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House Passes Cybersecurity Bill

By *JANIE LORBER*

Update | 12:46 p.m. The House today [overwhelmingly passed a bill aimed](#) at building up the United States' [cybersecurity](#) army and expertise, amid growing alarm over the country's vulnerability online.

The bill, which passed [422-5](#), requires the Obama administration to conduct an agency-by-agency assessment of cybersecurity workforce skills and establishes a scholarship program for undergraduate and graduate students who agree to work as cybersecurity specialists for the government after graduation.

As officials puzzle over [how to defend the nation from enemies](#) that are often impossible to pinpoint, the lawmakers behind the bill said education and recruitment are crucial.

"Investing in cybersecurity is the Manhattan Project of our generation," Representative Michael Arcuri, Democrat of New York, a sponsor of the bill said on the House floor Wednesday. "But this time around we are facing far greater threat. Nearly every high school hacker has the potential to hamper our unfettered access to the Internet. Just imagine what a rogue state could do."

Mr. Arcuri said that the federal government will need to hire between 500 and 1,000 more "cyber warriors" each year to keep up with potential enemies. Troops online "are every bit as important to our security as a soldier in our field," he said.

The Cybersecurity Enhancement Act, H.R. 4061, a major information security bill, closely follows a [warning by Dennis Blair, the director of National Intelligence, who told lawmakers this week](#) that computer-related attacks were becoming increasingly malicious.

The government's four-year review of Defense Department strategies, also issued this week, stated that large-scale cyberattacks could massively disable or hurt international financial, commercial and physical infrastructure.

Mr. Obama has said cybersecurity is one of his top priorities and between the fallout from the [attack on Google's computers](#) in January and the more modest [hacking of Web sites of 49 House members and committees](#) last week, the risk is felt acutely in Washington.

Still, the budget proposal the administration delivered to Congress Monday cut funding for the Homeland Security Department's cybersecurity division.

There is no companion bill in the Senate, but senators are working on several unrelated information security bills.

The bill is based on a review of Mr. Obama's review of cyberspace policies across the federal government in May, 2009. It authorizes one single entity, the director of the National Institute of

Standards and Technology, to represent the government in negotiations over international standards and orders the White House office of technology to convene a cybersecurity university-industry task force to guide the direction of future research.

It also directs the National Science Foundation to research the social and behavioral aspects of cybersecurity, like how people interact with their computers and manage their online identities, in order to establish a new, more accessible awareness and education campaign.

Correction: An earlier version of this story incorrectly reported the House roll call. The bill passed 422-5, not 424-0.