



## Over Two Dozen Computer Security Experts Call on MITRE to Retract its Georgia Voting Systems Report

Atlanta, GA (June 20, 2023) – Twenty-nine recognized experts in computer security sent a letter to Dr. Jason Providakes, president and CEO of the MITRE Corporation, urging him to retract a report MITRE produced last year on behalf of Dominion Voting Systems.

Dominion engaged MITRE to provide a expert report provided by Profs. J. Alex Halderman and Drew Springall on behalf of plaintiffs in the longstanding *Curling v. Raffensperger* election security lawsuit in Georgia. Coalition for Good Governance is the organizational plaintiff in *Curling* which it filed in 2017. The case does not allege any election was decided incorrectly.

“MITRE’s report is irresponsible, plain and simple,” said Professor Rich DeMillo, professor and Roger C. Warren chair of computing at Georgia Tech, and a signatory to the letter. “The report’s title leads one to believe it is an independent and technical analysis when it is neither. Buried in a footnote is an admission that MITRE did not examine the Dominion system or use any discernible technical methodology. Commissioned and paid for by Dominion, the MITRE report is a misguided attempt to discredit the Halderman-Springall-CISA findings. In reality, MITRE Election Lab relied solely on representations from the Secretary of State’s Office that physical security measures render the Halderman-Springall vulnerabilities low-risk. In effect, MITRE relied on blind faith, not careful, reviewable scientific reasoning, to create the misleading impression that there is another side to the vulnerability story. In the professional world, that is irresponsible. It skirts the line of unethical conduct.”

Professors Halderman and Springall were given access to Dominion’s touchscreen machines for twelve weeks in 2020 to conduct a security assessment for the *Curling* plaintiffs by court order. They uncovered and verified nine vulnerabilities in the Dominion touchscreen ballot marking devices that all in-person voters in Georgia must use to record their votes. The expert report concluded that exploitation of the vulnerabilities could result in undetectable vote tampering that could occur at scale.

The Halderman report was produced subject to the rigors federal litigation demands of expert reports. Dr. Halderman was required to provide full documentation of his methods and findings, submit sworn

written testimony, and to be deposed and questioned under oath by the Georgia Secretary of State's representatives. The unsigned MITRE report was subject to none of these conditions.

Because of the gravity of their findings, Halderman and Springall petitioned the court to permit them to submit their report to the Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) under the Coordinated Vulnerability Disclosure (CVD) program which was created to give security researchers an avenue to responsibly disclose cyber vulnerabilities found in critical infrastructure systems. CISA validated all of the Professors' findings and recommended the vulnerabilities be patched "as soon as possible."

In response, Dominion Voting Systems shared the sealed Halderman report with MITRE- in violation of the Court's Protective Order - and hired MITRE to respond outside of the litigation process to Halderman's findings. Computer security experts have criticized the MITRE report because MITRE issued its assessment without examining the Dominion voting machines. Furthermore, MITRE's unsigned report is predicated on the known false assumption that all Georgia's voting hardware and software are under strict access control, a premise that is belied by the fact that partisan operatives unlawfully accessed, copied and covertly distributed Georgia's voting system software to an unknown number of unauthorized individuals and entities.

"The fact that Georgia's voting system was breached several times in Coffee County in January 2021, then covertly distributed online to rogue actors epitomized the absurdity of MITRE's and Secretary Raffensperger's insistence that physical security of the system is adequate," said Marilyn Marks, executive director of Coalition for Good Governance. "We urge the public to read Dr. Halderman's more recent report (November 2022) regarding his findings on the system after he was granted additional access the state's system information following the Coffee County breaches."

"MITRE's entire analysis rests on this faulty premise found in a footnote: 'MITRE's assessment of the researcher's proposed attacks assumes strict and effective controlled access to Dominion election hardware and software.' This assumption is largely false for Georgia, and moreover should not be made in any cybersecurity analysis of national security importance. It basically ruled out any attacks by insiders or assisted by insiders," said David Jefferson, computer scientist recently retired from Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. "One should never assume in a security study that laws, regulations, and procedures are always correctly followed."

David Cross, lead attorney for the Curling Plaintiffs said, "The MITRE Report ironically is damning for Georgia's BMD system. Even putting aside its fatal flaws and false assumptions, in claiming that the many vulnerabilities Dr. Halderman and CISA found in the system likely cannot be used to change enough votes to alter election outcomes, MITRE concedes that many individual votes nonetheless could be changed. In other words, MITRE concedes that numerous voters could be disenfranchised through those

vulnerabilities.” Cross continued, “Secretary Raffensperger’s duties go beyond achieving the right election outcome to also protecting the fundamental right to vote afforded to each individual voter. His brazen indifference toward that important right is disappointing and a dereliction of his duties.”

Concerned that MITRE’s report offered dangerously misleading conclusions because it was not produced with the appropriate and typical scientific rigor, over two-dozen recognized computer security experts took the extraordinary step to write to MITRE’s president, Jason Providakes and urge him to retract the MITRE report. The letter states:

“MITRE’s analysis applies faulty reasoning and dangerously understates the risk of exploitation, asserting that the attacks would be “operationally infeasible.” This contradicts CISA’s determination that “these vulnerabilities present risks that should be mitigated as soon as possible.” MITRE’s logic is that if procedural defenses are perfectly implemented, then the system is immune from attack. This is a completely inappropriate methodology for assessing real-world risk, since actual risk hinges on how well defenses are implemented and operate in practice.”

Signatories include Ron Rivest, institutional professor at MIT; Andrew Appel and Prateek Mittal, professors at Princeton University; Michael Fischer professor at Yale University; Philip B. Stark, professor at the University of California at Berkeley; Bruce Schneier, technologist and lecturer at Harvard University; Eugene H. Spafford, professor at Purdue University, and many more.

Coalition for Good Governance is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization focused on fair and transparent elections.

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