STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO HARVARD STUDY ON VOTER REGISTRATION WEBSITE SECURITY

Maintaining the security of personal information in the voter registration database is a top priority for the Department of State.

The researchers who conducted the Harvard study did not look for nor find any irregularities in the 2016 election; rather they simply identified a potential vulnerability in voter registration databases in many states. Those databases are not connected to the actual voting machines at polling places. Nor is there any evidence of intrusion into Pennsylvania's voter registration database.

Pennsylvania already implemented several recommendations of the study's authors long before the study was conducted. For instance, we maintain access logs for the voter registration website and we look for anomalies in changes to voter records. If an intrusion did occur – and there is no evidence it has happened – the department can revert the database to a point in time. Also, voters whose names are not in the poll books on Election Day are allowed under state law to use a provisional ballot.

Furthermore, Pennsylvania is a recognized leader in cybersecurity. The commonwealth works closely with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to monitor for threats and we are using industry best practices and many of the study's suggestions to secure our voter registration database.

Pennsylvania was the first state to partner with DHS for a risk and vulnerability assessment of our system in the run-up to the 2016 election. The testing found our election infrastructure is secure. We are also partnering with local, state and federal law enforcement agencies to monitor and defend against potential cyber threats.

The Department of State continuously looks for better ways to maintain the security and integrity of the voter registration database and our practices and procedures evolve as threats to security evolve. In the meantime, we encourage voters to monitor their voter registration record, in much the same way that they check for unusual or unauthorized activity in their financial accounts. We strongly encourage voters to visit votesPA.com/status and verify that their registration is correct as each election registration deadline approaches. The upcoming deadline to register for this fall's General Election is Tuesday, October 10.