

After Months of Waiting, Florida Counties Will Finally See Federal Election Security Funds

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(TNS) — Well, that was fast.

It took Gov. Rick Scott's administration two months to formally apply for \$19.2 million in election security money. It took the feds one day to approve the request.

The U.S. Election Assistance Commission on Monday released a letter it sent to Sen. Marco Rubio that said the EAC "has reviewed Florida's disbursement request and approved the request in one working day. We expect funds will be in Florida's account this week." Read the letter:

The money will be divided among the state and all 67 counties to improve security procedures to help detect threats to voting systems, such as the attempted phishing emails in at least five counties in 2016 that a federal agency said was the work of Russian hackers.

UPDATE: In a statement, Rubio said: "We know that Florida is a target for Russian cyber-attacks, and I commend EAC for promptly approving much-needed funding to improve election security. State officials should quickly put this money to good use.

It is critical that Floridians have confidence going to the polls and participating in our democratic process."

The feds' announcement completes a stunning reversal from less than two weeks ago, when Scott's chief elections officer, Secretary of State Ken Detzner, [said "the answer is no"](#) when asked if the money, which was announced in late March, would be available for use in this election.

After seeing Detzner's remarks, Scott overruled him and ordered the state to apply for the money.

The state's three-page application reached D.C. late last week.

Detzner's office said Monday that it will work quickly with the Legislature to provide funding to supervisors "as well as bolster state efforts to enhance the security and integrity of our elections." At Scott's urging, the agency also is hiring five cyber-security specialists.

The clear implication of the EAC's letter is that Florida would have had the money long ago if it had applied for it faster. Sixteen states requested the money before Florida did, and as of Monday 23 states have applied.

In Monday's letter, EAC Executive Director Brian Newby wrote: "Florida has some of the most dedicated election administrators in the nation, and the EAC looks forward to sharing Florida's best practices in the areas of election security."

Okaloosa County Supervisor of Elections Paul Lux, who learned of the action from the Times/Herald, said counties are compiling lists of how they would spend the money and now will work closely with Detzner's office to get the funds flowing. "There's a real need for this money," Lux said.

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