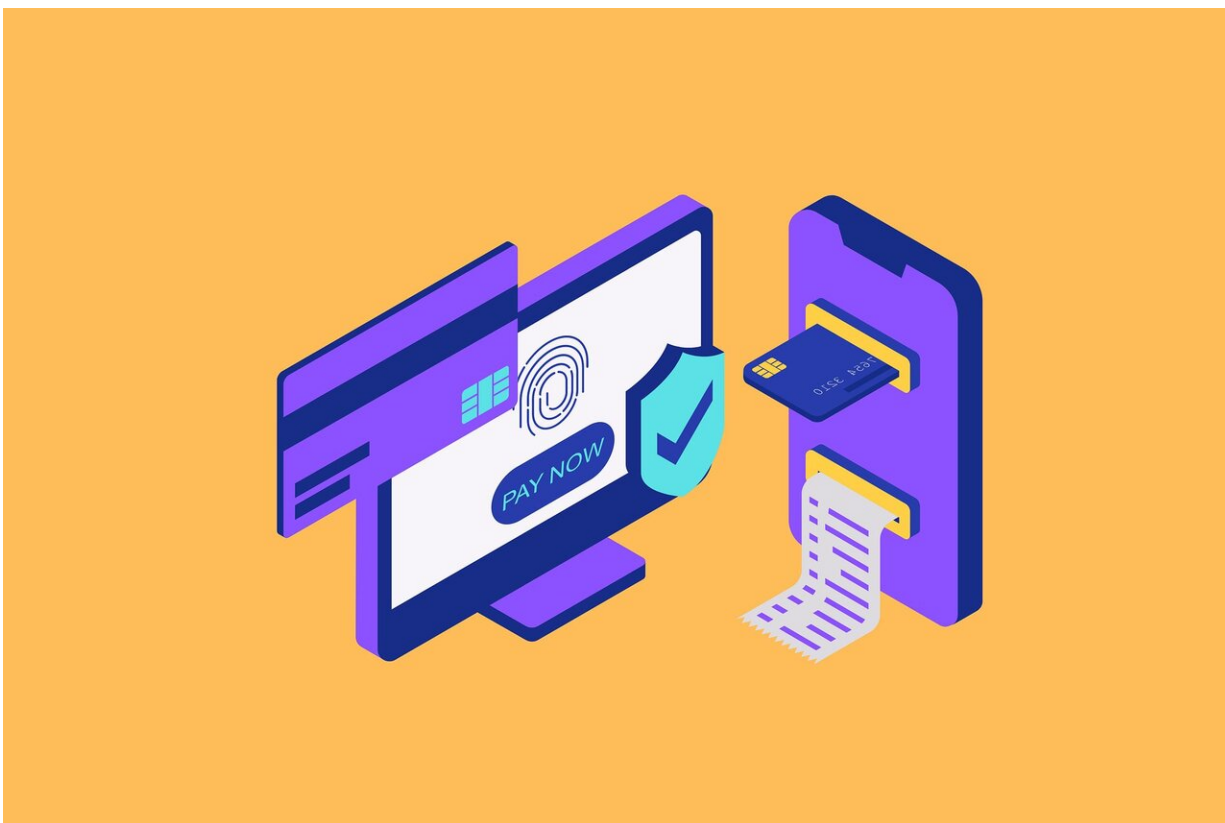


Virginia still working to fix issues after ransomware attack

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The information technology agency that serves Virginia's legislature is still working to fix problems [caused by a ransomware attack](#) earlier this month, a state official said Tuesday.

The attack substantially affected operations and occurred during preparations for a legislative session that is set to start Jan. 12.

Dave Burhop, executive director of Virginia's Division of Legislative Automated Systems, told The Associated Press in an email that the agency's "goal is to have the General Assembly session operational to the greatest extent possible."

"Our technical, investigative and administrative teams have been working tirelessly," Burhop wrote.

Burhop said a full forensic analysis generally takes several weeks. And he said he hopes the initial analysis will be finished just after the New Year.

"As of today, these teams continue to perform a meticulous, around-the-clock forensic analysis of our systems, servers and all connection points," Burhop wrote Tuesday.

The Division of Legislative Automated Systems, or DLAS, is the General Assembly's IT agency. The attack marks the latest in a ransomware scourge that has exploded over the past year, with attacks against governments, critical infrastructure and major corporations.

Cybersecurity researchers who track ransomware said earlier this month there was no previous record of a state legislature suffering an attack.

A top agency official told Virginia legislative leaders in an email obtained by The Associated Press last week that hackers using "extremely sophisticated malware" had accessed the system Dec. 10. A ransom note with no specific amount or date was sent, according to the email.

All of the agency's internal servers, including those for bill drafting, the budget system and the General Assembly voicemail system, were affected, the email said.

"Anything to do with bill drafting or bill referrals—all of that has been impacted," Senate Clerk Susan Clarke Schaar said earlier this month.

Brett Callow, a threat analyst at the firm Emsisoft, said Virginia is the 74th state or local government hit by ransomware attacks this year, though the first legislature he's ever seen attacked.

"Honestly, I'm surprised it hasn't happened before," Callow said.

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