



July 16, 2019

Dear Senator/Representative,

The facts are clear: hostile foreign governments have and continue to interfere with American elections. Indeed, they will continue to do so unless and until Congress acts to stop them. Without congressional action, the systems undergirding our republic remain vulnerable to hostile actions by Iran, Russia, China, North Korea, and other foreign actors seeking to undermine the American way of life.

The U.S. intelligence community is in agreement that the true aim of foreign interference schemes is not to help any particular candidate or party, but rather to foster division and undermine faith in our system of government.¹ When it comes to our national security, you and your colleagues in Congress must move beyond the partisanship and gridlock that mark most days in Washington and pass a package of legislation to address some of the most glaring vulnerabilities.

It is time for Congress to deliver a clear message to those who would seek to do the United States harm: Don't Mess With US.

Intelligence reports indicate that foreign interference takes many forms. An effective legislative package to start addressing the most insidious forms of interference will need to accomplish each of the following:

- increase transparency around paid, political advertising online to ensure that foreign actors are not secretly tampering with our elections
- improve the enforcement of disclosure rules for lobbying and public relations campaigns undertaken by foreign agents
- provide specific deterrents to discourage attacks on our political system
- strengthen procedures to stop foreign funds from making their way into elections
- provide stronger federal cybersecurity guidelines and remove vulnerabilities in our state- and-local run election systems

This critically important issue demands a bipartisan response. Each of the above approaches is contained in one or more bipartisan pieces of legislation introduced in this or the previous Congress: the Honest Ads Act (S. 1356 & H.R. 2592), the Foreign Agents Disclosure and Registration Enhancement Act (S. 1762), the Defending Elections from Threats by Establishing Redlines Act (S. 1060), the Shell Company Abuse Act, and the Secure Elections Act.

Each of these bills is important, but no single one can implement the range of necessary solutions. And while we applaud actions already taken by Congress — such as the \$380 million in federal grants available for election-related cybersecurity and voting equipment in the



Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018 — and those taken by the Executive Branch — such as work of the Justice Department’s Cyber-Digital Task Force and the FBI’s Foreign Interference Task Force — these actions are not enough. Further action is needed.

We are writing to you on behalf of Issue One and the ReFormers Caucus — a coalition of more than 200 former members of Congress, governors, and Cabinet officials representing all fifty states and both political parties. The ReFormers Caucus has a wealth of national security experience, counting among its members — serving both Republican and Democratic presidents — two CIA directors; secretaries of defense, homeland security, and the United States Army; 10 ambassadors; many military veterans; and a number of members of Congress who chaired or served on congressional committees dealing with foreign affairs, homeland security, and intelligence.

The American public is looking for action from its elected leaders regardless of party. Recent polling has found that 63% of Americans have major concerns about one or more ways that foreign election interference could happen in the 2020 election.² Other research has shown that voters who learned of foreign intervention were much more likely to distrust the results of an election and lose faith in U.S. democracy more broadly.³

It is Congress’ constitutional duty to address this crisis. We hope that, for the sake of our national security, you will — for a moment — set aside the partisan divisions of the day and join in this critical effort to pass legislation to combat foreign interference, protect our democratic republic, and make it clear to hostile foreign actors: Don’t Mess With US.

Respectfully,



Nick Penniman
Founder and CEO



Meredith McGehee
Executive Director

¹ ODNI: <https://bit.ly/2iRbS9b>

² AP-NORC: <https://bit.ly/2Ln4px9>

³ The Washington Post: <https://wapo.st/2Gf3cns>