

U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Joins effort requiring states to secure elections

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The Protecting American Votes and Elections Act Mandates Paper Ballots and Risk-Limiting Audits in All Federal Elections

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin today joined her Senate colleagues, led by Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR), to introduce legislation that would protect American elections from foreign interference by mandating hand-marked paper ballots and setting new cybersecurity standards for all federal elections. The bill provides the strongest protection for American elections of any proposal currently before Congress.

“American intelligence officials have made it clear that we face an ongoing threat to our elections from foreign adversaries and hackers. We must take action to protect the integrity of the vote,” **said Senator Baldwin.** “This legislation to require paper ballots and secure our federal elections is a commonsense solution that will strengthen election security and help protect our democracy from foreign interference.”

“The Russian government interfered in American elections in 2016 and if we don’t stop them, they and other governments are going to do it again. The administration refuses to do what it takes to protect our democracy, so Congress has to step up. Our bill will give voters the confidence they need that our elections are secure,” **said Senator Wyden.** “The *PAVE Act* scraps insecure voting machines that are juicy targets for hackers and replaces them with reliable, secure hand-

marked paper ballots. It gives states the funding they need to defend their election systems and puts the Department of Homeland Security in charge of setting strong security standards for every federal election.”

The [Protecting American Votes and Elections \(PAVE\) Act of 2019](#) requires paper ballots and statistically rigorous “risk-limiting” audits for all federal elections – two measures [recommended by experts](#) in a National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2018 report on election security.

Specifically, the *PAVE Act*:

- Bans internet, WiFi and cellular connections for voting machines, and gives the Department of Homeland Security the authority to set, for the first time, minimum cybersecurity standards for voting machines, voter registration databases, electronic poll books used to ‘check in’ voters at polling places and election night reporting websites;
- Provides state and local governments with \$500 million to buy new, secure ballot scanning machines, and \$250 million to buy new ballot marking devices to be used by voters with disabilities; and
- Permits the federal government to reimburse states the cost of conducting post-elections audits, as well as the cost of designing and printing ballots.

These measures, collectively, are necessary to fix the vulnerabilities in our election infrastructure highlighted by Russia in 2016, to secure our elections from foreign hackers and give voters confidence in election results. Read a summary of the bill [here](#).

The *PAVE Act* has been endorsed by leading cybersecurity experts, voting rights groups and fair elections advocates, including the League of Women Voters, Common Cause, Electronic Frontier Foundation, Public Knowledge, Brennan Center for Justice, Protect Democracy, National Election Defense Coalition, Fair Fight Action and American Statistical Association.

“Unfortunately, across the country and in Georgia, too many voters must depend on unreliable, hackable voting machines to try to make their voices heard. In Georgia, the governor has rejected the advice of security experts in favor of rewarding corporations with politically connected lobbyists, and he is not alone in jeopardizing

our democracy. We must ensure that every citizen's vote is protected against hackers who would thwart our constitutional rights as mute the will of the people. The *PAVE Act* will safeguard the votes of Americans in every state in the union, regardless of whether state elections officials find doing so politically expedient. I am proud to endorse Sen. Wyden's legislation and bring real security to our elections," **said Stacey Abrams, Founder of Fair Fight Action.**

"American elections should be free from foreign influence and political manipulation. It is clear after the 2018 elections that there needs to be mandatory cybersecurity standards that protect our election infrastructure from hacking. This legislation will build on the work of the Election Assistance Commission and give the resources that elections officials need to protect our election infrastructure," **said Virginia Kase, Chief Executive Officer of the League of Women Voters of the United States.**

"Our democracy works best when our elections are free and fair, and when every eligible voice is heard. The *PAVE Act* would mandate paper backups for every vote, and require that those backups be reviewed through rigorous, risk-limiting audits. It would also create minimum cybersecurity standards for the use of voting machines and other critical election infrastructure. Together these steps would greatly increase the integrity and security of American elections," **said Lawrence Norden, Deputy Director of the Democracy Program at the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law.**

"With state election systems facing constant cyber threats, this legislation would institute the most critical safeguards needed to defend against sophisticated cyberattacks. In addition to requiring the critical failsafes for voting systems, this legislation also importantly requires minimum cybersecurity standards for voter registration databases and electronic poll books. These additional measures are crucial. In the last election cycle, we saw too many voters denied the right to vote because their names were suddenly not on the voter rolls or their data was compromised in other ways," **said Susannah Goodman, Director of the Election Security program at Common Cause.**

"Public Citizen applauds Senator Wyden's work to secure our elections. The shocking lack of a mandatory minimum election cybersecurity standard has meant that our elections remain incredibly susceptible to interference. If implemented, this commonsense legislation would ensure that elections in all states are protected, taking us beyond just securing the ballot, to protecting voter registration databases

and election night reporting websites,” **said Lisa Gilbert, Vice President of Legislative Affairs at Public Citizen.**

“The *PAVE Act* takes on one of the most pressing challenges facing our democracy: ensuring that the country’s voting equipment counts every vote accurately, free from interference by cyberattackers. It sets baseline standards for responding to a national security risk that strikes at the core of our democracy,” **said Larry Schwartzol, Counsel, Protect Democracy.**

“The National Election Defense Coalition applauds Sen. Wyden for his vision and leadership on election security and voter accessibility. The provisions for paper ballots and post-election risk-limiting audits in the *PAVE Act* reflect the highest standards for providing resilience and transparency in the election process and will enhance voter confidence. We commend Senator Wyden for prioritizing a path to ensure full accessibility for all voters with verifiable elections,” **said Susan Greenhalgh, Policy Director of the National Election Defense Coalition.**

“The *PAVE Act* is a much needed step forward in election security. For years now, security researchers have been raising concerns with outdated voting equipment used across the country. But paper records that can be verified by voters and hand-audited increase the integrity of our elections and ward off potential interference. Now is the time for Congress to act and secure the integrity of the ballot box before we head into the next national election,” **said Jacob Hoffman-Andrews, Senior Staff Technologist at the Electronic Frontier Foundation.**

The *PAVE Act* is co-sponsored by Senators Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Cory Booker (D-NJ), Maria Cantwell (D-WA), Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Kamala Harris (D-CA), Edward Markey (D-MA), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Brian Schatz (D-HI), and Elizabeth Warren (D-MA).

An online version of this release is available [here](#).