

COMMENTS BY CSIA

GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP ON CYBER SECURITY

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US GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP ON CYBER SECURITY IS AWOL.

AS A RESULT, WE ARE SIMPLY NOT READY FOR A MAJOR
DISRUPTION TO OUR INFORMATION INFRASTRUCTURE.

NO WHERE IS THIS LACK OF LEADERSHIP MORE CONCRETELY
FELT THAN IN THE DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY.

TODAY MARKS THE ONE-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF SECRETARY
CHERTOFF'S ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE CREATION OF AN
ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR CYBER SECURITY AND
TELECOMMUNICATIONS, ELEVATING THE LEVEL OF CYBER
SECURITY LEADERSHIP WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT.

UNFORTUNATELY, WE CAN NOT YET CELEBRATE BECAUSE THE
POSITION REMAINS UNFILLED. THERE IS NO ONE IN CHARGE
TO LEAD THE RESPONSE AND RECOVERY FROM MASSIVE
DISRUPTIONS TO OUR INFORMATION INFRASTRUCTURE.

CASE IN POINT - THE BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE RECENTLY ISSUED A REPORT FINDING THAT OUR NATION IS ILL-PREPARED FOR A CYBER CATASTROPHE. FILLING THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY POSITION IS AN IMPORTANT FIRST STEP SINCE DHS IS THE PRESIDENTIALLY-DESIGNATED FOCAL POINT TO PREPARE, RESPOND TO AND RECOVER FROM LARGE-SCALE CYBER DISRUPTION AND THE MAIN POINT OF COORDINATION FOR BOTH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR EFFORTS.

KATRINA OFFERS AN EXCELLENT EXAMPLE OF WHAT CAN HAPPEN WHEN THE GOVERNMENT IS NOT READY. POOR GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNICATION PROLONGED THE EFFECT OF THE HURRICANE, INCREASING CITIZEN HARDSHIP AND COST TO TAXPAYERS. IMAGINE WHEN A MASSIVE CYBER DISRUPTION OCCURS AND NO ONE IS IN CHARGE, NO COMMUNICATION AND RECOVERY PLANS IN PLACE. THE STAKES ARE TOO HIGH FOR CONTINUED INACTION.

SADLY, THE PICTURE DOESN'T LOOK ANY BRIGHTER WHEN YOU TURN TO OTHER AREAS OF GOVERNMENT. IN THE LAST YEAR AND A HALF, MORE THAN 88 MILLION AMERICANS HAVE HAD THEIR PRIVACY COMPROMISED AS A RESULT OF SECURITY BREACHES AT GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE SECTOR ORGANIZATIONS. THE CONSEQUENCES OF THESE BREACHES ARE TOUCHING EVERY PART OF THE COUNTRY BY EVERY DEMOGRAPHIC FROM BLOOD DONORS, MEDICAID RECIPIENTS, COLLEGE STUDENTS AND GRADUATES, VETERANS, AND THOSE ENGAGING IN E-COMMERCE. AND WHILE MANY IN CONGRESS HAVE PUSHED TO ADDRESS THIS PROBLEM THROUGH A COMPREHENSIVE FEDERAL LAW AIMED AT PROTECTING AMERICANS FROM THESE TYPES OF PRIVACY BREACHES, EFFORTS ARE STALLED.

MORE THAN ONE BIPARTISAN BILL UNDER CONSIDERATION WOULD PROVIDE A REALISTIC AND EFFECTIVE LEGAL FRAMEWORK THAT ORGANIZATIONS OF ALL SIZES COULD COMPLY WITH – *IF* DIFFERENCES CAN BE SET ASIDE AND THE FOCUS RETURNED TO INTENT OF THESE BILLS – BETTER

PRIVACY PROTECTION FOR AMERICANS. THE SPECIFIC DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN THE BILLS' PROVISIONS ARE IMPORTANT, BUT NOT ENOUGH TO JUSTIFY DERAILING THE PROCESS ALTOGETHER.

WE MUST ALL UNDERSTAND WHAT IS AT STAKE HERE – DIGITAL SYSTEMS UNDERPIN OUR NATIONAL AND ECONOMIC SECURITY AND A MAJOR DISRUPTION TO - OR WIDESPREAD LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN - THESE SYSTEMS COULD HAVE A DEVASTATING IMPACT ON OUR CITIZENS, OUR ECONOMY AND SECURITY. THERE IS REAL URGENCY HERE. WE ARE LIVING ON BORROWED TIME AS WE AWAIT ACTION.

WE APPLAUD THOSE THAT HAVE STEPPED UP TO BRING MORE ATTENTION TO THESE PRESSING ISSUES AND WE HOPE THAT ALL OF OUR EFFORTS WILL RESULT IN A STRONGER, MORE RESILIENT, DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE THAT WE CAN ALL FEEL CONFIDENT IN.