

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 15, 2025

The Honorable Tulsi Gabbard
U.S. Director of National Intelligence
Office of the Director of National Intelligence
Washington, DC 20511

Director Gabbard:

For the better part of the last decade, the Senate Rules Committee and Senate Select Committee on Intelligence have led efforts to educate the United States Senate, and the American public, about foreign threats to our elections. As your testimony before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence in March made clear, foreign adversaries continue to conduct influence activities to undermine public confidence in our election system and potentially even shape election outcomes.¹ While you have chosen not to release a declassified version of the Intelligence Community Assessment for the 2024 U.S. Elections, the final Election Security Update ahead of Election Day noted that “Foreign actors – particularly Russia, Iran, and China – remain intent on” pursuing efforts to undermine public confidence in our democratic system, including inciting violence among Americans.² We are concerned that you may have directed the Intelligence Community (IC) to cease its intelligence reporting on this vital topic.

As the election cycle for the 2026 federal mid-term elections gets underway, and multiple state contests have already begun, we write to request that the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) coordinate an IC briefing for Senators on foreign election threats, including efforts to influence election outcomes through influence or cyber-enabled means. As part of that briefing, ODNI and the IC should also update the Senate on the status of planned defensive steps to ensure the cybersecurity of several state-wide elections in November 2025 and the mid-term elections in 2026.

In addition to an intelligence briefing on these threats, we invite you to clarify public statements that you have made about voting system security, which have generated significant confusion against the backdrop of efforts to dismantle key election security initiatives and programs at the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and at the Foreign Malign Influence Center at ODNI. Specifically, at a cabinet meeting with the President on April 10, 2025, you stated that ODNI was “investigating” the issue of “election integrity”:

“We have evidence of how these electronic voting systems have been vulnerable to hackers for a very long time and vulnerable to exploitation to manipulate the results of the votes being cast [...].”³

¹ *Annual Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community*, Office of the Director of National Intelligence, prepared for the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence hearing on “Worldwide Threats,” (March 25, 2025).

² Office of the Director of National Intelligence, “15 Days Until Election 2024: Election Security Update as of late October 2024,” (October 21, 2024). (Of note, additional Election Security Updates from the 2024 U.S. elections further noted efforts by at least one adversary to shape election outcomes through extensive influence efforts).

³ U.S. Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard at a Cabinet Meeting with President Trump. (April 10, 2025; 34:11). <https://www.c-span.org/program/white-house-event/president-trump-convenes-cabinet-meeting/658480>

On July 31, 2025, you appeared on a partisan political podcast and repeated these claims, citing alleged information from CISA:

“[A] whistleblower who came forward who was working under CISA at that time which is responsible for critical infrastructure and trying to protect against cyber vulnerability and critical infrastructure, including of course the integrity of our elections. And what was interesting was seeing how this whistleblower brought forward information that CISA at the time – the federal government – was aware of vulnerabilities in our election machines but they chose not to disclose that information to the American people or administration at that time. [...] We’re continuing to investigate this [...]”⁴

Given sustained efforts by the current Administration to dismantle CISA’s election security mission, including discontinuing funding to the critically important Elections Infrastructure Information Sharing and Analysis Center, over the bipartisan objections of Secretaries of State, your cyber vulnerability claims are puzzling and elicit justified skepticism, as well as concerns of politicization. Since taking office, the Administration paused CISA’s election security work, fired election security staff, and staff are reportedly afraid to work with state and local election officials and vendors for fear of retribution.⁵ In June, the Administration proposed to cut CISA’s Fiscal Year 2026 budget by \$495 million and reduce its workforce by 30%. To date, CISA has failed to disclose its assessment of its election security work or its plans to secure future elections to Congress or the American people. According to public reports, you have also initiated a review of work of the Congressionally-authorized Foreign Malign Influence Center.⁶

With significant elections occurring less than 60 days away, we ask that ODNI coordinate an IC briefing before October 10.

Sincerely,



Alex Padilla
United States Senator
Ranking Member, Committee
on Rules and Administration



Mark R. Warner
United States Senator
Vice Chairman, Select
Committee on Intelligence

⁴ The Benny Show, *Tulsi Gabbard TORCHES Hillary’s ‘TREASONOUS’ Actions to RIG Election as She Drops ‘Smoking Gun’...* (July 31, 2025; 19:41). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NludG6fl1Vc>

⁵ Joseph D. Morelle, Alex Padilla. Letter to Cybersecurity Infrastructure and Security Agency Acting Director Gottumukkala regarding election security work. (July 7, 2025). https://www.padilla.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025.07.07-CISA-Letter_Morelle-Padilla.pdf

⁶ Steven Lee Myers, Julain E. Barnes, and Sheera Frenkel, *Trump Dismantles Government Fight Against Foreign Influence Operations*, New York Times (Feb. 20. 2025).