

January 19, 2011

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC

Dear Majority Leader Reid and Minority Leader McConnell,

We write to urge the Senate to take up, debate, and pass legislation to strengthen our nation's cybersecurity.

As former executive branch officials who shared the responsibility for our nation's security, we are deeply concerned by the severity and sophistication of the cyber threats facing our nation. These threats demand a response. Congress must act to ensure that appropriate tools, authorities, and resources are available to the executive branch agencies, as well as private sector entities, that are responsible for our nation's cybersecurity. The Senate is well-prepared to take up legislation in this important national security field, and to do so in a bipartisan manner in the best traditions of the Senate.

Every week brings new reports of cyber intrusions into American companies or government agencies, new disclosures of the breach of Americans' private information, or new revelations of incidents of cyber disruption or sabotage. The present cyber risk is shocking and unacceptable. Control system vulnerabilities threaten power plants and the critical infrastructure they support, from dams to hospitals. Reported intrusions into defense contractors and military systems reveal the direct national security cost of cyber attacks. Evaluations of the Night Dragon and Aurora attacks reveal the vulnerability of our most advanced and essential industries to sophisticated hackers. The recent report by the Office of the National Counterintelligence Executive makes clear that foreign states are waging sustained campaigns to gather American intellectual property – the core assets of our innovation economy – through cyber-enabled espionage. The growing threat of terrorist organizations acquiring cyber capabilities and using them against American interests opens another battlefield in cyberspace. And every day, Americans' identities are compromised by international criminals who have built online marketplaces for buying and selling Americans' bank account numbers and passwords.


This constant barrage of cyber assaults has inflicted severe damage to our national and economic security, as well as to the privacy of individual citizens. The threat is only going to get worse. Inaction is not an acceptable option.

Senate committees of jurisdiction have done important, bipartisan work developing legislation to strengthen our nation's cybersecurity. The Administration likewise has weighed in with a set of legislative proposals. The stage thus is set for the Senate to take up cybersecurity legislation. We believe that it can and should undertake this work in keeping with its best, bipartisan traditions, addressing this pressing national security need with the seriousness that it deserves.

We urge the Senate to do so in short order: the rewards of increased security for our country, particularly our private sector critical infrastructure, will be rapid and profound.

Sincerely,



Hon. Michael Chertoff

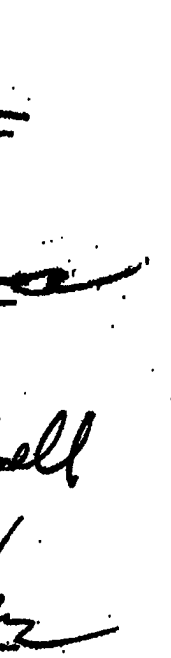

Dr. William J. Perry



Hon. William J. Lynn III


Hon. Paul Wolfowitz


Hon. J. Michael McConnell


Hon. Jamie Gorelick


Hon. Richard Clarke


Gen. (ret.) James Cartwright USMC