report concerns.

► Third, an informed and discerning public is a resilient public. As consumers of all types of media, you can help separate facts from falsehoods by seeking trustworthy sources for information and by evaluating what you read or watch with a critical eye. Some foreign governments have a track record of meddling in our affairs by attempting to shape public opinion and voter perceptions. Foreign actors have done this by hacking and dumping private campaign and candidate information on the internet and spreading disinformation and divisive messages on social media.

Often, we see foreign adversaries amplifying messages some Americans create and share with each other, in an effort to stoke hostility among us and make us appear more divided than we are. They seek to undermine our trust and confidence in each other, our democratic society and democracy itself.

To combat this threat, we continue to strengthen partnerships with technology and social media companies and share more information than ever before. Those companies are taking more responsibility for preventing foreign adversaries from weaponizing their platforms. Additionally, we must remain aware that foreign adversaries continue to spread disinformation to discredit politicians and views that are counter to their interests and ambitions.

We cannot prevent all disinformation, foreign propaganda or cyberattacks on our infrastructure. However, together, we can all help to mitigate these threats by exercising care when we share information and by maintaining good cyber hygiene to reduce the risks that malicious cyberattacks will succeed.

We can all play a role in sustaining our democracy and securing our elections from foreign interference. Americans can rest assured that our agencies' efforts to defend our republic are unwavering, and we will work diligently to secure our elections, both in 2020 and beyond.

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