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Chicago
Board of Election Commissioners

For Immediate Release

Statement on Voter Data Files Used for Electronic Poll Books

At 5:37 p.m. on Sat., Aug. 12, the Chicago Election Board received an alert that was triggered by UpGuard cybersecurity expert Chris Vickery, regarding Chicago voter information that was stored by an Election Board vendor, Election Systems & Software (ES&S) on an Amazon Web Services (AWS) server.

Based on information that Vickery provided Saturday, the Election Board quickly determined that the issue did not involve any systems, web sites or servers directly managed by the Election Board. The Board's web site and network systems do not reside on AWS servers.

Instead, the issue involved back-up files on a computer server that was maintained by the Board's electronic poll book vendor, Election Systems & Software on an AWS server. Vickery has discovered similar flaws with servers on the AWS platform in the past.

By 9:44 p.m. on Saturday, ES&S had taken the AWS server off-line.

Since then, ES&S has been working with computer forensic teams to examine the server, its files and its security settings. One file on the server contained 1.8 million voter names, addresses, dates of birth, the last four digits of many voters' Social Security numbers, driver's license and state ID numbers.

"We were deeply troubled to learn of this incident, and very relieved to have it contained quickly," said Chicago Election Board Chairwoman Marisel A. Hernandez. "We have been in steady contact with ES&S to order and review the steps that must be taken, including the investigation of ES&S's AWS server. We will continue reviewing our contract, policies and practices with ES&S. We are taking steps to make certain this can never happen again."

The Board credited Vickery for immediately alerting local, state and federal officials of the files he obtained. Vickery advised the Board that he has taken steps to secure the files that he downloaded.

The back-up files that were held by ES&S on the AWS server had no impact on any voter records and had no impact on the vote tabulations or results of any elections.

No computer network systems or web sites directly managed by the Chicago Election Board were exposed at any time. The Board's web sites do not contain any personal-identifying information such as dates of birth, partial Social Security numbers, driver's license numbers, etc.

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