

February 12, 2025

Dear Members of the Washington State Congressional Delegation,

As Washington's chief elections officer, I am writing to express deep concerns about the impact of Memorandum M25-13 and subsequent actions by the new presidential administration that could significantly undermine election security in Washington state and across the country.

Since the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) designated election infrastructure as critical in 2017, the Washington Office of the Secretary of State (OSOS) and county election offices have relied on critical support from the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) to manage risks and protect our systems. The OSOS, under both Republican and Democratic leadership, has worked closely with federal partners to secure our elections, and CISA has been a vital part of that collaboration.

Last month, I traveled to Washington, D.C., for the National Association of Secretaries of State Winter Conference, where I, along with my colleagues from across the country, expected to receive updates from key federal partners on their efforts to secure our elections. However, our partners at CISA—who were initially scheduled to attend—canceled at the last minute, apparently at the direction of CISA leadership. Just a week later, employees from CISA's Election Security and Resilience Division, along with employees from the Foreign Influence Operations and Disinformation initiative within CISA, were placed on administrative leave without explanation. These abrupt and unexplained actions have left many of us deeply concerned about the level of federal support and efforts to counter election disinformation we can expect moving forward.

This concern is not theoretical—CISA has played an essential role in protecting Washington's elections. During the white powder threats targeting election offices in past elections, as well as the recent Vancouver ballot drop box attack, CISA was instrumental in coordinating with federal partners to ensure we received timely, accurate information and had the resources needed to respond. These events underscore the critical nature of federal support in safeguarding our election infrastructure against both physical and cyber threats.

CISA's funding also supports the Elections Infrastructure Information Sharing and Analysis Center (EI-ISAC), which provides election officials with essential cybersecurity tools, real-time threat intelligence, and incident response services. As a member of both EI-ISAC and

the Multi-State ISAC (MS-ISAC), not only does our office benefit from these industry-leading cybersecurity solutions, but so do 15 cyber-underserved counties within Washington. These counties receive critical services including Endpoint Security and Malicious Domain Blocking and Reporting that protect their county networks at no cost. These services directly benefit Washington taxpayers and make it more difficult for nation states and criminals to compromise local services and support to your constituents. Without this federal support, securing these local networks will cost the state three times as much, a burden that would be especially challenging given current budget constraints across state government.

While M25-13, which threatened ISAC funding, was quickly rescinded, a federal review of grants and financial support for ISACs remains ongoing. The uncertainty surrounding ISAC funding for 2025 and beyond, coupled with proposed federal budget cuts, jeopardizes vital cybersecurity resources that help election officials nationwide combat cyber threats, including ransomware and foreign interference.

Election security is not a partisan issue. Each of you was elected through a fair, free, and secure process—one that we are committed to protecting. Curtailing federal support will make that mission significantly more difficult, particularly as cyber threats grow more sophisticated.

This is an urgent matter. While federal elections may be a year away, Washington holds multiple elections annually, all of which depend on strong federal partnerships. I urge you to advocate for sustained funding and support for CISA, EI-ISAC, and MS-ISAC to ensure we can continue safeguarding our democracy.

I appreciate your attention to this critical issue and welcome the opportunity to discuss how we can work together to protect our elections.

Sincerely,



Steve Hobbs
Secretary of State