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Election Integrity Network ✓

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DHS Drew a Line on Election Security

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The Department of Homeland Security has done something states can't ignore: it has made election security a formal National Priority Area and tied the State Homeland Security Program funding to concrete election integrity requirements. The question is no longer whether states "support secure elections." It's whether they will use the authority they already have—or keep looking the other way and fall behind.

DHS Moved. The Money Is on the Line.

DHS has elevated election security to the same level as other core homeland security missions and attached real leverage to it. Effective immediately, 20 percent of your state's homeland security funds are now withheld until states meet five specific election security conditions.

That means election integrity has crossed a line: from a policy debate you can dodge to a security test you can fail. If your state doesn't meet the requirements, you aren't just ignoring advocates—you're putting federal security dollars at risk and leaving critical infrastructure more vulnerable than it should be.

The truth is simple: states had the solutions in front of them long before Washington tied them to funding.

DHS has simply taken the reforms the states have been ignoring and turned them into conditions for funding.

Funding Requirement #1: Move to secure hand-marked paper ballots

Transition plans must exist to end QR/Bar code technology for ballots. That plan has to cover all jurisdictions using such systems, a timeline, and, where needed, request funding to replace ballot marking devices with systems that accept hand-marked paper ballots.

This shift matters because voters cannot read a bar code. A hand-marked paper ballot is a voter-verified record that can be audited, recounted, and inspected. DHS is effectively saying what election integrity advocates have argued for years: a secure election begins with a piece of paper the voter can see and understand.

Funding Requirement #2: Conduct real post-election audits

States must demonstrate compliance with a 5 percent manual audit of electronic results, following guidelines set by the Secretary. Done well, a manual audit is not a partisan exercise; it is quality control. It provides assurance that the technology performed as expected and creates a structured way to detect problems before they become crises of confidence.

Funding Requirement #3: Reconcile voters and ballots

Voter-ballot reconciliation helps identify missing or extra ballots, data entry errors, and weak spots in chain-of-custody. It is a straightforward measure that pays dividends in accuracy and public trust.

Funding Requirement #4: Verify citizenship in voter rolls

This is not about targeting anyone; it is about enforcing a basic rule that only citizens vote in federal elections. In an era when foreign actors actively seek to erode confidence in American democracy, maintaining accurate citizenship-verified rolls is both a legal obligation and a security imperative.

Funding Requirement #5: Verify citizenship for all election workers

Only U.S. citizens should participate in American elections, in any manner.

This Is a Test of Legislative Seriousness

DHS has moved election security into the national security column and backed it with funding leverage. That raises the cost of continued inaction and *exposes the comfort of old excuses*.

Legislators write the statutes. They control whether their state uses the Model Election Laws Handbook and the model laws you already have—or whether it remains a soft target with a good press release.

If your state still lacks these safeguards, it's not because no one told you what to do. It's because bills died in committees, never made the calendar, or were stripped down to symbolic resolutions.

At this point, the remaining election vulnerabilities are not mysteries. They are policy choices. DHS has drawn a line. The playbook is in the hands of state legislatures.

States that fail to comply with DHS's FY2026 Election Security requirements will have 20 percent of their Homeland Security Grant Program funding withheld from drawdown until DHS verifies compliance.

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