

Chair says cyberattack stole \$2.3 million from RPW

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Chair Andrew Hitt says a cyberattack resulted in \$2.3 million being stolen from the Republican Party of Wisconsin.

Hitt said the party began noticing suspicious activity a week ago. By Friday morning, it determined the attack had resulted in the stolen funds and the party notified the FBI.

Hitt said the hackers appeared to be politically savvy and understood the inner workings of a state party operation. They were able to manipulate information in emails and invoices to vendors the party was using for work to help the president's reelection and obtained the funds that way. What's more, they knew enough to target a state party in a battleground state at a time when significant resources were being spent in the presidential race.

The party was still working with its IT firm and handing over documents and emails to the FBI.

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Hitt said the national party had warned states to be on the lookout for cyberattacks and had wanted them to take precautions, which the party had.

"Unfortunately, one slipped through the cracks," Hitt said in an interview.

Spokesman Alec Zimmerman said the money was stolen from the party's federal account. The party had \$2.4 million in that account at the end of September, according to its filing with the FEC. Zimmerman said the party still had about \$1.1 million in the fund, though the balance fluctuates regularly toward the end of an election.

Hitt said the party hasn't been forced to cut back on anything yet. Still, he said the party typically makes last-minute decisions on digital ads, calls and texts that may be hampered.

He wasn't sure the party would be able to raise in a matter of days the money it expected to have for the final stretch of the election. It was also talking with the national party about help, though he noted money is "finite" at this point in a campaign.

"There's no doubt that we're going to be at a disadvantage as we try to make strategic decisions quickly at the end unless we can replenish these funds," Hitt said.