

Frustrations mount as Oregon secretary of state databases remain offline after website breach

kate.brown.feb.7.2013.JPG

Oregon Secretary of State Kate Brown warned businesses Thursday about a fraudulent invoice making the rounds. *(Michael Lloyd/The Oregonian)*

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SALEM -- Frustrations are mounting more than a week after a **breach of the Oregon secretary of state's website** caused elections and business databases to go offline. State officials say they're still investigating how the intrusion from a foreign entity occurred and don't know when the databases will return.

The attack "appears to be an orchestrated intrusion from a foreign entity and not the result of any employee activities," the agency reported on its website this week.

The department's Central Business Registry and ORESTAR, the state's online campaign finance reporting system, were temporarily taken offline as a precaution after officials detected "an intrusion" around Feb. 4. Since then, business attorneys haven't been able to look up existing business names, and campaign finance officials have not been able to report transactions.

The outage could lead to missed deadlines and increased costs for businesses as attorneys spend extra time filing documents, said **Shawn Lindsay**, a business attorney and a Republican former state representative.

"I've tried calling Thursday, Friday and Monday," Lindsay said. On Monday "I was on hold for 30 minutes, and I never got through."

The breach also raises questions about the security of the agency's other databases, including the voters database, which contains personal information that isn't publicly available, Lindsay said.

The voters database is on a separate server and was not affected by last week's breach, state officials say. **Credit card data is also safe.**

Two campaign finance officials said Wednesday that ORESTAR's outage has had minimal effect on their work, though they will need to file thousands of transactions once the website returns.

Kevin Neely, co-owner of **C&E Systems**, said he has between 5,000 to 7,000 transactions to upload to the database. Neely, who is the treasurer for about 400 Democratic political action committees, said he has had to submit paper forms to create four or six political action committees since the outage began.

"People are understandably frustrated," Neely said. "There's no good time for an outage, but frankly, if there were a good time in an election year, this is when it'd be because most of our legislative candidates aren't raising money right now."

House rules prohibit representatives from raising money during the session, and senators follow a similar informal rule.

Neely and Carol Russell, the Bandon-based treasurer of many Republican political action committees, said they weren't worried about any missed deadlines.

"If anybody's concerned about deadlines, we're going to fully take into consideration that our website made things either difficult or not possible," said Tony Green, spokesman for the Secretary of State.

About 25 agency workers are investigating the breach, and officials are in the process of hiring outside experts to review security measures, he said. "The forensic exam is an incredibly laborious, highly specialized process," Green said. "We've had people working as many hours in a day as possible."

The agency is receiving about 1,100 calls a day, nearly twice as many as usual, and wait times are longer than usual, he said. **Business forms can be filed via fax, mail or email**, he said.

Officials reported the breach to the Oregon State Police, and the FBI have also been informed.

-- Yuxing Zheng

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