

Cybersecurity Task Force Releases Recommendations *Framework for Legislative Action Unveiled in the House*

(WASHINGTON) – The House Cybersecurity Task Force today unveiled its recommendations to help guide legislative action for the remainder of this Congress and beyond. The Task Force formally delivered its report to the Speaker and Majority Leader earlier this week.

“Cybersecurity attacks are a direct threat to our economy and job creation, as well as our national security. The task force has addressed this critical issue in a thoughtful and substantive way, and I look forward to working with our committee chairmen and all our members to examine and act on these recommendations in the coming weeks and months. I particularly want to thank Rep. Thornberry and our members for all of their hard work in putting together this report,” said House Speaker John Boehner.

Reflecting a growing concern about malicious cyber activity, House Speaker John Boehner and Majority Leader Eric Cantor formally created the Cybersecurity Task Force in June. They asked Rep. Mac Thornberry to lead the effort and appointed members from nine committees with significant jurisdiction on the issue, as well as three at-large members. They charged the group with making recommendations in four key areas: authorities, information sharing and public-private partnerships, critical infrastructure, and domestic legal frameworks.

“These recommendations provide sound, concrete steps to help strengthen our cybersecurity now, while also highlighting issues that need more work,” said Rep. Thornberry, who chaired the Task Force. “Starting with incentives, information sharing, and updating some key laws can lead to real progress rather than more gridlock like we have seen with larger proposals,” he continued.

The recommendations highlight the critical need for the improvement of existing information sharing structures and the development of an active defense capability. Taken together, such efforts would improve security and disseminate real-time information designed to help target and defeat malicious cyber activity.

“Cybersecurity is a rapidly evolving challenge, and I am confident that our Task Force’s recommendations will put us on the right track in helping to protect our networks from attacks that could threaten both our national and economic security,” said task force member Rep. Mike Coffman (R-CO).

Also included in the framework is the adoption of voluntary incentives to encourage private companies to improve cybersecurity, such as the development of voluntary standards through a public-private partnership, utilizing existing tax credits and grant funding to promote increased security, and studying the possible role the insurance industry may play in strengthening cybersecurity. Suggestions for oversight and reporting requirements are also outlined.

The group mentions several federal laws dealing with cybersecurity that need to be updated with an eye toward reform, including Federal Information Security Management Act (FISMA) of 2002, Computer Fraud and Abuse Act (CFAA) of 1986, as well as other communications laws and criminal statutes.

Finally, the Task Force acknowledges that updating legal authorities is among the most complex issues facing lawmakers. It does recommend certain areas where Congress should begin action on updating these authorities, including the federal government defining a proactive process for Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA) and increased support from the Department of Defense to the broader federal government. The group also suggests that Congress should formalize the Department of Homeland Security’s current role in coordinating cybersecurity for federal civilian agencies’ computer and networks.

The Task Force represents a broad cross-section of the House Republican Conference and the committees of jurisdiction on the issue of cybersecurity. In addition to Reps. Thornberry and Coffman, Members serving in the group include Reps. Robert Aderholt (R-AL), Jason Chaffetz (R-UT), Bob Goodlatte (R-VA), Robert Hurt (R-VA), Bob Latta (R-OH), Dan Lungren (R-CA), Mike McCaul (R-TX), Tim Murphy (R-PA), Steve Stivers (R-OH), and Lee Terry (R-NE).

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