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SECRETARY OF STATE
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November 9, 2023

Representatives and Senators,

Thank you for contacting me about our request for proposal (RFP) concerning online media monitoring. I share your concerns about Oregonians' first amendment rights, and you will be pleased to learn that nothing in this RFP impacts free speech.

There is a lot of misinformation online about this RFP. I'm happy to help set the record straight.

First, we have not signed a contract at this time. We did a pilot project in 2022 with Logically and are currently in an RFP process for a system we'd like to bring online. This confusion may stem from the timeline in the RFP, which indicates that the contract would be in place by now, but we are still in the RFP process.

The purpose of the proposed system will be to review publicly available information on websites, social media, and blogs, and notify us of threats and misinformation in a manner similar to a Google news alert. We will do two things with these notifications: 1) when there is a threat to life or infrastructure, we will notify the relevant law enforcement agencies, and 2) when there is false information about our elections, we will use our communications channels to share accurate information with voters.

My office has no authority to remove information from the internet, so there is no first amendment issue here. We do, however, have a very real need to protect the people and infrastructure that make our democracy work.

County clerks have specifically asked for assistance in responding to threats online. I believe you share my goal of ensuring the safety of elections officials, their staff, and property. **During our pilot project in 2022, we identified threats to the lives of both Republican and Democratic gubernatorial candidates, and we were able to elevate those to the appropriate authorities.** The real-time alerts created by the system we are proposing in this RFP will be an important part of that security plan during the 2024 election cycle.

We also share a goal of ensuring that Oregonians have access to accurate information about elections. The internet is a big place. In order to stay informed about election information online, several states use online tracking services. These services monitor posts on blogs and

social media, similar to google alerts, and we use that information to inform our communications. When we understand what people are saying about elections online, we are better able to provide Oregonians with accurate information.

While we have no authority, ability, or desire to censor speech, we do have the ability to provide accurate information through official channels. We are more effective at this when we know what false information is being shared online.

I am also including the responses my office has shared to specific questions we have received about this RFP.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lavonne Griffin-Valade". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lavonne" being the most prominent.

Lavonne Griffin-Valade
Oregon Secretary of State

What information is specifically being gathered/collected?

Using publicly available information, the system will detect potential threats to the safety of election workers and inaccurate information related to the administration of elections. Election workers faced greatly increased risk of threats and harassment in recent years. Situational awareness helps the SOS and county partners protect elections critical infrastructure. Understanding the information landscape helps inform our team on where information gaps exist and how to strengthen and educate the public about the election process.

How is the information being used?

When there is a threat to life or infrastructure, we will notify the relevant law enforcement agencies, and when there is false information about our elections, we will use our communications channels to share accurate information with voters.

How long has the contract been in place? If we used them during the last election, do we have any data, report done to show how it went?

We currently have an active RFP. We had a pilot during the 2022 election for a few months. We identified false narratives and contacted law enforcement about a handful of incidents that threatened life and safety of potential targets.