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## **GOVERNOR CUOMO AND STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS ANNOUNCE REGIONAL EXERCISES TO STRENGTHEN CYBERSECURITY OF NEW YORK'S ELECTION INFRASTRUCTURE**

***First-of-Its-Kind Tabletop Exercise Sponsored by State Board of Elections and U.S. Department of Homeland Security; in Partnership with the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services, State Police, and State Intelligence Center***

***Series of Regional Exercises Statewide Will Focus on Cybersecurity Preparedness and Response to Threats to Election Systems***

ALBANY, NY (May 30, 2018) - Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced that the State Board of Elections—in concert with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security—will host a first-of-its-kind series of tabletop exercises focused on protecting the integrity of New York's electoral systems against cyber-attacks. Partnering with the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services, State Police, and State Intelligence Center, the tabletop exercises will identify areas for improvement in cyber incident planning, preparedness, and response through simulation of realistic scenarios attempting to undermine voter confidence, interfere with voting operations, and affect the integrity of elections.

"We have witnessed firsthand the devastating consequences a compromised election has had on our nation and New York will not stand idle and allow our democracy to be infiltrated once again," **Governor Cuomo said.** "The people of New York deserve an open, transparent election process they can trust, and these exercises are an integral part of restoring voter confidence and the integrity of our election infrastructure."

State and local officials, led by the State Board of Elections and new DHSES Cyber Incident Response Team, will utilize information gleaned from six regional tabletop exercises with state, local, and federal stakeholders to identify risks and develop necessary steps to safeguard the election process against a cyber-attack. Exercise dates and locations are below:

- **May 31:** Albany County – Times Union Center
- **June 6:** Monroe County – Board of Elections
- **June 7:** Onondaga County – Syracuse University, Dineen Hall
- **June 11:** Nassau County – Morrelly Homeland Security Center
- **June 12:** Orange County – County Department of Emergency Services
- **June 18:** Broome County – Floyd L. Maines Veterans Memorial Arena

The regional tabletop exercises will cover all of New York's county election jurisdictions. The exercises will be substantively similar, with several scenarios contoured for each region. The scenarios will be based on a combination of real world events and potential risks facing our election infrastructure. This includes possible social media manipulation, disruption of voter registration information systems and processes, voting machines, and the exploitation of board of elections business networks.

These tabletop exercises are part of the Board's cybersecurity plan that was approved on May 3, 2018, to further strengthen cyber protections for New York's elections infrastructure through the Board's Secure Elections Center. The plan, dubbed **ARMOR** has four elements:

- **Assess** the risk to State and County Elections Systems;
- **Remediate** the vulnerabilities;
- **Monitor** ongoing Operations; and
- **Respond** to incidents.

**Senator Fred Akshar, Chair of the Senate Elections Committee said,** "These exercises demonstrate the State's commitment to protect New York's voters and ensure New York State continues to take precautionary measures to safeguard our voting systems. State, local and federal partners are actively collaborating to protect and assure the resiliency of New York's elections infrastructure."

**Assemblyman Charles Lavine, Chair of the Assembly Election Law Committee said,** "New York State has a responsibility to ensure those entitled to vote can remain confident in the integrity of New York's election systems. Working together with our partners, we will continue to strengthen and secure the cyber environment in New York and ensure public trust in the voting process."

**Todd D. Valentine, Co-Executive Director of the State Board of Elections said,** "So far there have been no credible reports of disruptions in our electoral systems, but we cannot be complacent. We have worked diligently since 2016 to develop a robust plan and these tabletop exercises are a vital part of sharing information with state and local officials."

**Robert A. Brehm, Co-Executive Director of the State Board of Elections said,** "From some of the most stringent security protocols in the nation for voting systems to taking steps to meet the challenges that cyber threats pose, the Board welcomes this opportunity to build upon its already strong relationships with local, state & federal partners to best position itself to protect the election infrastructure of the state."

**Dr. Peter Bloniarz, Executive Director of the New York State Cyber Security Advisory Board said,** "Cyber security is an "all hands on deck" effort that takes teamwork and partnership between all levels of government. Under Governor Cuomo's direction, his administration has worked collaboratively with State and County Boards of Elections and federal authorities to prepare to meet today's cyber threats. Lessons learned from these tabletop exercises will help New York continue to be vigilant in protecting its election infrastructure."

**Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services Commissioner Roger L. Parrino, Sr. said,** "When citizens walk into the voting booth, they want to know that their vote counts. It is the duty of the government to ensure that every vote and voter is secure, the process works, and the system is protected from outside influence."

**State Police Superintendent George P. Beach II said,** "In America, voting is one of our most cherished rights. The State Police and our agency partners within New York State recognize that it is

important to protect the sanctity and integrity of that privilege. As threats to our Cybersecurity become more plausible, collaboratively we need to be proactive in protecting that infrastructure. By bringing everyone to the table, these exercises will better prepare us to respond to such attacks. More importantly, by working together, we can help to prevent these types of attacks on our cyber systems.”

**Bob Kolasky, Acting Deputy Under Secretary of the National Protections and Programs Directorate at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security** said, “These exercises show the seriousness with which federal, state and local officials take the threat to election infrastructure, and the level of cooperation taking place to address it. State and local officials in New York have taken a number of steps to improve the security of their elections, and the Department of Homeland Security stands ready to support their efforts through exercises, information sharing, and by providing our technical cyber analysis and expertise. We look forward to continuing to work together to ensure the security and integrity of future elections in New York.”

**Matthew Masterson, Senior Cybersecurity Advisor at DHS’s National Protection and Programs Directorate** said, “The Department of Homeland Security values our partnership with New York State as we work together to improve the security of the election process. Today’s training is just one example of the New York State Board of Elections commitment to the process to secure elections against cyber and other threats. We will continue to support the Board of Elections’ work to ensure the election process is secure and the residents of New York votes count.”

These exercises align with initiatives announced in Governor Cuomo’s 2018 State of the State address, which includes a four-pronged approach shared by the State Board of Elections to further strengthen cyber protections for New York’s elections infrastructure:

- Create an Election Support Center;
- Develop an Elections Cyber Security Support Toolkit;
- Provide Cyber Risk Vulnerability Assessments and Support for County Boards of Elections
- Require Counties to Report Data Breaches to State Authorities

Although the tabletop exercises will not be open to the public, there will be limited press availability before each event. For more information, contact John Conklin or Cheryl Couser in the New York State Board of Elections Public Information Office at [\(518\) 474-1953](tel:5184741953) or [INFO@elections.ny.gov](mailto:INFO@elections.ny.gov); or Kristin Devoe at the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services: [Kristin.Devoe@dhses.ny.gov](mailto:Kristin.Devoe@dhses.ny.gov).

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