

# Widespread Adoption of DotGov Domain is Essential

## Issue and Background

- The DotGov domain provides enhanced security features and increases the public trust in government.
- With rampant misinformation and disinformation campaigns from issues ranging from election security to COVID-19, it is paramount that citizens receive accurate and trusted information from government websites.
- Nearly twenty years after making DotGov available to state and local governments, only approximately 8.5 percent of local governments are registered on the domain.
- With the vast majority of local government websites on domains other than DotGov, there is no official governing body validating whether their websites are legitimate entities or fraudulent actors.
- In the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress, NASCIO endorsed the DOTGOV Act, introduced Senators Gary Peters (D-MI), Ron Johnson (R-WI), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) and James Lankford (R-OK), which was passed and signed into law in December 2020.
- Under the new law, DOTGOV program will be managed by DHS CISA and require them to develop an outreach strategy to inform and support the migration to the DotGov domain of local governments. DHS CISA will provide technical information on how to migrate online services to DotGov. The law also allows State Homeland Security Grant Program funds as an allowable expense for the adoption of the DotGov domain and further stipulates that the CISA Director may waive any fees associated with DotGov registration.

## Recommendation

- **The DotGov Program should be free to all eligible entities.** One significant barrier of adoption is the \$400 annual registration fee, which many local governments identify as being cost prohibitive. CISA should work to remove all associated fees to further incentivize adoption.
- **Provide flexible usage of State Homeland Security Grant Program funds** to be used for migration to DotGov domain to include non-technical transition costs on items including stationary, business cards and marketing materials.
- **CISA should establish a stakeholder advisory group** to include State CIOs and CISOs to provide feedback and input on their outreach strategy to local governments, work with local governments to highlight the security enhancements of DotGov, as well as to assist in migration to DotGov domain.

