In 2016, the media reported on a number of election cybersecurity incidents around the country, from the attempted penetration of the voter registration system in Arizona to the breach of voter data in Illinois. While no elections in those states were affected, the incidents exposed a lack of response protocols and communication strategies for state agencies responsible for information technology and elections. Without a protocol or a communications strategy, valuable time can be lost addressing the breach and communicating the problem to other stakeholders and the public. Equally serious is the impact a chaotic response, with its accompanying confusion, will have on the public’s faith in our election system, the bedrock of our democracy.

To help states address these increasingly complex concerns, The Council of State Governments, or CSG, has partnered with the Democracy Fund to create an advisory group of state and local officials and cybersecurity and election experts. The advisory group will guide CSG’s efforts throughout the project and will play a key role in hosting a consortium later this year, at which delegations from a sample group of states will map their states’ election structures and develop incident response communication protocols for election cybersecurity breaches. Eight states, two from each of CSG’s four regions, will be invited to participate. Each state’s delegation will include, at a minimum:

- The state chief information officer or state technology director
- An election official at the state level
- A representative from the governor’s office
- A legislative representative

During the consortium, attendees will hear from election and cybersecurity experts, as well as local and state colleagues to learn about both problems surrounding election cybersecurity, and state solutions and best practices. Interspersed throughout the event, each delegation will meet and work with a skilled facilitator to determine the actions to be taken during a cyber breach, the agencies or offices responsible for those actions, and strategies for explaining the breach to the media and public.

Observations and lessons learned from these facilitated sessions will be distilled into a toolkit that any state can use to map a communications plan for an election cybersecurity breach. The toolkit will be made available on the CSG website in November 2018.

If you would like to learn how your state can participate in our project, please contact Jessica Kirby at jessica.kirby@csg.org.

CSG Election Cybersecurity Initiative Advisory Group Members

- **DAVID BEIRNE**, director, Federal Voting Assistance Program
- **AMY COHEN**, executive director, National Association of State Election Directors
- **YEJIN COOKE**, director of government affairs, National Association of State Chief Information Officers
- **DAVID FORSCHEY**, policy analyst, Homeland Security & Public Safety Division, National Governors Association
- **ROBERT GILES**, director, Division of Elections, New Jersey Department of State
- **KATHLEEN HALE**, member, Election Center board of directors
- **JOSEPH HALL**, chief technologist, Center for Democracy & Technology
- **TOM HICKS**, chairman, U.S. Election Assistance Commission
- **GEMA HOWELL**, computer scientist, National Institute of Standards and Technology, U.S. Department of Commerce
- **MATT MASTERSON**, senior cybersecurity adviser, U.S. Department of Homeland Security
- **NOAH PRAETZ**, director of elections, Cook County, Illinois Clerk’s Office
- **LESLIE REYNOLDS**, executive director, National Association of Secretaries of State
- **BRAD STEELE**, treasurer of the National Association of State Technology Directors (NASTD), senior director of unified communications for the Executive Office of Technology Services and Security (EOTSS), Massachusetts

The Council of State Governments
As our nation’s only organization serving all three branches of state government, CSG has decades of experience convening forums that foster the exchange of insights and ideas to help state officials shape public policy. CSG also has considerable experience helping states develop public policy specifically suited to their needs.

Democracy Fund
The Democracy Fund is a bipartisan foundation established by eBay founder and philanthropist, Pierre Omidyar, to help ensure that the American people come first in our democracy. The organization is a resource for those who want to strengthen our nation’s democracy and invests in change makers whose ideas and energy can make a difference.