

OLD & NEW LIES: How Newsrooms Can Build Trust & Debunk Election Lies for Voters

Election lies are not new. Newsrooms have experience covering these false claims from previous election cycles. In the days and weeks before and after the election, reporters, editors and other media professionals can anticipate recycled falsehoods and ready their audiences for new lies. Here's what to watch out for and ways to cover these narratives:

RECYCLED LIES ABOUT THE VOTING PROCESS & LOGISTICS



Newsrooms should *correct false localized information* about changes to the logistics of voting — such as voting dates, polling locations, etc. Newsrooms should also clarify that election results may take time to determine, which is not a sign of corruption or a rigged process. Specific best practices:

- Provide information from your state and local election authorities about voter registration, early voting and mail-in ballot deadlines.
- Share the most up-to-date maps and links to the addresses of polling locations as well as information about any changes. This is especially crucial in states where climate events have impacted polling locations.
- Correct and debunk lies about voting logistics or alleged changes to the voting process.

RECYCLED LIES THAT CAST DOUBT ON THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM



Newsrooms should *combat efforts to sow distrust in electoral processes*, such as false stories about rampant voter fraud:

- Report on the role of local election officials. Explain how they count ballots, review the tallies and ensure all ballots — including provisional ones — are cast legally.
- Inform the public about how votes are verified and explain the timeline for results at the local and state level. Remind audiences that a national election result may take days to determine, which is not proof of a corrupt or rigged electoral process.
- Report on any changes to vote-counting rules your state has made in recent years.
- Investigate the kinds of voter systems that are used locally, how voters can safely use them and how they meet all applicable requirements of the elections code.

HARASSMENT OF & LIES ABOUT ELECTION OFFICIALS



Newsrooms should *educate audiences about the important nonpartisan role that election officials play* in the democratic process. This coverage should include combatting false claims and harassment designed to undermine the credibility of election officials:

- Investigate what the county and state are doing to ensure the physical security of election workers and the ballots themselves, not just on Election Day but through the tabulation of the vote and when the new Congress is sworn in.
- Report on any instances of intimidation, threats and/or violence to election workers.

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NEW LIES ABOUT THE VOTING PROCESS & LOGISTICS



Newsrooms can anticipate new lies that make false claims about specific communities and groups of people — specifically immigrants — attempting to vote twice or “steal” the election.

- Report on the legal requirements for voting, including citizenship and proof of residency. Some states also have voter-ID laws. Debunk disinformation about noncitizens voting in elections.
- Call out racist conspiracy theories that dehumanize immigrants, people of color and other marginalized communities. Provide factual information and data showing that these narratives are false.

NEW LIES ABOUT ELECTION-LAW CHANGES



Many states have made changes or are considering changes to election laws. *Share with audiences what the laws are* and correct false claims about voting-law changes.

- Explain the election-certification process at the county and state level.
- Report on the specific statutes in your state for when an election official refuses to certify an election.
- Identify the legal remedies available to state and federal authorities — as well as voters — to protect the certification of the election.
- Verify claims of ballot destruction, especially in swing states. Even a small percentage of destroyed ballots might jeopardize the ability of election officials to determine the winner of the election in close races.

For more newsroom resources, Free Press has developed a [checklist](#) for newsrooms to prepare for election disinformation. Additional resources can be found [here](#).