



## Global Cyberattack Underscores Need to Strengthen U.S. Electric Grid

WASHINGTON, May 16, 2017 – The global cyberattack that brought millions of computer networks to a halt last week serves as an important reminder that securing the nation’s electric grid must be a key national priority, according to Protect Our Power, an organization of renowned experts dedicated to protecting our electric transmission and distribution system. The electric grid is an interconnected network of power plants and power lines that supplies all of us all with a resource critical to the functioning of our society.

“The U.S. electric grid is complex,” said Jim Cunningham, executive director of Protect Our Power. “It needs significant upgrades to withstand the growing threat of cyberattacks. Building a more resilient grid should become the nation’s No. 1 priority.”

The latest ransomware attack is not a new phenomenon. The [Wall Street Journal](#) had reported that a hacker successfully breached a Michigan utility in April 2016 and successfully extorted \$25,000 to unlock the computer system. A [March 2017 poll](#) conducted by Protect Our Power indicated that nearly 61 percent of Americans believe the electric grid is vulnerable to a cyber or physical attack.

President Trump signed an executive order on May 10, 2017, ordering Secretary of Energy Rick Perry and Secretary of Homeland Security John Kelly to work with state and local governments to assess gaps in power grid cybersecurity and the potential impacts of a prolonged power outage as the result of an attack.

“The Executive Order is a good starting point but we must get to the action phase very soon,” said Sudeen Kelly, Protect Our Power’s regulatory counsel and former commissioner with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). “To improve the grid’s resilience, we must help industry leaders, regulators and legislators work together to determine and implement the most practicable solutions with suitable funding mechanisms to pay for them.”

### **About Protect Our Power:**

Protect Our Power (POP) is a not-for-profit organization designed to build a consensus among key stakeholders, decision-makers and public policy influencers to launch a coordinated and adequately funded effort to make the nation’s electric grid more resilient and more resistant to all external threats. The national program must also ensure establishment of an enhanced power restoration and recovery component for all grid operations that would include communications protocols to protect the American public.

For more information about Protect Our Power, visit [www.protectourpower.org](http://www.protectourpower.org).

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