



BIPARTISAN POLICY CENTER

March 5, 2012

The Honorable Harry Reid
Senate Majority Leader
S-221, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
S-230, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid and Minority Leader McConnell:

We write to urge the U.S. Senate to take up cyber security legislation in the near future. Recently, the Director of National Intelligence and the FBI Director both warned Congress about the advanced nature of the cyber threat. These warnings should not be ignored.

Much like the situation before the September 11th, 2001, attacks, the federal government is not adequately organized to deal with a significant emerging national security threat. With cyber attacks becoming more sophisticated and pervasive, it is paramount that the federal government take the steps necessary to prepare the nation to prevent and mitigate the effects of potentially catastrophic cyber attacks on the nation's critical infrastructure.

Comprehensive legislation is needed to flesh out a range of pressing cyber security policy questions, including how the federal government should defend against and respond to cyber attacks and what measures private sector owners of critical infrastructure should take to prevent the damage or disruption of their often interconnected and interdependent networks. Nothing less than the security of our electricity, communications, financial, and water systems is at stake.

We are encouraged by the significant legislative drafting efforts by multiple Senate Committees over the last three years, and hope that the bipartisan cyber security legislation they have produced can be brought to the floor. One of the reasons that the 9/11 Commission recommended the establishment of one committee with jurisdiction over homeland security issues was to ensure that there would not be a failure to act on important issues because of jurisdictional conflicts. Unfortunately, jurisdictional and procedural objections to considering cyber security legislation are now being raised. This homeland security issue is too critical for it to succumb to such conflicts between committees.

Sincerely,

Tom Kean
Co-chair, 9/11 Commission
Co-chair, Homeland Security Project

Lee Hamilton
Co-chair, 9/11 Commission
Co-chair, Homeland Security Project