Hackers Hit Web Hosting Provider Linked to Oregon Elections

By Associated Press on May 10, 2022

A week before Oregon's primary election, the secretary of state's office is moving to protect the integrity of its online system where campaign finance records are published after a web hosting provider was hit by a ransomware attack.

Secretary of State Shemia Fagan's office said people inputting records into the ORESTAR state campaign finance reporting system may have been affected, and have been sent detailed instructions on how to proceed.

"The Oregon Secretary of State has not been hacked," Fagan's office reassured voters in a statement late Monday. "No sensitive data on our systems has been exposed. No systems related to elections administration have been compromised."

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By Tuesday, one-tenth of registered voters had already cast their ballots for the May 17 primary election. Oregonians vote by mail or by using official drop-off boxes.

The Oregon Elections Division said it learned on Monday that **Opus Interactive** — a web hosting provider used by the campaign finance firm C&E Systems — was the victim of a ransomware attack.

"C&E's database was compromised, which includes their client's log-in credentials for ORESTAR accounts," Fagan's statement said. The Secretary of State's office said it is requiring all 1,100 affected users to reset their passwords.

But Jef Green, owner of C&E Systems, gave a lower number of affected users, saying only about 300 clients are political committees involved in the 2022 midterm elections in Oregon.

"At least 500 of the committees don't exist anymore," Green said. His company offers help with all aspects of campaign compliance and reporting, and indicated the ransomware attack is more of an annoyance than anything.

"This isn't going to affect any of our clients as far as the reporting (of campaign spending and contributions). None of the candidates are going to be affected by this because, even though we don't have access to our fancy database to make it easy for us, we can still do everything that needs to be done manually," he said.

While candidates for state and local elections use ORESTAR, candidates for national office like Congress use a different system.

Opus Interactive's website was down Tuesday morning. A person who answered the phone at the company said he couldn't comment on the ransomware attack.

An online "status page" about the issue from the Portland company said "Opus Interactive and certain Opus-hosted customer virtual servers and backups were hit by a ransomware attack which encrypted the server disk files." It added industry-leading cybersecurity and digital forensics experts have been engaged to assist in the company's response.

Fagan's office said it works with the U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, the Elections Infrastructure Information Sharing and Analysis Center and the FBI year-round to ensure the integrity of its systems.

As of Tuesday morning, 288,337 completed ballots have been returned out of a total of just over 2.9 million registered voters, according to unofficial ballot counts from the secretary of state.

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