



Written by [Kurt Hyde](#) on August 10, 2018

Florida Senator Nelson Says Russians Have Hacked Into Florida's Voter Registration System

Senator Bill Nelson (D-Fla.), speaking in Tampa, Florida, Wednesday, told reporters that the Russians are in the voter registration records in Florida. Nelson added that all the Russians need to do is "start eliminating registered voters and you can imagine the chaos that would occur on election day."



Nelson said of the letter he and Senator Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) sent to Supervisors of Elections in Florida:

We were requested by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the [Senate] Intelligence Committee to let the Supervisors of Elections in Florida know that the Russians are in their records. The letter that we sent also pointed out: "You can have assistance to secure your records from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security free of charge."

Never mind that intervention by a federal agency in a state election is unconstitutional, even if it is wrapped in bundle labeled as assistance free of charge. It is also unconstitutional for a U.S. Senate committee chairman to bypass state election officials and attempt to participate in the management of elections at the county or local level.

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The New American contacted the Florida Department of State's office and spoke with Communications Director Sarah Revell. She reiterated the official statement issued by the Florida Department of State's office in response to this:

The Florida Department of State has received zero information from Senator Nelson or his staff that support his claims. Additionally, the Department has received no information from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the Federal Bureau of Investigation or the Florida Department of Law Enforcement that corroborates Senator Nelson's statement and we have no evidence to support these claims. If Senator Nelson has specific information about threats to our elections, he should share it with election officials in Florida.

But if Senator Nelson would like to take federal action regarding this, he might do well to review his own voting record. As a freshman senator he voted for the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) of 2002. Section 303 of this unconstitutional monstrosity said:

Except as provided in subparagraph (B), each State, acting through the chief State election official, shall implement, in a uniform and nondiscriminatory manner, a single, uniform, official, centralized, interactive computerized statewide voter registration list defined, maintained, and administered at the State level that contains the name and registration information of every legally registered voter in the State and assigns a unique identifier to each legally registered voter in the State (in this subsection referred to as the "computerized list.")



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The HAVA law also added the following unconstitutionally forced centralization regarding the state-wide voter registration lists:

(i) The computerized list shall serve as the single system for storing and managing the official list of registered voters throughout the State.

Note how Senator Nelson's statement of Wednesday shows further what a mistake the HAVA law is regarding defining the central voter registration database as "the official list of registered voters." What if that one database gets hacked by outsiders or, the even greater danger, hacked from within by an employee or other person with inside access? Senator Nelson explained how it might go wrong when he spoke Wednesday:

You can imagine the chaos that would occur on election day when the voters get to the polls and they say "I'm sorry Mr. Smith, I'm sorry Mr. Jones, you're not registered. Well, here's my registration card. Well, I'm sorry, you're not on the registration list."

Who caused the one central list to be the only official list? Senator Nelson and the other senators and members of Congress who voted for HAVA.

According the Florida Department of State website, the State of Florida recently started allowing online voter registration as of October 1, 2017. Perhaps this is what Senator Nelson means when he says the Russians are in there. Online voter registration is fraught with the security flaws that are inherent in any Internet computer system. Where did the states get the idea to implement Internet voter registration? The following was in Section 245 of HAVA. It called for a study into:

(B) the possible methods, such as Internet or other communications technologies, that may be utilized in the electoral process, including the use of those technologies to register voters and enable citizens to vote online, and recommendations concerning statutes and rules to be adopted in order to implement an online or Internet system in the electoral process.

Whether or not the Russians have actually hacked their way into Florida's central voter registration database or even if this is only a ploy to distract attention from the greater threat of hacking elections from within, the best course of action would not be adding additional unconstitutional federal involvement, but rather undoing the harm that has been done and is currently being done by unconstitutional federal involvement in elections. Repealing HAVA, Motor Voter and numerous other federal laws that actually harm, rather than help, would be a great start.

Photo of Vladimir Putin with Russian officers: Kremlin.ru



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