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As one of America's premier news media outlets you know as well as anyone how much our nation depends on a reliable and secure digital information network. From the production and transmission of your news coverage to managing the everyday work of government to the smooth functioning of our financial markets, it is the invisible digital information infrastructure that forms the backbone of our economy and our democracy.

As the cyber attacks on American government and financial institutions during the 4th of July holiday showed us, we now face a very real and very different kind of national security threat. This new threat, though it has not immediately put human lives at risk, has the potential to be every bit as costly to our way of life as conventional terrorist attacks. And while there was little lasting system damage done by last July's attacks, the scope and relative ease of the assault – combined with its anonymous nature – should put into sharp focus the threat our digital information infrastructure faces every day.

That is why I'd like to take this opportunity as president of the National Association of State Chief Information Officers (NASCIO) to urge you to participate and promote the sixth annual National Cybersecurity Awareness Month this October. Given the ever-increasing severity of the threat, this year's National Cybersecurity Awareness Month will be a valuable opportunity to inform the public and policy makers about an issue I feel will be one the most important national – and global – security issues of the 21st century.

Whatever level of your participation, be assured that any awareness you can bring to this issue will be valuable to your audience. If you decide that you would like to create unique programming or interview a cyber security expert, myself and NASCIO are willing and able to help in any way we can. In fact, NASCIO has developed a comprehensive cyber security website that aggregates much of what my colleagues are doing to address cyber security issues in their states. In my other role as the State of Minnesota's Chief Information Officer, I have made a commitment to making as much information available to citizens as I can. My hope is that your news organization will do the same for a much wider national audience.

Protecting the nation's digital information infrastructure is not only the responsibility of local governments, states and the federal government. There is a role that citizens can – and must – play and with your help we can get them engaged in becoming a part of the solution.

If you would like more information on what you can do to promote National Cybersecurity Awareness Month, please visit NASCIO's resource website at www.nascio.org/advocacy/cybersecurity or contact Charles Robb, NASCIO Issues Coordinator at crobb@amrms.com

Thank you and I look forward to working with you to educate our fellow citizens on this very important and timely issue.

Gopal Khanna
President,
National Association of State Chief Information Officers
Chief Information Officer,
State of Minnesota