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Cyber Security Risk

This modern era of the twenty first century has been a time of great advancements in

technology from transportation to communication, the most notable being the internet. It has

paved the way for a bright and technological based future for every individual in the United

States and even the world, and while it has brought many benefits, it has also made Americans

the most vulnerable they have ever been. People use the internet every day whether it be on their

cell phones or computers, but what many people fail to see is the risk that comes with internet

connectivity. We all put our lives out there for the world to see, and even on "private" settings,

our information is still out there, risking the chance of someone using the internet to hack or

expose us. The internet also makes this nation susceptible to manipulation on a larger scale, such

as through unwarranted foreign interference. While this cyber security risk is not prominently

recognized, it will grow as technology continues to advance and will eventually pose a great

threat to this nation as a whole. Cyber Security is an issue of this modern era which must be

made a priority; we must adapt to changing times to ensure the safety of our country's citizens,

the preservation of our democracy and the fairness of our political system.

Risks to cyber security became apparent in the US during the 2016 presidential election

with the discovery of evidence of Russian hacking influencing election results. This occurrence

is not however even up for debate, having been proven through numerous investigations such as

the Muller Report and other government run organizations: "The CIA, FBI, and National Security Agency jointly stated with "high confidence" that the Russian government conducted a sophisticated campaign to influence the recent election." (Masters, cfr.org) Also the, "Department of Homeland Security (DHS) officials said that individuals linked to the Kremlin attempted to infiltrate election-related computer systems in more than twenty states" (Masters, cfr.org) further proving that Russia had involvement in manipulating our nation's election results. While infiltrating the election results directly and trying to expose other candidates through hacking their emails, Russia went beyond having, "sent phishing emails to over 100 election officials and vendors, and exposed 126 million Americans to Russia-backed ads on Facebook to sow discord in the presidential election" (Brennen). 2016 was just the start of foreign influence, and America needs to increase its vigilance and act now to prevent additional hacking, especially as we move toward the 2020 elections.

Since 2016, many organizations, both within the government and large private businesses, have taken steps towards a safer online presence for the good of the nation. One initiative headed by the US Department of Homeland Security with the Certified Information Systems Auditor (CISA), called #Protect2020, is working to fix the vulnerabilities exploited in 2016 with the hopes of helping to ensure a fair election in 2020. They are, "partner[ing] with election owners, operators, and other stakeholders to enhance the security and resilience of election infrastructure, and to ensure the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of the free and fair elections foundational to the American way of life." and are "working with national partners to build resilience to foreign interferences, particularly information activities (e.g., disinformation, misinformation)" (dhs.gov). #Protect2020 has become nationally known and

continues to enhance their outreach program dedicated to helping local election officials. As Americans, we all need to get behind programs such as #Protect2020 to protect our own democracy and our right to cast our vote unhindered by foreign propaganda and manipulation. The institutions that form the very basis of our government and political freedoms were hard-won, and we now risk losing them to invisible, malicious foreign influences.

The United States used to be considered as one of the strongest powers of this world; but due to manipulation through the internet, countries such as Russia have taken advantage of our government, making us like puppets of which they are holding the strings for their own entertainment. It is time to take back our power and protect ourselves from negative foreign influence so that along with the rest of the world, we can use our technological advancements to their utmost without risk. With the upcoming 2020 elections, it is important that as participants in our democratic process, that we feel safe and that our vote truly means something. The time to act is now before the US is taken advantage of again.

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