
NEWS RELEASE

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Jan. 17, 2017

SECRETARY SCHEDLER SEEKS ASSISTANCE FROM PRES.-ELECT TRUMP

BATON ROUGE, La.—Louisiana Secretary of State Tom Schedler penned a letter this week to President-elect Trump seeking his assistance in undoing a last-minute action of the Obama administration. On Friday, Jan. 6 at approximately 5:40 p.m., the National Association of Secretaries of State was notified that U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson issued a press release announcing all 50 states' election systems had been designated as "critical infrastructure." Nationally, there are 16 critical infrastructure sectors and 20 subsectors that are eligible to receive prioritized cybersecurity assistance from Homeland Security. Election Infrastructure was established as a subsector within the Government Facilities Sector.

"As immediate Past-President of NASS, I am appalled at the deafness of the Obama administration, but not surprised," Schedler wrote. "The outgoing President is consistently governed by his own sense of priorities regardless of the opinions of the American people. It has been obvious and even acknowledged by Secretary Johnson in his announcement that there is much trepidation among the states concerning the critical infrastructure designation yet he forged ahead during the last minutes of the administration."

Schedler urged President-elect Trump to rescind the designation as soon as possible describing the move as an intrusion on state's rights held within the Constitution and a dangerous step towards nationalizing elections. Schedler recalled during the 2016 Presidential Election cycle that the U.S. Department of Homeland Security took an interest in election processes in response to cybersecurity concerns. In doing so, Secretary Johnson set up a working group to voluntarily assist states who sought guidance. Louisiana however, was already fully prepared and had implemented all of the recommendations made by Johnson's agency.

"It was clear to me after meeting with Homeland Security, the FBI and the U.S. Attorney's Office that they lacked the basic understanding necessary to assist in 'securing' our nationally recognized system," said Schedler. "This is a federal intrusion issue and should not be taken lightly."

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The U.S. Department of Homeland Security announcement stated, “This designation does not mean a federal takeover, regulation, oversight or intrusion concerning elections in this country,” which is why Schedler, along with several other secretaries of state directly questioned Johnson during a conference call, as to the exact changes that could result from the designation and why it was necessary. Johnson admitted that election assistance would be granted to states regardless of any formal designation. Furthermore, he could not adequately explain why it was immediately necessary.

Schedler’s letter followed a strong response from the National Association of Secretaries of State which read in part, “U.S. Homeland Security Jeh Johnson’s announcement of a critical infrastructure classification for elections 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 November 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. 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 election cycle, it is unclear why a critical infrastructure classification is now necessary.”

Schedler says he and other secretaries will continue to discuss the issue and possibly consider a resolution in response to the critical infrastructure designation during the NASS Winter meeting to be held in Washington D.C. in mid-February. Additionally, Louisiana citizens who oppose the designation are encouraged to visit www.protectlouisianaelections.com to sign a petition in support of his efforts.

“I have yet to hear of a single secretary of state from either side of the aisle who is in favor of this designation,” said Schedler. “We all feel railroaded by this announcement and have serious concerns about the way in which this announcement was delivered and its timing. When it comes to election integrity, I am not going to let the federal government have the keys to our secured election system unless they can better articulate their intentions,” emphasized Schedler.

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