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## The Buzz Post - Letter from Secretary Raffensperger: Setting the Election Security Record Straight

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Mon, Jun 19, 2023 at 2:40 PM

A [new discussion](#) has been posted in The Buzz by Evans, Blake on 6/19/2023 2:30 PM

Here is a letter that Secretary Raffensperger wanted me to share.

Dear Elections Officials:

Georgia's election system is secure. It's been battle-tested through two general elections, subjected to repeated audits and intense public scrutiny, and come through with flying colors. Georgia's election officials are proceeding judiciously and responsibly to ensure that our elections are secure, accurate and accessible to the voters. Voting equipment across Georgia will undergo security health checks ahead of the 2024 presidential elections, including verification no software has been tampered with.

The current proposed software upgrade has never been deployed for a major election anywhere in the nation and was only approved by the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) in mid-March of 2023. There will be pilots as Georgia will test it in some municipal elections this fall. In Ohio, where the new version of Democracy Suite was deployed in 2 counties, it was discovered the upgraded software will require additional programming of our Poll Pads to code voting cards correctly. Discovering that problem during an election would have caused chaos. Discovering it ahead of time allows us to methodically and responsibly address the issue without risking any election or public trust in the results.

The "critics of Georgia's election security" you've probably seen quoted in the media are from one of only two groups: election-denying conspiracy theorists or litigants in the long-running Curling lawsuit. These two groups make ever-shifting, but always baseless, assertions that Georgia's election system is at risk because bad actors might hack the system and change the result of an election. These are the same assertions we heard in 2016, when Russia supposedly "hacked the election," and in 2018, when Stacey Abrams refused to concede because of "voter suppression." We heard them in 2020 and conducted a risk-limiting audit, a full hand count of every ballot in Georgia to prove that our results were accurate and our elections were and are secure. The 2022 elections saw record-breaking voter turnout, high levels of voter satisfaction and virtually zero complaints about the process - or the results.

That system, proven and tested, is the system we have in place today for Georgia elections. We have layers of security protocols and procedures to physically protect ballots, the system, the software, and the results. We have tests and audits to verify results. You, in partnership with our office, have to run elections in the real-world, not just create conspiracies or hypothetical possibilities.

The Halderman report was the result of a computer scientist having complete access to the Dominion equipment and software for three months in a laboratory environment. It identified risks that are theoretical and imaginary. Our security measures are real and mitigate all of them. The [MITRE report](#) is available on our website for anyone to read, and points out that the vulnerabilities described by Halderman are operationally infeasible. Specifically the MITRE report found "five of six attacks were...non-scalable, impacting a statistically insignificant number of votes on a single device at a time. One attack was technically scalable but also...infeasible due to access controls in place in operational election environments, access required to Dominion election software, and access required to Dominion election hardware."

Is it possible for a team of bad actors to break into Georgia's 2,700 voting precincts, install malware that changes election outcomes on 35,000 pieces of equipment, and sneak back out -all the while being undetected and leaving no trace? I'll put it this way: It's more likely that I could win the lottery without buying a ticket. If the threat to election security comes down to bad people doing bad things, that threat is addressed with locks and keys and surveillance cameras and physical security measures, not software. Again, we are partnering with the Department of Homeland Security to inspect locations in every county where election equipment is stored. Logic and Accuracy testing of every piece of voting equipment is performed before each election. In SB 129, the number of required post-election audits was increased.

The [MITRE Report](#) does a great job explaining that the claims of the expert witness for litigants in a 6 year old case are, "operationally infeasible." The Coffee County situation where unauthorized access was granted to the state's election equipment in that county does not change the review of the claims. We have to always operate as if bad actors have access to the software. That doesn't change the fact that if you want to affect the system as a whole you have to have physical access to individual machines, none of which are linked to each other. [You can read the report yourself here.](#)

Finally, the decision was made to update to the next version of the software following the 2024 election because it was the responsible choice that poses a lower risk than moving forward in a rushed manner. I know it seems like the 2024 election is far out but it truly isn't. The Presidential Preference Primary is set for March 12. It is a federal election. That means we have to mail out or set electronic ballot delivery for Military and Overseas Voters 49 days out, or January 23. That further means ballots will be built in December and January...only 6 months from now. Also, hundreds of jurisdictions will be conducting municipal elections in November with qualifying beginning in August, only weeks from now.

This office will always put the voters first. We will continue to make the thoughtful, responsible decisions to execute secure and accessible elections, always working with our partners in the counties, as they are the ones who have to run the day to day and put boots on the ground. The laws passed since 2019 have helped make Georgia a model for orderly, well run elections with high turnouts and satisfied voters.

I know you share my concern for election integrity, and I appreciate your actions in support of this office. I believe that legislative consideration for increasing the penalties for any person who gains or grants unauthorized access to any part of Georgia's election equipment or software would demonstrate to the people of Georgia that we take their elections seriously. You want to attempt to tamper with Georgia's Election System...you go to jail. Let's make that a priority when legislators are back in session.

As always, we value the work that you do. We share your frustration that small groups with a political agenda, from both the Left and the Right, can do so much to make all of our work that much harder. We will get through it together, making the responsible, reasoned decisions to keep our voters happy and keep Georgia a model for running elections across the country.

Sincerely,

Brad Raffensperger  
Georgia Secretary of State

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